



Family Handbook 2025-2026

## **WHAT IS LEARNING?**

Learning, in the public schools, is a series of separate, timed boxes: 10:00–10:45 is Math, 10:45–11:20 is Science, and 8:00–8:30 AM on Wednesdays is Health.

Learning in a preschool setting—whether it’s a large or small group childcare center or a family childcare—involves everything you do with the children for all of the time that they are there. Every moment is a teaching moment. In these preschools, teachers have a special continuity to their days that they can use to create meaningful learning experiences for their students.

The trend today is to standardize education and make every student, teacher, and school in the country accountable for the same content. This approach has students taking high-stakes tests (MCAS in Massachusetts, FCAT in Florida, STAAR in Texas, MSP and HSPE in Washington, to name a few.)

The long-reaching arm of standardized education is now pulling in preschools and preschool learning. Preschool teachers are being held accountable by parents and public schools for curriculum content in English language arts, mathematics, and sciences. The high-stakes testing for these very young children is the readiness test.

But what is learning?

Learning is a child’s ability to master a task. In preschool, a child’s learning tasks include sitting and listening to a story, sharing, realizing that they are indoors and using their indoor voices, choosing not to bite, using words instead of hitting, not putting toys in their mouths, choosing to eat their lunches because noodles in the trash can is not the fastest way to cookies in the mouth, taking turns, and actually resting during rest time.

A child’s learning in preschool is recognizing different colors and shapes, pointing to a square and saying, “Square!” Preschool learning includes recognizing the first letter of their names, and gleefully shouting, “R!! That’s my name!”

How do teachers know what to do when?

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

To become a preschool teacher, you must complete a course in child growth and development. There are many different lenses through which you can examine child growth and development. Development in children isn't straightforward. We can have expectations about when children will walk, when they will talk, and when they will succeed at toilet training. But these are ranges. One child may master a developmental task many months before another child achieves the same level of mastery. Both children have normal development. Everything hinges on brain development. All the things we do—talking to each other, talking to ourselves, singing, listening, understanding, reading, moving, making plans, thinking, problem solving—are controlled by different and specific areas of the brain. The brain doesn't develop all at once. What does this mean for teachers?

This means that the typical brains of young learners in preschool are not yet able to master abstract thinking, so it's best not to give a child a worksheet until they're in about the third grade. That's when their brains will have developed enough for them to be successful using a worksheet. Third grade is for eight-year-olds. We don't want to set children up to fail.

Young learners in preschool, typically aged 2.9 to 4.6 years old, are at a stage of learning where they require concrete presentations. They need to hold, feel, and touch things to learn. The curriculum for young learners should include lessons that allow students to touch, handle, and hold objects. That is why here at Einstein's Learning Center, we use the Reggio approach to learning.

Dear Parents,

I am excited that you've chosen to partner with us during such a thrilling time in your child's life. I want you to know we are here to support you and your family. You are the expert, and I am here to support your whole family. Our school app provides all the information you need, from the daily menu and class schedule to special events. It is our primary communication tool, where you will sign your student in and out, view daily updates and photos, make tuition payments, and access your contract and other important resources.

If you need help using the app, please use the following link:

<https://help.tryplayground.com/en/articles/6263294-add-invite-manage-guardians>

This handbook contains essential information to help you have the best experience here at Einstein's Learning Center (ELC). I hope you find it helpful as our school expands. Some policies may be modified or added, and we reserve the right to update this handbook at any time, notifying all parents of any changes.

If you have any questions at any point, I am here to help.

Sincerely,

*Melissa C Whithorn*

## **MISSION**

At ELC, our mission is to enhance the quality of life for children and empower individuals to reach their full potential. Our primary objective is to create a secure and nurturing environment that enables children to explore and discover the world around them. Our goal is to establish a solid educational foundation that supports lifelong learning for every child.

## **OUR GOALS**

- Establish a secure and healthy atmosphere for the children.
- Promote positive self-esteem and independence in each child, and cultivate respect for oneself and others.
- Encourage positive relationships between children and adults.
- Facilitate the development of healthy habits in children.
- Support healthy social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth in age-appropriate ways.

## **PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

ELC was created to meet the developmental needs of children ages 0-5. We offer an array of engaging, hands-on experiences in creative art, scientific exploration, motor skill development, sensory activities, and dramatic play. Our goal is to introduce children to a diverse range of positive and age-appropriate experiences, thereby fostering their natural curiosity and growth.

R.4.01

## **OUR VALUES**

**Safety and Care:** We prioritize the safety and well-being of every child, maintaining a secure environment and adhering to strict health guidelines.

**Inclusivity:** We celebrate diversity and strive to ensure every child feels valued and respected in our center.

**Partnership with Families:** We recognize the importance of collaboration with families and encourage open communication to support each child's development journey

## **LEARNING THROUGH PLAY**

The Reggio Emilia approach is a child-centered, experiential philosophy of early childhood education that originated in Italy. It emphasizes that children learn best through active exploration, hands-on experiences, and social interaction rather than passive instruction. In other words, children learn best in play. Aligned with NAEYC standards, the Reggio Emilia approach emphasizes that children are capable, curious, and active participants in their learning. In our classroom, what may look like just play time is actually when our students are learning the most. Our teachers:

- Design classrooms as **beautiful, engaging environments** that act as a "third teacher," encouraging exploration and creativity.
- Support children in **learning through experiences and presentations**, allowing them to express ideas through various "languages" (art, movement, play, etc.).
- Collaborate with children, guiding rather than directing, and honoring their ideas and interests.

Overall, learning through play helps toddlers grow into curious, capable, and confident learners ready for future challenges. R.4.01

## **LEARNING THROUGH PRESENTATIONS**

In Reggio-inspired classrooms, "presentations" are not traditional teacher-led lectures. Instead, they are opportunities for children to share their ideas, creations, and discoveries with their peers and educators. For example:

- A child might present a drawing or a clay sculpture to the class, explaining their thinking and creative process.
- Children may work together on a project and then present their findings or creations to parents or other classes.

These presentations help children:

- Develop communication and language skills.
- Gain confidence and a sense of ownership over their learning.
- Learn to listen to others and engage in meaningful dialogue.

### **LEARNING THROUGH PLAY**

At our school, we believe that play is the foundation of meaningful learning. Through play, children explore new ideas, solve problems, develop social skills, and express their creativity in a safe and supportive environment. Our classrooms and outdoor spaces are designed to encourage hands-on experiences where children can build, create, imagine, and collaborate with their peers. By engaging in activities such as dramatic play, sensory exploration, building with blocks, and outdoor adventures, children naturally develop critical thinking skills and a love for learning. We see play not just as free time, but as an essential, intentional part of every child's growth and development.

- **Supports overall development:** Play helps toddlers build physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills all at once. As they move, explore, and experiment, they strengthen their bodies and their minds.
- **Encourages creativity and imagination:** Play allows toddlers to express themselves freely, try new ideas, and use their imagination, which supports problem-solving and creative thinking.
- **Develops social skills:** When playing with others, toddlers learn how to share, take turns, communicate, and resolve conflicts, building important social and emotional skills.
- **Builds language skills:** Through pretend play, storytelling, and interacting with peers and teachers, toddlers expand their vocabulary and learn how to express their thoughts and feelings.
- **Fosters independence and confidence:** Play gives toddlers opportunities to make choices and take risks in a safe environment, helping them feel more confident and capable.
- **Supports emotional growth:** Play provides a natural way for toddlers to explore and express their emotions, helping them develop self-regulation and a better understanding of their feelings.

R.4.01

## **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCES**

Experiences are at the heart of Reggio learning. Children are encouraged to explore their environment, experiment with different materials, and follow their natural curiosities. For example:

- A nature walk where children collect leaves and then investigate their shapes and textures.
- Water play enables children to understand scientific concepts such as floating and sinking.
- Building structures with blocks, which supports spatial awareness and problem-solving.

Through these experiences, children:

- Make sense of the world around them in concrete, meaningful ways.
- Engage all their senses, which deepens learning.
- Develop critical thinking and creativity.

## **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

In this approach, teachers act as guides and co-learners rather than traditional instructors. They observe children's interests and questions, then design experiences and environments that encourage further exploration and learning. Teachers also help document and display children's work (the "third teacher"), which serves as a form of presentation and reflection. **R.5.01**

## **HOW OUR TEACHERS INTEGRATE NAEYC ETHICS & STANDARDS WITH THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO CREATE A SAFE, INSPIRING, AND EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

At our center, we are deeply committed to fostering a learning environment where every child feels safe, valued, and inspired to explore and grow. To achieve this, our teachers intentionally combine the **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Professional Standards**, the **Reggio Emilia approach**, and comprehensive assessment practices. **R.5.02**

## **NAEYC ETHICS & STANDARDS**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) outlines core values and standards designed to support high-quality, developmentally appropriate practices. Our teachers embody these values by:

- **Building trusting relationships** with children and families.
- **Creating inclusive classrooms** where each child's identity, culture, and abilities are respected and celebrated.
- **Maintaining professionalism and continuous self-reflection**, ensuring ethical decision-making in every interaction.
- **Prioritizing child safety and well-being** in both physical and emotional aspects.

## **OBSERVATIONAL & FORMAL ASSESSMENTS R.5.02**

To ensure each child's growth and to prevent learning gaps, we use a blend of ongoing observational assessments and formal tools, including the Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP) and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA). However the best recourse we have is you. We rely on our bi-monthly parent teacher meetings to gain as much insight about your child as we can. You are the first and primary teacher and you know your child best, our goal as educators is to support you in these early years.

*Parent Observation:*

- ELC values parents as partners in their child's learning and development. Families are encouraged to share observations about their child's interests, strengths, and growth at home. Parents can provide these insights through daily conversations with teachers, on our school app under "Observation", emails, or by using our communication app. During parent-teacher conferences, families can also discuss any changes they notice and collaborate on strategies to support their child's individual needs. By sharing observations, parents help us create a more personalized and meaningful learning experience that reflects each child's unique journey. **R.5.03**

*Observational Assessments:*

- Teachers carefully observe children during daily activities and document their progress, interests, and developmental milestones. This ongoing process helps teachers tailor experiences to each child's needs and strengths. **R.5.01**

*Formal Assessments (LAP & DECA):*

- LAP helps us assess developmental skills across various domains such as motor, language, cognitive, and social-emotional.
- DECA focuses on children's social and emotional strengths and resilience.

Our program conducts both informal and formal assessments on a daily basis for each child. This ongoing data collection is combined with information (using Teaching Strategies GOLD platform) from other children and across classrooms to generate comprehensive assessment reports at the end of each unit. We review and analyze this data to inform our program planning, ensuring that activities support each child's development and learning needs.

Before advancing to the next unit, we ensure that at least 80% of the children have fully understood the main concepts and objectives. If this benchmark is not achieved, we modify our teaching strategies and repeat the unit as necessary to ensure all children attain the desired understanding. In addition, the assessment data helps us identify individual learning patterns, enabling us to group children with similar interests and needs for targeted instruction. This supports personalized learning and fosters peer collaboration.

The information gathered also informs the arrangement and setup of the classroom environment, as we believe that the physical space acts as a third teacher. We adapt our environment based on assessment data to create a nurturing and responsive space that meets each child's developmental needs.

Moreover, this data-driven approach guides our monthly Teacher Training sessions. These professional development opportunities focus on enhancing our skills to better observe, assess, and support each child's growth, ensuring continuous improvement in our teaching practices.

**CLOSING GAPS & PROMOTING GROWTH**

By combining these approaches:

- We **nurture each child's unique abilities** and support holistic development.
- We ensure **all children are progressing**, addressing challenges early and providing intervention when needed.
- We create an environment where every child feels safe, inspired, and empowered to learn and grow at their own pace.

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

Through a thoughtful integration of NAEYC ethics, Reggio-inspired practices, and comprehensive assessments, our teachers create a classroom where learning is joyful, individualized, and inclusive, ensuring every child thrives without gaps in their development. **R.5.02**

Now that you understand the foundation of our program here are our values:

**All children are capable of learning**

- Families are the primary caregivers and teachers of their young children **R.5.03**
- Teachers have to know about child growth and development to create, facilitate, and build lessons for their young learners. Teachers never stop learning.
- It is crucial for teachers to work together and to work in partnership with families. There needs to be open lines for two-way communication.
- It is vital for teachers to be knowledgeable about the cultural diversity of their students, their students' families, and the communities within which their students live. This includes knowledge about cultural backgrounds, languages spoken at home, and different family structures.

- It is the teachers' responsibility to foster and create a favorable emotional climate in their classrooms
- that supports the emotional well-being of their students.
- Students need to be able to receive support from teachers for their appropriate expressions of emotions, positive and negative—joy, pleasure, and excitement as well as anger, frustration, and sadness.
- Teachers need to pay attention to how they respond to their students. Teachers should respond to their students based on the students' individual needs (for example, differing abilities, temperaments, activity levels, social development, cognition.)
- Young students learn by doing
- No physical punishment ever! No hitting, no shaking.
- Learning is more than just academic; it is gaining the ability to discover and remember new information about yourself and the world around you.
- Children can learn to be advocates of their body, space, needs, and feelings while respecting those of others.
- Understanding the value of honesty and community.
- Talk frequently with the children. Listen to them with attention and respect.
- Respond to their questions and requests—answer them with respect.
- Have meaningful and extended conversations with each child regularly.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION**

ELC hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. ELC will provide care during the hours and days agreed upon in advance. The Parent/Guardian must notify ELC in advance of any schedule changes or if the child will not attend on a scheduled day.

### **LATE ARRIVALS**

Parents agree to notify ELC via the app "Mon My Way Queue" before 8:00 am if the child will be arriving later than 8:30 am. Breakfast is served at 8:30 am. If your child is not signed in by 8:00 am, they will not be served.

### **LATE PICK-UP**

If a parent is unable to pick up their child on time, they must notify ELC in advance. If the parent fails to do so, they will be charged a late fee \$5 per minute. Parents who have not informed us of their late arrival can expect the following consequences:

- Our first attempt will be to contact all authorized guardians and pick-up persons on the child's medical release.
- If no authorized guardians or pick-up persons can be reached within 30 minutes, the local police and or Child Protective Services will be notified. Your child will be taken into their custody.
- If a child is consistently picked up late from the program, actions for dismissal may be necessary. Parents who consistently pick up their child late will receive a "Notice of Late Pick Up." If you receive three late notices, you will be dropped from enrollment.

### **DROP-OFF**

To ensure a smooth, safe, and supportive transition for all children, we have established the following drop-off policy. Please read carefully and reach out if you have any questions.

- Drop-Off Times: 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM - Children must be dropped off no later than 9:00 AM unless prior arrangements have been made. Arrivals after 9:00 AM may not be accepted to avoid disruptions to our scheduled activities.
- Drop-Off Procedure: All children must be dropped off at the front gate. A staff member will greet your child and escort them into the class. Parents/guardians are asked to say their goodbyes at the gate and not enter the facility unless they have been previously scheduled.

- For Children Who Struggle with Drop-Off - We understand that some children may experience separation anxiety or have a harder time at drop-off. If your child requires extra time and support during transitions, we kindly request that they still be dropped off within the 7:30–8:00 AM window. This time allows our staff to provide the emotional support and care needed without disrupting the rest of the group's activities. Consistency is key — regular, on-time drop-offs help children settle into their routine more easily over time.

### **TRIAL PERIOD**

There is a one-week trial period before your child is guaranteed a permanent place in ELC. This time will be used to determine if your child adapts well to the childcare program and that the program fulfills all of your child's needs.

### **HOLIDAYS AND VACATIONS**

Holidays: Care will not be provided, but payment is due on the following holidays when they occur on a day the child(ren) is/are regularly scheduled:

\*Week of July 4th \*Thanksgiving Day -Black Friday,\*Christmas Break: 23rd of December - 1st of January

**Teacher Training - school closes at 4 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. This time is critical to the state-required training that each teacher must do. We understand that this may be an inconvenience, but we appreciate your understanding and support.**

### **COMMUNICATION R.2.01 R.2.02**

Effective communication is key to any healthy relationship.

*Daily* updates on the child's activities, behavior, and progress, along with pictures and videos on our school app. We do ask that you refrain from posting any school pictures on social media to protect the other children in them.

*Bi-monthly* one-on-one meetings are offered to every family every Tuesday and Thursday. It is up to the parent to request a time and schedule the sessions. It is recommended that you attend at least three one-on-one meetings to stay informed about your child's progress.

*Monthly* Newsletters will be sent out through the school app with the months Unit Study, Vocabulary Words, ways you can join in the classroom, Menu Calendar, and Special Events.

*Annual* meeting is held every year in May. It is required that any Parents with students enrolling in the fall of that year must attend the meeting. All contracts and state forms must be resubmitted, regardless of when they were originally signed.

Pickup and drop-off are not the time to discuss anything that requires a conversation longer than 3-5 minutes. Transition times can be stressful, and our teachers are here to give your child their full attention during these times. Teachers have also been instructed never to discuss negative behavior in front of any students. Any red light actions will be recorded in the app for you to review.

*Steps that families can take to ask questions, raise concerns, or provide feedback on an ongoing basis are to contact either one of the Owners. You may do so by calling, text, DM on the school app or emailing. You may ask to scheduled a meeting or receive a phone call back. There is also a feedback drop box if you would like to submit anything anonymously. We are here to serve you. If you need anything or ever feel that our care dose not meet your standards please reach out so we can address it and correct it.,*

Owner: Melissa Whithorn  
Cell: 406-920-5110 Email: melissa@einsteinslearningcenter.com and Direct Message via app

Owner: Zen Yarnell  
Cell: 406-220-5050 Email: tinysteiny22@gmail.com and Direct Message via app

## **COMMUNICATION POLICY FOR SEPARATED OR DIVORCED PARENTS**

We are committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and neutral environment for all children and families. In cases where parents are separated or divorced, it is essential that all communication related to the child is handled appropriately and without disrupting our daycare environment.

To ensure clear and consistent communication:

- All communication between separated or divorced parents must take place through our program management software, Playground, or in a group setting with both daycare owners present.
- All meetings, including evaluations, day-to-day concerns, and sit-down discussions, must include both parents. We do not hold separate meetings or provide individual updates unless required by law.
- We do not mediate between parents or pass messages from one parent to another.
- If there is a legal custody arrangement or court order that affects pick-up, drop-off, or parental access, a copy of the official documentation must be provided to the daycare. All Parenting Plans must be handed to or sent directly to the owner. **R.9.04**

## **STANDARD RATES AND PAYMENT POLICIES**

### **ALL FUNDS ARE NON-REFUNDABLE**

- A registration fee of \$200 is required to enroll each new child.
- The childcare fees vary based on the number of days per week your child(ren) attends. Please see your contract for your exact fees.
- Please note that your fee is based on the days specified in this contract, not the days you actually attend. If you wish to make any changes, a new contract must be signed, and fees are subject to change.
- Furthermore, we cannot guarantee care for your child outside of the days and times specified in this contract.
- Payment will be made five days prior to the due date. Payments are due on the 1st of each month.
- Failure to make timely payments may result in the termination of care services.
  - Tuition is due on the 1st of each month. A 3-day grace period is allowed. After that, a \$50 late fee will be charged per day until the full balance is paid. If payment is not received by 4:00 PM on the 5th, your child will be disenrolled from the program, and the fee will continue to accrue until the balance is paid in full.
- A minimum 30-day written notice is required before permanently withdrawing a child from the program.
- We do accept the Best Beginning Scholarship
  - Students must be enrolled in a full-time spot
  - Parents are responsible for tuition until the school receives a letter from the state with the scholarship information.
  - Parents are responsible for renewing the application. If there is a lapse in coverage, parents are responsible for the full tuition.

Full Time: Monday – Friday \$1210

4 Days a week (must be consecutive) \$1080

3 Days a week (must be consecutive) \$799

Daily \$75

Extended hours 7 am - 6 pm \$200 monthly can be added as needed

We understand the financial burden early education can be, and we are here to help. If you need financial assistance at any point, please don't hesitate to contact Melissa or Zen for a personalized financial plan.

## **WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

A minimum of 30 days' written notice is required before permanently withdrawing a child from the program. This notice must be submitted in writing (either physically or via email) to the daycare director and will take effect on the date of receipt. Failure to provide 30 days' notice will result in full tuition being charged for the following month, regardless of attendance. Tuition is charged monthly, and the final month will not be prorated. Full tuition is due even if the child's last day of attendance is earlier than the final day of the month. By signing the enrollment agreement, parents/guardians agree to comply with this policy and understand it is legally binding.

## **TRANSITION EXPECTATIONS**

To support a smooth and successful move from TS to ELC, we look for children to meet key developmental milestones that help them thrive in the new classroom environment. These include:

- Independently walking into the classroom
- Following 3- to 4-step directions
- Sitting with peers during group activities
- No longer needing pacifiers or comfort items (e.g., blankets) during nap time or the school day

These readiness skills help ensure your child is set up for success in a more structured and socially interactive setting. Our team will work closely with families to support each child's progress and communicate when we see signs of readiness for this exciting next step.

Either party may terminate this agreement with written notice of 30 days. ELC reserves the right to terminate care immediately if the Parent/Guardian fails to comply with the terms of this agreement and/or if the child's behavior is not conducive to the safety and well-being of other children enrolled in the childcare program, their safety, or the safety of our staff.

## **Active Supervision Policy**

Our program is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of every child through active supervision. Active supervision is defined as the focused, intentional, and continual observation of children by educators and staff to promote a safe, engaging, and enriching environment.

Expectations for Active Supervision by Age Group:

Toddlers (1-3 years): Staff actively monitor children during exploration, guiding behavior and preventing unsafe actions while encouraging independence.

Preschool (3-5 years): Staff supervise children closely during both structured and free play, ensuring safe exploration and assisting as needed.

Key Principles of Active Supervision:

Maintain constant visual awareness of children at all times.

Use appropriate positioning to have a clear view of all children during activities.

Engage children with eye contact and verbal cues to promote safety and positive behavior.

Anticipate potential safety hazards and intervene proactively.

Consistently scan the environment to identify and address unsafe situations promptly.

By adhering to this active supervision policy, our staff ensures a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for all children to explore and learn confidently. **R.6.06**

## **ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE**

We believe in the importance of ongoing assessment to support each child's growth and development. Our assessment schedule ensures that we consistently monitor progress and share valuable insights with families throughout the year.

Assessment Schedule:

Quarter 1 (Jan. 1 – March 31): Progress Report / Quarter 2 (April 1 – June 30): DECA Assess.

Quarter 3 (July 1 – Sept. 30): Progress Report / Quarter 4 (Oct. 1 – Dec. 31): DECA Assess

Note: A DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment) Pre-Assessment is conducted during the first month of a child's enrollment or at the time of application. **R.5.02**

## **PAPERWORK AND FORMS**

All childcare participants are required to have the following paperwork in their files prior to attendance for licensing purposes.

- Childcare enrollment forms
- Emergency contact information
- Copy of child's updated immunization records
- Authorized pick-up form
- Child's health history report
- Medical treatment form/Consent for emergency medical treatment, Daycare contract

**All forms and documents must be updated yearly. Any changes to the information, including updates to addresses, phone numbers, emergency contact individuals, and/or authorized pickup individuals, should be reported to the ELC as soon as possible. All forms are available for parental inspection upon request.**

### **Confidentiality Policy**

Our program is dedicated to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all children and families enrolled. We recognize that sensitive information is entrusted to us, and we are committed to protecting it.

#### **Expectations for Confidentiality:**

**Privacy of Information:** All personal, medical, educational, and developmental information regarding children and their families will be kept confidential and shared only with authorized staff members who need the information to provide quality care and education.

**Staff Responsibilities:** Staff are expected to handle all information in a discreet manner, refrain from discussing it with unauthorized individuals, and secure any physical or digital records.

**Parent and Family Rights:** Families have the right to access their child's records and request corrections in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

**Communication:** Any conversations about a child's progress or personal information should be conducted privately and respectfully, avoiding public areas or unintended listeners.

**Disclosures:** Information will only be shared with parental consent or as required by law. In cases where abuse or neglect is suspected, staff will follow mandated reporting protocols in accordance with legal requirements.

#### **Commitment to Confidentiality:**

Our staff understands the importance of confidentiality in building trust with families and ensuring a safe, respectful environment for children. **R.9.04**

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

The childcare provider should be notified in writing as soon as possible of any changes to address, phone numbers, emergency contacts, school information, or any other essential details.

**PARENTS' GOING SUPPLIES**

ELC Only Change of Clothes Seasonal Outdoor Gear Sunscreen / Bug Spray - Labeled Over-the-Counter Medications - Labeled Diapers & Wipes	TS only Change of Clothes Seasonal Outdoor Gear Sunscreen / Bug Spray Over-the-Counter Medications - Labeled Diapers & Wipes Formula / Breast Milk - Labeled Bottles / Sippy Cup - Labeled
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**SUPPLIES REQUIRED AT ENROLLMENT AND EVERY AUGUST.**

Gallon of Glue / Construction paper / Playdough / Wipes / Tissues / 4 rechargeable AA Batteries / 4 rechargeable AAA Batteries

**Family Involvement in Our Program**

ELC welcomes and encourages families to join classroom activities, share special skills or cultural traditions, attend family events, and volunteer in various capacities. Families are invited to contribute to curriculum planning by sharing their child's interests and providing feedback during conferences and meetings. We also provide regular updates through newsletters, our communication app, and parent-teacher conferences to keep families informed and engaged. By fostering strong family partnerships, we create a supportive and enriched learning environment where each child can thrive. **R.2.03**

**ELC WILL PROVIDE**

The ELC will provide the following:

Age-appropriate activities and educational materials / A safe and clean environment for the child  
 Nutritious: Breakfast, Lunch, and Afternoon Snack / Supervision and care of the child during agreed-upon hours / Water Bottle / Napping Blanket / Inside Slippers

**SIGN-IN AND SIGN-OUT PROCEDURE**

To ensure the safety and security of the children at ELC, every individual dropping off or picking up a child must sign in through our school app. Failure to comply with this requirement will incur a \$5 late fee and may lead to termination from ELC.

- It is essential to keep ELC informed of any changes to the list of authorized or unauthorized individuals who are permitted to pick up items.
- Once a child has been signed out, even if they are still on the school premises, they are no longer under the care of ELC.

**AUTHORIZED PERSONS FOR PICK-UP**

Children can only be picked up by their parent or guardian, or an individual who has been previously authorized by the parent or guardian and registered on the emergency card. ID verification will be required.

Suppose you would like to add individuals to the list of authorized sign-in or pickup personnel for your child. In that case, we require the following information: the person's full legal name, phone number, and their relationship to the child. To ensure the safety of the children, our staff is mandated to ask for photo identification from any person picking up your child(ren) whom they do not recognize. Therefore, always have your picture identification with you when picking up your child(ren) from ELC. Please note that ELC will only release your child(ren) to individuals listed on the authorized form, and verbal permission over the phone is not sufficient to allow someone not on the pick-up list to take your child.

**UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS FOR PICK-UP**

At our site, any person who is not authorized to pick up a child must have a restraining or court order on file. Furthermore, we require all child custody papers and visitation schedules to be on record at ELC. In the absence of a court order stating otherwise, ELC is obligated by law to allow the child(ren) to leave with either parent.

**TV POLICY**

Television and videos are used only for educational content and movement activities, such as dance and exercise programs that encourage physical activity and learning. On special occasions—such as holidays, celebrations, or other significant events—we may show age-appropriate 30-minute programs that are both fun and suitable for young children. These instances are limited and are always supervised by staff.

**POTTY TRAINING AND DIAPER CHANGING**

*Students in diapers- Diapers are changed every two hours. Parents are responsible for keeping their children stocked with diapers, wipes, and a change of clothes. If we have to use a school diaper, there is a \$5 fee per diaper. We do our last diaper change at 4pm. Once a Parent or approved pick-up is on site, they must change their child's diaper. However, if we have the staff and assistance is needed, we are more than willing to help if requested, ensuring you that your child's needs are our priority.*

**POTTY TRAINING**

Children must be in underwear at all times. Children must be able to take off their pants and underwear independently. After the age of 3, we will no longer assist with wiping, as this is a developmental skill they need to learn. After the age of 4, if a child has an accident, we will instruct them on how to clean themselves up and change their clothes, but again, this is a skill they need to learn. We are committed to following the reward method and vocabulary you use at home to help create a cohesive experience. Please ensure the school has extra clothing and any rewards you would like us to use, as your involvement is crucial to your child's development.

**BATHROOM POLICY**

To ensure the safety of the children, our staff will accompany groups of two or more children to the bathroom. They will maintain visual observation of the children as they enter and exit the restroom while ensuring that they can hear the children. Staff will not be left alone with any child in the bathroom. In case of an accident, we have a changing table available, and we request that children have a change of clothes with them at all times while at ELC.

**REST PERIOD**

Our childcare facility understands the importance of rest and quiet time for children and ensures they have daily opportunities for it. To provide a comfortable napping experience, each child will be provided with a napping cot or mat. We ensure that napping cots are disinfected daily, and blankets are provided and washed weekly. Children will not be required to stay in the napping area longer than the normal scheduled nap time. Naps are planned from noon to 2 pm; we do request that there are no pick-ups or drop-offs during this time.

**ILLNESS IN CLASS**

If a child falls ill during the day, they will be isolated from other children until a parent or authorized individual arrives to pick them up. The parent or authorized person will be promptly informed via phone that the child is unwell and must be picked up from ELC within an hour. **R.6.01**

**ILLNESS, INJURY, OR EMERGENCIES**

If a child becomes ill or injured, including dental issues, at ELC, the staff will follow established guidelines for care, which include the following: **R.6.01**

- If the child becomes ill or sustains an injury more serious than a minor cut or scratch, the parent or guardian will be immediately notified.
- The parent or guardian will receive a written report of the illness or injury, including the care provided.
- Center staff will follow specific instructions from the parent or guardian over the phone regarding the necessary action to be taken. Suppose the parent or guardian is unavailable and the illness or injury warrants immediate medical attention. In that case, the medical professional or hospital closest to the school will be used, taking into consideration the preferences and the extent of the illness or injury, as well as the distance involved.
- If the child is ill and requires isolation, they will be separated until the parent or authorized person removes them from ELC.
- In case of a life-threatening emergency, the Emergency Medical System (911) will be used.

If your child(ren) presents any of the following, please keep the child at home:**R.6.01**

- **Fever of 100+ degrees:** stay home for 24 hours after the fever breaks, unless fever is paired with Strep, Influenza, Noro, RSV, or a virus that mimics those mentioned. These viruses require more time out due to contagious periods.
- **Persistent diarrhea**—24 hours free from diarrhea upon return
- **Irregular breathing**—please take your child to the doctor and return when able to function as normal with the group.
- **Unusual rashes/blisters** – rash/blisters need to be clear or scabbed and healing before return
- **Vomiting** – 24 hours after the last vomit
- **Persistent and/or excessive crying**—please see doctor for possible ear infection, or keep child home to rest and return the following day
- **Excessive drowsiness**—please keep the child home to rest
- **Lice**—we have a nit-free policy. Please keep the child home for 48 hours after the first treatment, comb for nits daily, and treat again in 5-7 days. Hair checks will be done throughout the day.
- **Earache**—please take the child to the doctor for a possible ear infection, and stay home for 24 hours to rest.
- **Strep throat**—please keep your child home until at least 48 hours after the first dose of antibiotics.
- **Pink eye**—please keep the child home for 24 hours after drops have started, **and the eyes need to be clear of goop before returning to daycare.** You will be sent home for goopy eyes due to contagion.
- **Hand Foot and Mouth**—your child will get a fever and feel better, then 3 days later break out in a rash or blisters in all or some of the following areas: mouth, throat, hands, bottom, stomach, and/or feet. Please stay home for 4 days with fever-free for 1 day/and until all sores are scabbed over. Your child is contagious and could get an infection if the sores are open or blistered. HFM is painful, and the only treatment is pain management.
- **Croup**—this is very contagious for 4-7 days. Please stay home for 3-4 days, depending on the persistence of cough symptoms.
- **RSV**—please stay home for 4-7 days due to the contagion period
- **Norovirus**—please stay home for 4 days due to the contagion period
- **Influenza**—please keep the child home for 4-7 days, depending on the child and severity of symptoms.

*In the event that four or more children are diagnosed with the same illness, ELC/TS reserves the right to extend the required stay-at-home period in order to prevent a potential outbreak.*

### **DAILY HEALTH CHECK**

The child's teacher conducts a daily health inspection to check for any visible signs of illness. We do not accept sick children into ELC. If a child has been ill, they must wait for at least 24 hours after being symptom-free before returning. A doctor's permission will be necessary for children with communicable diseases, such as chickenpox, impetigo, strep throat, head lice, measles, etc., to return to ELC. Please inform ELC if your child contracts a contagious illness so that we can notify other parents. Suppose a child contracts a disease that must be reported to the Commission for Health Services. In that case, ELC Director will inform the local Health Department and take appropriate preventative measures as directed by the Park County Department of Public Health.

### **MEDICATIONS**

During program hours, any medications that a child needs must meet the following requirements:

- They should be in their original bottle, with a clear label indicating the child's name, the physician's name, the drug name, and the dosage information.
- The dosage amounts and times must be appropriate for the child's age.
- The parent must complete and sign a medication authorization form, which should also be provided.
- Medications must be picked up and taken home by the parent each day and then returned to ELC.
- Over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin and cough medication, will not be administered unless written instructions and dosage information are provided by the child's physician. Medications should not be left in the child's cubby.

### **VACCINATIONS**

ELC requires Parent/Guardian to keep the child's vaccines updated and provide the daycare with a copy of the child's updated immunization record. Your child cannot be

### **FOOD SERVICE**

Breakfast Policy - If your child is to be served breakfast at the school, you must sign your child in, and they must be inside the building by 8:00 AM. This ensures they have enough time to eat and transition smoothly into the day's routine. Children arriving after 8:00 AM will not be served breakfast, so please plan accordingly.

Our center is committed to providing safe and nutritious food to meet the needs of the children. We provide Breakfast at 8:30 am, Lunch at 11:30 am, and a snack at 2:00 pm. To ensure this, we have established the following guidelines:

- ELC will provide meals.
- Snacks will be available between meals and will include servings from at least two of the four major food groups.
- Menus will be posted one week in advance and will be in writing.
- Pesticides and other toxic substances will not be stored in the same area as food.
- Soaps and cleaning products will be stored in a locked container away from food sources.
- The kitchen and food areas will be kept clean. All food will be protected against contamination.
- The food served at the facility meets the nutritional guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the Child Care Food Program.

### **FOOD ALLERGIES**

Children with identified and documented food restrictions for health reasons will be provided with alternate meals. To ensure that the child's specific needs are met, their physician must identify the food restrictions (allergies).

### **DRESS CODE**

Children need to wear clothing appropriate for their environment and activities. In cold weather, it is essential to dress them in warm clothes, such as a coat, hat, and socks (even with sandals), to keep them comfortable. As children engage in messy activities like painting, playing on grass, and using chalk, it is required to label all personal items with their names. All children out of diapers are required to wear underwear every day. Parents should provide spare clothes for their children and take home any soiled garments. It is recommended to check the child's cubby regularly and ensure that spare clothes are always available. Additionally, parents are encouraged to clear their child's cubby of any clutter by taking home their projects daily.

- Dress children in weather-appropriate clothing each day, as we go outside regularly.
- If a child is not in diapers or pull-ups, they must wear underwear daily.
- **Socks are required every day, regardless of the type of shoe worn (including sandals).**
- No hats or hoods indoors to support school-readiness habits.

### **PERSONAL TOYS**

ELC offers toys and games for the children to play with. Bringing personal toys from home can lead to problems such as breakage or loss. To avoid such issues, we kindly request that parents do not allow their children to bring personal items from home unless it is for a special show-and-tell day at school. In such instances, the teacher will notify the parents in advance and request the child to bring the item to school.

### **GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE POLICY**

We view discipline as an opportunity for growth and learning. Our center employs various techniques to help children resolve conflicts. The methods we use depend on the child's age and the circumstances surrounding the situation. Our teachers prioritize the development of problem-solving skills and an internalized sense of right and wrong in their approach. All parties, including parents, teachers, and ELC director, agree to communicate effectively and attempt to resolve any issues or concerns that may arise. The best interest of the child will always be the primary consideration in decision-making.

Children who exhibit behavior that endangers others will be supervised separately from the other children, to provide guidance and not punishment. A teacher will help the child verbally process the issue, while another teacher will remain nearby to ensure the child's safety and assist in regaining composure. The discipline approach will be positive, constructive, and prompt, and will not involve humiliation, shame, fear, physical punishment, or verbal abuse by any staff member.

Suppose dangerous behavior continues or significantly disrupts the program. In that case, ELC will work with the child's family to find a solution, including referral for outside services or potential dismissal from the program.

### **INSPECTION AUTHORITY**

The Montana Child Care Licensing Department has the power to inspect any childcare facility without prior notice. During such inspections, the Department has the authority to interview children and staff, as well as audit and examine any child or Childcare Center records without seeking prior consent.

### **SIGNS OF NEGLECT**

The law requires us to report any sign of neglect or abuse to any child under our care. We will comply with this law in all aspects as they are related to the safety and well-being of the children in our care.

## **BITING POLICY**

We understand that biting is a significant concern and take measures to minimize this behavior. Our staff members are trained to identify triggers and prevent and reduce biting incidents. While biting is not an acceptable behavior, we recognize that it is common among young children during their early developmental stages. Children tend to explore through their senses, including orally, and may become frustrated due to communication difficulties, leading to impulsive biting. If your child is bitten or bites another child, an incident report will be provided to you and the other child's parents. Our office staff will discuss the report with you while maintaining confidentiality. We believe that being aware of potential issues and having a plan of action in place can help manage the situation when biting occurs in a group setting. [R.9.04](#)

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of families. We will not disclose any confidential information or intrude into family life. The children's records will be kept confidential and will only be accessible to family members, program personnel, and consultants who are bound by a duty of confidentiality. In cases of abuse or neglect, we may need to disclose information without familial consent. [R.9.04](#)

## **DAMAGES**

Parents/guardians will be responsible for any damages (excluding normal wear and tear on toys) caused by their child to the childcare provider's property or belongings during their child's attendance at the childcare services.

## **NO LOITERING OR IDLING VEHICLE POLICY**

To ensure the safety of our community, reduce environmental impact, and maintain smooth traffic flow, we strictly enforce a No Loitering and No Idling Vehicle Policy on our premises. Visitors are expected to promptly drop off or pick up individuals and exit the property. Congregating in parking areas or near entrances is not permitted unless otherwise authorized. This helps us maintain a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. [A.6.07](#)

## **IDLING VEHICLES**

For health, environmental, and safety reasons, all vehicles must be turned off if parked for more than 30 seconds. Engine idling contributes to air pollution and unnecessary fuel use, and poses a risk to children and other pedestrians in the area. [A.6.07](#)

## **NON-SMOKING ENVIRONMENT**

ELC strictly prohibits smoking within its premises. This includes all areas, such as the driveway, yard, and planters. We ask all individuals to refrain from smoking on the premises.

## **LEAD POISONING PREVENTION**

Our childcare center is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children in our care. We recognize that lead poisoning is a significant threat to children's health and will take all necessary steps to prevent lead exposure in our facility.

Lead Poisoning Prevention Procedures:

- **Regular Inspection of Facilities:** Our childcare center will conduct regular inspections of our facilities, including paint, water, and soil, to identify and eliminate any potential sources of lead. We will use a certified inspector to conduct the inspections and take appropriate action based on their recommendations.
- **Education and Awareness:** We will provide our staff, parents, and caregivers with information on lead poisoning and how to prevent it. We will ensure that our staff is trained in identifying the symptoms of lead poisoning and the appropriate steps to take if they suspect a child has been exposed to lead.
- **Safe Water and Food Practices:** We will test the water in our facility for lead levels and take appropriate measures if lead is detected. We will use lead-free pipes and plumbing fixtures in our

facilities, and our staff will be trained to follow safe food practices to prevent contamination from lead.

- Cleaning and Maintenance: We will implement a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule for our facilities, including dusting and vacuuming, to prevent lead dust buildup. Our staff will use lead-safe cleaning products and follow safe cleaning practices to prevent the spread of lead.
- Response to Identified Lead Hazards: If a lead hazard is identified in our facility, we will take immediate action to eliminate the hazard and notify all affected parties. We will work with qualified professionals to ensure that the hazard is remediated promptly and effectively.
- Per the American Red Cross, our center Director will call the Emergency Montana Poison Control Center at 1 (800) 222-1222 when a child is suspected of having ingested any poisonous or toxic substance.

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR RELOCATING CHILDREN**

To ensure the safety of all participants, monthly fire and emergency disaster drills are scheduled at ELC. In case of an actual emergency, parents will be notified about their child's well-being as soon as possible. Suppose the site needs to be evacuated due to an emergency. In that case, the children will be taken by foot to the location listed on the "Emergency Care and Disaster Plan," which is posted on the Parent Board and in each classroom. During fire drills or practices, children will gather at the designated location where attendance will be taken, and the time taken to evacuate will be recorded. We will exit through the doors and the front gate, and children will wait with an adult in front of the childcare facility, away from any danger, or cross the street cautiously to the park next to the building. **A.6.19**

### **FIRST AID KIT**

The childcare facility keeps a first aid kit in the office and on the playground. Additionally, each teacher is provided with a simple first aid kit for minor injuries that do not require medical attention. If a child sustains a simple injury, a supervising teacher or the Director will provide simple first aid, complete an incident/injury report, and file it in the child's folder. The parent will receive a copy of this report. All regular staff members have received training in Basic First Aid and CPR.

### **INHALERS AND EPIPENS**

Our goal is to provide a safe and healthy environment for all children, including those who require medication for asthma or severe allergic reactions.

- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing the inhaler or EpiPen to ELC in its original packaging with the child's name and medication instructions clearly labeled.
- EIC will store the medication in a secure location that is easily accessible to staff in case of an emergency.
- Parents or guardians must complete and sign a medication authorization form for each inhaler or EpiPen.
- Staff members will be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of an asthma attack or severe allergic reaction and to administer medication as needed.
- If a child experiences an asthma attack or severe allergic reaction, a staff member will immediately administer the inhaler or EpiPen as directed by the child's physician.
- The child's parents or guardians will be notified as soon as possible in the event of an emergency.
- After administering medication, the staff member will document the time, dosage, and any observed side effects.
- Any unused medication will be returned to the child's parent/guardian at the end of the day.
- Suppose a child's condition requires the use of an inhaler or an EpiPen on a regular basis. In that case, the child's parents or guardians must provide a new, unexpired medication when the current supply runs out.

- Staff members will follow the instructions on the medication authorization form and will not administer medication in excess of the prescribed dosage or frequency.

### **LIABILITY**

The Childcare Provider is not liable for any injuries or damages that may occur while the child is under their care. The Parent/Guardian is responsible for any damages caused by the child while under the care of the Childcare Provider.

### **Termination of Care:**

Either party may terminate this agreement with written notice of 30 days. ELC reserves the right to terminate care immediately if the Parent/Guardian fails to comply with the terms of this agreement and/or if the child's behavior is not conducive to the safety and well-being of other children enrolled in the childcare program, their own safety, or the safety of our staff.

### **COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Big Brother / Sister: 105 South 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Livingston 406-222-1930

Provides one-on-one mentorship for children facing adversity, fostering strong, professionally supported relationships to help them succeed. BBBS partners with parents, volunteers, and community programs to provide meaningful support.

DPHHS: 1-866-820-5734

Federally mandated protective services for children at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Investigates allegations and works with courts, law enforcement, and community service providers to ensure children's safety and well-being.

Services include:

- Child abuse and neglect investigations
- Foster parent training and licensing
- Home studies and resource referrals
- Family preservation and reunification support

Learning Partners: 112 West Lewis St., Livingston 406-823-6356

A home visiting educational program designed to support early childhood development, learning, and health. This program empowers parents and caregivers to become self-reliant and actively engage in their child's growth.

Youth Dynamics: 817 W. Park St., Livingston 406-548-6607

Offers a wide range of strength-based, client-centered mental health services to children and families.

Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch: 5237 Highway 89, Livingston 406-222-6490

A mental health center for children, offering community-based services and residential treatment for youth struggling with emotional regulation and behavioral challenges.

Livingston office services include:

- Therapeutic Youth Mentoring
- Home Support Services
- Chemical Dependency Counseling
- Case Management & Psychological Testing
- Therapeutic Foster Care
- Outpatient Therapy

## **R.2.05**

**Evacuation:** In case of the need to evacuate our site, the following procedures will be followed:

**Evacuation Routes / Exits**

Little E.

A warning whistle is worn by each owner will be blown 3 times in the case of an emergency.

In the event of an evacuation, the children will be relocated as a group, walking in two lines with our line belt. The childcare facility has three exits, one in the front, the back and one in the middle.

The emergency backpack is stationed near the middle door and will be grabbed by the owner.

If evacuation through the windows becomes necessary, children will be evacuated first, and any available items will be used to lower them to the ground safely.

**Once the children are safely out of the building a head count will be done at our first check point, 332 South Main St.**

**Evacuating Routes / Exits**

Teeny Steinys

A warning whistle is warn by each owner will be blown 3 times in the case of an emergency.

All children will be put into a wagon and exited through the closes exit, exits are located at the front and back of the building.

If evacuation through the windows becomes necessary, children will be evacuated first, and any available items will be used to lower them safely to the ground.

**Once the children are safely out of the building, a head count will be done at our first checkpoint, 332 South Main St.**

**Notification**

After all the children have been successfully evacuated to a safe location, the childcare facility will immediately contact 911 for emergency assistance. Additionally, parents or guardians will be promptly notified of the evacuation.

**Emergency Kits / Information**

Whenever feasible, emergency kits will be brought along during an evacuation, including a binder and smartphone containing the emergency contact details of each child.

**At 332 S Main, each child will have a strip of tape placed on their back with the school's name and the owner's cell phone number.**

**Evacuation Sites**

**Neighborhood (e.g., for fire): Name of**

**Location: Lyons Main**

**Contact Name: Tara Lyons**

**Address: 219 S Main St Livingston, MT 59047 Phone**

**Number: (406) 222-0075**

**Out-of-neighborhood (e.g., explosion, flooding): Name of**

**Location: Public Library**

**Contact Name: Anyone**

**Address: 228 W Callender Livingston, MT 59047 Phone Number:**

**(406) 222-0862**

### Transportation to Evacuation Locations

- Children will be pushed in portable play yards or strollers to the neighborhood evacuation site and, weather permitting, to the out-of-neighborhood evacuation location.
- Children will be driven in a personal vehicle, with three car seats, to the out-of-town location.

**Shelter-in-Place:** In case of the need to stay put due to a tornado or notification from authorities, the following procedures will be followed:

**Parent Reunification:** In the event of an evacuation or if parents/guardians are unable to access their children, the following protocols will be implemented to swiftly reunite children with their respective parents/guardians (or other individuals authorized by the parent/guardian) as soon as it is deemed safe to do so.

<b>Location</b>	<p>ELC - Children will be taken to the office.</p> <p>TS - Children will be taken to the infant nap room.</p>
<b>Emergency Supplies</b>	<p>Emergency kits with food (including formula), toys, and water are stored in both the office and the napping room.</p> <p>A first aid kit is stored in both shelter rooms.</p> <p>A battery-powered radio and NOAA radio is stored with the emergency supplies.</p> <p>A cell phone will be brought to the room.</p> <p>Emergency contact binder, is stored with supplies.</p> <p>Supplies for sealing the room are stored in the room.</p>
<b>Notification</b>	<p>Parents/guardians will be notified by phone and CMR once the immediate threat has passed.</p>
<b>Notification</b>	<p>Parents/guardians are provided: Information on the evacuation site.</p> <p>Contact information: owner's cell phone and business phone number and CMR.</p> <p>Parent/guardian contact numbers are stored in the binder and CMR. Kept in emergency kits.</p>
<b>Release</b>	<p>Children will only be released to contacts listed on the child's form with proper identification. <a href="#">A.6.19</a></p>