

## ***New Canaan Nature Center Contact Information***

**NCNC Main Number:** 203-966-9577

**NCNC website:** [www.newcanaannature.org](http://www.newcanaannature.org)

**Mailing address:** 144 Oenoke Ridge, New Canaan, CT 06840

\*Urgent messages, including changes in pickup plans, can be delivered by telephone or email. Messages should be left with Director of Environmental Education, Michelle Hips, at ext. 1042, or [mhips@newcanaannature.org](mailto:mhips@newcanaannature.org). You can also try the Visitor Center Front Desk at ext. 1010.

### **I. Philosophy & Objectives**

The New Canaan Nature Center After School Program provides children in grades K-2 with quality care during after school hours. The purpose of our new STEAM afterschool program is to allow children to explore the forests, fields, and ponds of the New Canaan Nature Center, while creating hypotheses, conducting experiments, and participating in hands-on collaborative learning. Children will delve into fun and engaging weekly themes while exploring the natural world. Program includes: snack time, outdoor free play (whenever possible), sustainable STEAM activities, and homework time.

### **II. Enrollment**

Registration for our After School Program is first come, first served **for students in grades K-2**. Programming is available for 2, 3, 4, or 5 day per week. Please see our website for our program dates and registration information.

Current New Canaan Nature Center After School Program participant families and Nature Center Members will have access to special early registration.

To register for a session, a \$250, non-refundable deposit is required. All registration forms will be available online or emailed to parents before the program start dates.

#### **Request for Additional Days**

If you would like your child to attend the program on a day that he/she is not normally registered, please contact the Director of Environmental Education to see if we can accommodate your needs. A written request 1 week prior to the requested date should be executed. If space is available, the additional fee will be \$50 per day.

#### **Revision of Enrollment Days**

If you would like to change your days per week of programming, please contact the Director of Environmental Education to see if we can accommodate your needs. A written request 2 weeks prior to the requested date of change should be executed. A processing fee may be required.

### **Withdrawal From Program**

A written notice must be received by the Director of Environmental Education at least two weeks prior to the date of withdrawal in order to receive a prorated refund. A processing fee may apply.

At any time, if the staff feels that a child's enrollment is detrimental to the health/safety or progress of himself/herself or other children, and withdrawal is deemed necessary, a pro-rated refund of the remaining tuition will be returned to the parent if applicable.

### **III. Tuition and Billing**

Please see our website for current tuition rates.

#### **Billing and Payment Policy**

Tuition and deposit are required at the time of registration. A payment plan of 3 installments is available with an ACH draft or a Credit Card payment. Credit card processing fees of 3% will apply. A form will be provided for this option.

Additional Fees such as Finder's Fee (see description to follow), Insufficient Funds Fee, and Processing Fees may be assessed in such situations.

Billing concerns should be addressed to the Registrar.

**Note:** Tuition is required, regardless of absence, due to illness or personal vacation. Public school vacation weeks have been factored out of the annual tuition payment.

### **IV. Hours of Operation & General Procedures**

#### **Hours of Care**

The New Canaan Nature Center After School Program follows the New Canaan Public School calendar. The program operates every regular school day from school dismissal until 5:45 PM. In New Canaan, children are picked up from their school (public elementary schools) by the bus company contracted by the New Canaan Public School and brought to the New Canaan Nature Center.

Early pick-ups may be arranged, however our staffing requirements remain the same, therefore, full payment of each session is required.

#### **Absence Procedure**

For absence notification for the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program, please call or email the Director of Environmental Education or the Visitor Center Front Desk. Please call or email before 11:00 AM when absence is anticipated on a child's scheduled day. When calling and leaving a message, be sure to speak slowly and:

1. Indicate you are calling for the NCNC After School Program

2. State: The date / your full name / your child's full name.
3. Record your message.
4. Leave a phone number where you may be easily reached on that day.

There will be no refunds or make up days due to absence.

### **"Finder's Fee"**

In cases when a child does not arrive at the New Canaan Nature Center on their scheduled day, and the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program staff has not been informed of their absence, the child is classified as a "missing child" per state licensing guidelines.

Verifying the safety and location of "missing children" takes a considerable amount of time. The safety of each child is of utmost importance to us, and the absence procedures must be followed. Parents will be charged a "Finder's Fee" of \$20.00 on any occasion that the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program staff have not been notified of a child's absence on their scheduled day.

### **Pick-Up Procedure**

The New Canaan Nature Center After School Program day ends at 5:45 PM. All children must be picked up by that time, and signed out on the appropriate forms, printing your name and time of departure. Only authorized persons, as stated on your "Pick-Up/Emergency Contacts" form may sign out and pick-up your child. If at any time you intend for an individual who is not on your "Pick-Up/Emergency Contact" form, to pick up your child, a written note must be provided to the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program staff in order for us to release your child. Authorized persons will be asked to show photo identification before a child is released to him/her.

### **Late Pick-Up Policy**

If possible, as a courtesy, please let us know if you anticipate being late on any given day by calling the Visitor Center Front Desk. Parents/guardians who are consistently late may be requested to find another program which better meets their schedule needs.

Children remaining on the premises 15 minutes past the end of class will be brought to the Visitor Center for pick-up. Children will always be supervised and cared for by our staff.

When an hour has lapsed and a child is not picked up as planned and all emergency contacts have been called, the local police department will be notified.

### **Early Dismissal from School**

For the 2022-2023 school year, on days when the public schools have early dismissal, the program will have revised operating hours. More information will be emailed to families at the start of each program session.

## **Vacation Days**

During most of the public school vacation weeks, the New Canaan Nature Center offers a Vacation Break Program.

The Vacation Break Program is not part of the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program. The New Canaan Nature Center After School Program tuition does not include payment for public school vacation weeks when both the public schools and New Canaan Nature Center After School Program are closed.

New Canaan Nature Center After School Program participants receive information about the Vacation Break Program prior to the general public.

There will be no programs, New Canaan Nature Center After School Program or Vacation Break Programs, on the following days\*: Labor Day, Thanksgiving day + the day after Thanksgiving day, Christmas + December school vacation, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, and Memorial Day.

\*Schedule subject to change due to school schedule, weather conditions, etc.

## **School Closings**

If the New Canaan Public Schools are closed, due to weather, the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program will be canceled.

If the New Canaan Public Schools dismiss the students from school early, due to weather, the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program will NOT run and students will not be transported to the Nature Center at dismissal time.

If the scheduled children have already arrived at the New Canaan Nature Center from their respective schools, and an early shut down of the facility is deemed necessary, parents will be contacted to come and pick up the child by a designated time.

The New Canaan Nature Center After School Program does not make up snow days and refunds are not granted for the above conditions or any forces of nature beyond the Nature Center's control.

## **V. Medical and General Information**

According to Connecticut State Day Care Regulations, we are required to have two current forms on file at all times for every student or else a religious or medical exemption form. **These forms must be handed in prior to the first day of the After School Program as they are mandatory for your child to attend our program.**

1. The Emergency Contact Form: This form provides NCNC Staff with contact names and numbers in case of emergency. Please keep NCNC Staff updated with any changes to this information.

2. The Medical Health Form: this form must show that your child has had a complete physical exam within the past year and indicate that he/she has had all the required immunizations (or a form indicating medical or religious exemptions).

3. Pertinent information from this paperwork is collected in a student database detailing relevant expiration dates for paperwork and medications. As paperwork expires, parents receive reminders that the forms must be updated. The actual documents are filed by class in binders that stay with the class at all times, including during outdoor times. It is our goal that teachers always have the students' health and safety information on hand in case of an emergency. All health and safety information is confidential, however accessible to teachers and administrators in the event that parents need to be contacted or in an emergency. Parents also have the right to see their own paperwork, however other students' paperwork is confidential. State Licensing Inspectors have the right to check that all paperwork is current and that the paperwork is approved by the state.

4. Medication Administration Policies: NCNC will only administer medications that have been submitted with the proper paperwork and physician signature. Examples of medication that we will administer include emergency medications such as Epi Pens, Benadryl, Inhalers, Insulin, and other lifesaving medicines. All of these must be submitted to us in accordance with the Office of Early Education requirements.

Please see the Director of Environmental Education regarding special situations or if you have any questions.

## **VI. About the Program**

### **Snack**

Snack time will be provided daily. We ask that all parents please provide a nutritious snack from home for their child (but please no peanut or tree nuts, as NCNC is a nut-aware facility). Additionally, we request that any snacks be packed in reusable containers with as little disposable wrapping as possible.

Please be mindful of children with food allergies in your child's class, and make every effort to avoid snacks with known allergens in them. Your teachers will tell parents in your class which foods to avoid.

### **Daily Nature STEAM Activity**

All New Canaan Nature Center After School participants will enjoy a daily 30-60 minute nature STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) activity with a New Canaan Nature Center Naturalist.

### **Homework Assistance**

Monday through Friday, a quiet time is set aside for all children to do homework. We encourage all children to do their homework, and we provide staff assistance and guidance when needed. We also suggest that your child pack a book each day for quiet reading during Homework Time if there is no homework assigned by their teachers.

The New Canaan Nature Center is not responsible for your child's education, completion of assignments, or understanding of their subject matter.

### **Communications**

Monthly newsletter, reminders, invitations, etc. will inform parents of up-coming events and dates. All New Canaan Nature Center After School Program communications will be done via email.

### **Birthdays**

Birthday celebrations are important to children, and we love to share them too! The parent should check with the Director of Environmental Education if any special plans are desired.

## **VII. SPECIAL PLANS & PROCEDURES**

### **PLAN FOR THE SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN**

There will always be adequate numbers of staff on hand, to maintain the required state ratio of one to ten and to safely and responsibly supervise the children.

#### **INDOOR TIME**

When indoors, the children will be divided into small groups (15 or less) with two staff members, to reinforce a more relaxed and low key environment.

Routines will be adhered to whenever possible, however teachers will be flexible in changing activities when children lose interest in one activity and move on to another.

Special activities will be planned and room arrangements will be reflected in the schedule to avoid confusion on part of children or staff dealing with them.

#### **OUTDOOR TIME**

When outdoors, our small groups may combine for free play time or STEAM activities. There will always be adequate numbers of staff on hand, to maintain the required state ratio of one to ten and to safely and responsibly supervise the children.

Children will go outdoors at least once daily and, therefore, should be dressed for active outdoor play, in washable and comfortable clothes. One of the most important parts of our program is our daily exploration outside on the Nature Center's trails & grounds. These expeditions take place in all kinds of weather, including rain and snow.

For rainy days, a raincoat with a hat or hood is essential. Waterproof boots are also recommended.

For colder (and/or snowy) days, snow pants, boots, a warm jacket, mittens or gloves, and a hat will be needed.

Sturdy sneakers or hiking shoes are also recommended (please no flip-flops, sandals, or crocs), as is packing a change of clothes.

## **CARING FOR A SICK CHILD**

### **ILLNESS**

Please do not send your child to the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program if he/she shows any signs of illness or seems overly tired. A day of caution at the beginning may forestall a more lengthy illness. When your child will be absent, please call our Director of Environmental Education or the Visitor Center Front Desk.

**In cases of common childhood disease (i.e., chicken pox, strep, conjunctivitis, lice, pink eye, impetigo, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, fifth disease, etc.) please call us at once. When there has been such an exposure at the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program, we promptly notify all parents, with details about symptoms and incubation periods, etc., as appropriate, excluding the identity of the child. Please be on the look-out for early signs and symptoms. The sooner we catch an illness, the easier it is to prevent it from spreading in school.** All sick time policies and procedures apply to staff as well as children.

Your child should not come to the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program if:

- Your child has a temperature over 99.6 degrees. Must be fever free for 24 hours before returning.
- Your child is vomiting or feels nauseous. Must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning.
- Your child has a cough that cannot be subdued.
- Your child has had a sore throat for 3 days and it hasn't improved. Must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning.
- Your child has yellow or green phlegm or nasal discharge.
- Your child goes to bed with a stomach ache and/or wakes up with a stomach ache.

\*Remember that NCNC staff are not permitted to administer prescription or over the counter medications without written permission from a doctor.

If your child becomes sick while at the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program, we will notify you as soon as possible to discuss early pick-up. If a parent cannot be reached, we will call the names listed on your emergency contacts form. If your child comes down with a contagious disease (i.e., chicken pox, conjunctivitis, lice, etc.), it is our policy to notify the other parents in your class that they and their child may have been exposed to the disease. This also applies to staff members.

If no adult can be reached to pick-up the sick child, and the staff believe that the child is contagious, the child will be made to feel comfortable by offering a warm, quiet spot to sit, until an authorized caregiver arrives for pick-up.

If the family of a sick child disagrees with any of these policies, they may consult with our nurse or physician consultants.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

If a parent in the New Canaan Nature Center After School Program has a concern, a conference should be set up with the parent(s) and the teacher(s) involved. If the parent/teacher conference does not solve the problem, another conference will be set up with the parent(s), the teachers, and the Director of Environmental Education. If the problem still persists, the Executive Director can be called in to meet with the parents, teachers and the Director of Environmental Education. A meeting with members of the Board of Trustees of the New Canaan Nature Center and the parties involved would be the final recourse.

## **SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

In addition to nurturing your child's growth and development, the safety of your child is our highest priority. Our standard safety practices include but are not limited to:

- Two staff members will be present with each group of children at all times
- We are a "nut aware" campus and ask that all families avoid bringing food with tree nuts as ingredients onto campus
- All our staff members hold current training in first aid, CPR and EpiPen response
- We are in constant radio contact with our New Canaan Nature Center After School Program staff, even when they are out exploring our campus with the children
- We regularly practice and improve our emergency response procedures
- We have a registered nurse on call and available to us at all times for further consultation and guidance
- Building security: After drop-off, staff will lock the outside classroom doors each day. Visitors or workmen are asked to register at the Visitor Center Front Desk and get



authorization before entering any of the After School classes. All other volunteers are asked to sign in and out in the classroom visitor/substitute/volunteer notebook.

- New Canaan Nature Center After School Program staff are expected to constantly be aware of equipment where injury could occur. In the classroom this includes all play structures and tables. In the outdoor play area it includes natural objects such as tree stumps and on the natural structures in the Children's Play Garden. One staff member is always assigned to be a spotter on equipment that could cause injury.
- Air pollution: Our Nature Center After School Program policy is that we take the children outdoors, everyday, in all kinds of weather, including snow and rain. However, if the weather conditions are dangerous for the safety of children or adults (lightning, heavy winds, torrential rain, smog, or other high doses of air pollution), classes will remain indoors.

## **WORKING WITH CHILDREN POLICY**

### **Staff Document (selected portions)**

The safety of the children and the staff are paramount and protected through this document. This pertains to all NCNC teachers, educators, staff members, Board members, volunteers, and interns associated with the organization. Any individual with any contact with children must submit a background check.

A copy of the New Canaan Nature Center Working with Children Staff Policy is provided to all staff in addition to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct. This document is available to all at:  
<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05.pdf>.

Copies of the NCNC Working with Children Staff Policy and the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct are posted in the entry area to every classroom, and are available on our website as well.

### **Staff Code of Conduct (Excerpts)**

#### **Privacy**

Adults must respect the privacy of children in situations including bathroom use and changing of clothes. Adults should only intrude to the extent that health and safety require. Adults should protect their own privacy in similar situations. For children under age eleven, an adult must accompany children to the restroom area as needed. The adult will ensure that the facility and hallway are safe, and is responsible for children returning from the restroom. An adult may assist any child under age six in the restroom. No caregiver may touch a child's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take another therapeutic measure. At all times that this help is needed, a second adult must be present.

#### **Injury or illness**

All persons supervising children are expected to take reasonable steps to prevent any person from coming into contact with any body fluids. If a child receives a minor injury, an adult will provide first aid as needed at the time of injury, to the extent that they have been trained to administer first aid. The adult will notify the injured child's parent or guardian. A well-equipped and fully stocked first aid kit, with incident report forms, must be available at all times. An incident report form must be completed after any and each minor or major injury.

If a child receives an injury that requires medical treatment beyond simple first aid, an adult should provide immediate attention to the injured child, and contact one of the NCNC medical administrators. As soon as possible during or after treatment and/or evaluation by one of the NCNC medical administrators, notify the child's parent or guardian will be notified. 911 will be called only if the NCNC medical administrator deems this necessary or cannot be reached.

### **Student Behavior Management Philosophy and Policies (Excerpts)**

Teachers at the New Canaan Nature Center guide, nurture and direct the children to help them learn to cooperate with their peers and have positive, educational experiences. Most behavioral issues with a child can be minimized and perhaps even avoided altogether through proactive, flexible and responsive classroom management techniques and actions. We best support children by using positive facilitation techniques. Behavior management with a child should be constructive. Corporal punishment and verbal reprimands are not acceptable. Adults do not physically restrain any child, unless they deem it necessary to protect the health and safety of the child or other people.

### **Overview of Child Abuse and Neglect (Excerpts)**

#### **Policy for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

All NCNC staff are mandated by Connecticut State Law to report any suspicion or observation that a child is being abused, neglected or is at risk.

All NCNC staff are mandatory reporters and if a report or suspicion of child abuse/neglect comes to any staff member's attention, they must ensure that a report is made to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), before or after consultation with the Director of Environmental Education or Executive Director,. The filing of a child abuse report must be done orally within 12 hours of the incident or first knowledge of an incident, and followed by a written report within 24 hours of the oral report. This form can be faxed or mailed to DCF. Copies of all documents should be kept for confidential NCNC records as well.

Once the appropriate NCNC staff and/or supervisors (Executive Director, the Director of Environmental Education) have deemed that a report will be made, the process of reporting a case of suspected or observed child abuse/neglect follows standard protocol for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our procedure is available upon request.

Failure by any teacher, educator, staff member, Board member, volunteer or intern to make a timely report to a supervisor about a suspected incidence of child abuse shall be considered a procedural violation of the NCNC Working with Children Staff Policy and shall be grounds for disciplinary actions up to dismissal.

### **Privacy Protection**

At all times, the administration will take precautions to ensure that the privacy of the child and family are protected, as well as the privacy of the accused. An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. It is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or alleged perpetrator should be purely on a need-to-know basis and is not for public knowledge. This information should not be shared with staff, other than the Executive Director, Director of Environmental Education, and the Director reporting the abuse (if this is not the Executive Director.) Until abuse has been proven to have occurred by a state investigation, one must always refer to 'alleged abuse.'

### **Procedures in the Event of Accusations of Abuse/Neglect**

Any teacher, educator, staff member, Board member, volunteer or intern accused of child abuse will immediately be notified, will be asked to provide all pertinent information, and suspended from participation with NCNC children's programs until an internal investigation takes place. After the internal investigation is completed, the administrative team (Director of Environmental Education and Executive Director) will determine the appropriate organizational course of action.

If an accusation of abuse or neglect by a parent is made, the Director will immediately inform the parents or guardians that a report has been made to DCF. Health care officials may need to talk to a child's parents to access the cause of the child's injuries and offer support and guidance.

### **Status during Investigation**

During both an NCNC internal investigation (conducted by Preschool Director and/or Director of Environmental Education and/or Executive Director) and a DCF led investigation, the following possible actions may be taken for staff accused of abuse/neglect are:

1. Suspend the individual without pay during the course of investigation;
2. Provide a leave of absence, with or without pay, during the investigation;
3. Remove teacher/educator from any child interactions but maintain employment on grounds;
4. Place individual under close supervision in a teaching setting during the investigation.

The NCNC Director(s) shall follow the guidelines of the Department of Children and Families during the investigation of any charges of abuse. The accused staff member shall be entitled to notice of the investigation and shall have the right to respond to all charges.

## **Conclusion**

Upon conclusion of the investigation by the state agencies, the NCNC supervising Director (in consultation with the administrative team) shall take whatever personnel action deemed appropriate, including discharge. If the result of the investigation shows that the charges are without merit/unsubstantiated, the fact will be noted in the individual's personnel file.

When an accusation of abuse or neglect by a staff member is made, the program's director must immediately inform parents or guardians of the child in question that a report has been made to DCF. Health care officials may need to talk to a child's parents or guardians to assess the cause of the child's injuries and offer support and guidance.

The Hot Line phone number (1-800-842-2288) for child abuse is posted near the teachers' and director's phones. Directors have the names and phone numbers of local resources and referral consultants available for all staff or parents.

## **NCNC After School Licensing**

The New Canaan Nature Center After School Program is fully licensed by the Office of Early Childhood under Connecticut's Day Care Regulations ([www.ctdph.gov](http://www.ctdph.gov)). Statutes and Regulations for licensing Child Care Centers are determined by the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, Department of Public Health and the Child Day Care Licensing Program. These regulations can be found on the Office of Early Childhood, Child Day Care Licensing Homepage: [http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day\\_Care/day\\_care.htm](http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/day_care.htm).