Typical Contents for a Parent Handbook
for School-Age Programs[1]

Parent Handbooks for School-Age Programs are a valuable tool for communicating with parents about the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures. They serve as a useful resource for parents to consult when they have questions or concerns. Listed below are some typical topics addressed by parent handbooks. Topics may be rearranged, deleted, or added based on the unique characteristics of your program.

- **Overview of the Program** (Defining your service – its vision, mission, goals, scope, who the program is intended for, organizational structure, location or locations, partnerships with other organizations such as schools and community agencies, etc.)

- **Eligibility for the Program** (Listing requirements for participation in the program, if any – age or academic criteria for children, whether the program is for parents who work or all parents, income requirements, etc.)

- **Description of Program Services?** (Providing a detailed description of program offerings, sessions, schedule, and calendar)

- **Enrollment Policies and Procedures** (Providing information on how to register, a list of documents required at registration, re-enrollment policies and procedures, waiting list policies and procedures, priority enrollment policies, if any)

- **Cancellation Policies and Procedures** (Discussing procedures for withdrawing a child from the program, advance time required for notification of cancellation, etc.)

- **Fees** (Outlining the program's Fee Scale and any subsidies or scholarships available; types of fees such as Registration Fees, Program Fees, Late Pick-Up Fees; and policies related to fee adjustments, refunds, and returned checks)

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[1] To examine a sample Parent Handbook, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc (Go to SACC: School-Age Child Care and Click Parent Handbook). Revised October, 2009.

- **Billing Procedures** (Outlining billing procedures for different program components such as after-school, holiday programs, and summer camp; payment options such as credit cards, personal, or e-checks; delinquency/non-payment and collection policies; billing for cancelled services; and other issues related to billing)

- **General Information, Policies, and Procedures** (Including information related to the topics listed below and more)
  - Licensing Compliance for the Program
  - Required Emergency Contacts for Each Child
  - Authorized Pick-Up Persons
  - Change of Contact Information (keeping emergency and daily pick-up contact information up to date)
  - Health Form and Immunization Records.
  - Documentation of Child Identification (birth certificates, passports, other)
  - Custody Issues
  - Medication Policies and Procedures
  - Sunscreen/Insect Repellant Policies and Procedures
  - Communicable Diseases
  - Weapons
  - Child Protective Services
  - Emergency Preparedness and Shelter-in-Place Plan
  - Staff Background Checks
  - Additional Topics as Needed

- **Emergency School Closing, Delayed Openings and Early Release** (describing policies and procedures relating to changes to program hours due to emergency situations such as school closings, weather-related program closings, program services on teacher workdays, school vacations, etc.)

- **Opportunities for Parent Involvement** (identifying opportunities for parents to observe the program in action; make suggestions; share information about their children's needs and interests; stay informed through program newsletters, bulletin boards, web sites; volunteer to lead activities or chaperone field trips; participate on parent advisory boards; contribute supplies and recyclables; share talents and skills; participate in parent conferences, etc.)

- **Special Reminders for Each Type of Session Offered (Before School, After School, Holiday Program, Summer Program)** (Providing specific information about session hours, arrival and dismissal/release policies, availability of breakfast programs, lunch guidelines for children who bring lunch, snack service, transportation services, items children may need to bring such as rest blankets, late pick-up policies, etc.)

- **Program of Activities** (Including descriptions of the program components listed below and more)
  - Description of Program Activities, Experiences, and Format (Focus Areas – Subjects and Topics Children Explore; Skills and Knowledge Children Develop; Groupings - Large Group, Small Group, Independent Activities, Clubs, etc.)
  - Description of the Program Environment
  - Overview of Field Trips and Special Events
  - Homework Policy
  - General Program Schedule and Calendar
  - Teacher Qualifications, Roles, and Responsibilities
  - Program Oversight (Site supervisors and/or program director)
  - Additional Topics as Needed

- **Behavior Guidance Policy** (a description of the program's guidance policy and strategies teachers use to promote positive behavior, including helping children solve problems and manage conflicts, work cooperatively with others, and assume responsibility for their actions)

- **Sick Child Policy and Procedures** (a description of steps that will be taken if the child becomes sick or injured during the program)

- **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers** (including questions listed below and more)
  - What will my child's experience in the program be like?
  - What is the program's schedule when school is closed?
  - What should I do if my child will be absent?
  - How can I arrange for my child to participate in extracurricular activities (such as sports, music or dance lessons, etc.) during program hours)
  - Additional questions identified by your program.