

Parent Handbook

Revised May 2023

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Welcome to Thistleoaks!



Thistleoaks is a child care centre for the children of employees of Central West Specialized Developmental Services and the Oakville Community.

We are a non-profit organization, operated by a volunteer Board of Directors and a paid Executive Director and Leadership Team. We are licensed by the Ministry of Education and our operation is guided by the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA). Our license is posted in the Sunroom and in the School Age Room at the Central West Specialized Developmental Services main building.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is located on the grounds of Central West Specialized Developmental Services, a residential facility for developmentally handicapped individuals. This is their home and the residents are free to use the grounds. For safety purposes, please drive slowly and obey all traffic signs.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is a facility for children and families to learn, grow, explore, and create. We believe in teamwork and, as a part of Thistleoaks, we want you to feel like part of our team. Our goal is to nurture each individual child in a safe, warm, caring, and education-focused environment. Your suggestions, support, and ideas are valued and always welcome.

Our handbook will provide information that relates to our centre and its programs. If you should require any further information about Thistleoaks, please feel free to contact our Leadership Team.

Contact Information

Address

53 Bond Street
Oakville, ON
L6K 1L8

Main Office: 905-842-7303
Enrollment and Compliance Supervisor x102
Team and Program Supervisor x102

Enrollment and Billing Inquiries: info@thistleoaks.ca
Team and Program Inquiries: supervisor@thistleoaks.ca

Website: www.thistleoaks.ca
Twitter: @thistleoaksgcc

Our Philosophy

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre provides a warm and caring atmosphere to nurture the growth of the total child. Children thrive in a snug, secure, and stimulating environment. We provide this special atmosphere to all our children.

The educators offer a flexible program, which promotes the children's sense of belonging and self-confidence, while recognizing their individual needs. The children are exposed to a variety of activities in large and small groups. Activities are geared to each child's age and stage of development to promote emotional, intellectual, physical, and social growth.

We offer an integrated program for children with extra support needs. A Resource Consultant from the Region of Halton works with centre staff to provide support and individual program plans.

Our Policy

We believe that every child is to be respected as an individual and as a member of the group. Our goal is to meet each child's needs and interests to ensure optimal growth. We appreciate your cooperation in reporting anything that could affect your child's behavior. For example, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, fears or sources of anxiety, crisis at home, and so on.

Our "Open Door" policy encourages parent and guardians to drop in at any time during operating hours. We encourage parents to become involved with Thistleoaks by volunteering in their areas of expertise.

Program Statement

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre offers a learning program that is consistent with the Ministry of Education policies, pedagogy, and curriculum. Some of the Ministry documents we reference in our program include the following:

- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*
- *Ontario Early Years Framework*
- *Ontario Early Learning Framework*
- *Think Feel Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children*
- *Early Learning for Every Child Today*

We know that children learn best by pursuing their personal interests and goals, so by following the Emergent Curriculum, children are able to make their own choices about materials and activities during program time. As they pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with peers, program staff, students, and other adults.

Children are competent, curious, and rich in potential

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre recognizes that each child is a unique individual who brings his or her own abilities to the program and deserves the encouragement and space to try new things, explore new ideas, and develop their own unique creativity.

We provide an environment that promotes curiosity and exploration. We believe every child deserves a safe and caring environment in which they will grow and develop to their maximum potential.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre understands the importance of children's stages of development. For each child, their stage of development is individualized. Contributing factors include their unique family, community, and life experiences. We aim to integrate all areas of child development in our program.

Our goals for children include the following:

- Every child has a sense of belonging and is connected to others and contributes to the world
- Every child is developing a sense of self, health and well being
- Every child is an active and engaged learner, who explores with body, mind and senses
- Every child is a capable communicator who expresses themselves in many ways

Our Programs are designed to:

- Encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self regulate
- Promote the children's exploration, play, and inquiry
- Provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences
- Offer opportunities to create genuine relationships with others in the program

Types of Activities we offer daily include:

- Drama, music, dance, and visual arts
- Language and literacy
- Nature, science, and technology
- Construction and design
- Daily opportunities for active outdoor play
- Rest and quiet time

Our approach

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre implements its programs through the Reggio Emilia approach. The Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy that supports child-initiated and educator-supported programming.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based upon the following set of principles:

- Children must have some control over the direction of their learning
- Children must be able to learn experiences through touch, movement, listening, and observing
- Children have a relationship with other peers, educators, volunteers, placement students, and with material items in the environment
- Children have endless ways and opportunities to communicate and express themselves

A child has 100 languages. Children utilize many different forms of communication. At Thistleoaks we encourage children to explore each concept and learn to communicate not just through spoken language, but through art and play as well.

Educators as co-learners

It is our philosophy that educators are co-constructors, researchers, documenters, and advocates for children, and through collaboration alongside children, families and peers, we aim to become co-learners' side by side with each child.

Emergent curriculum

Emergent curriculum is a method of learning and teaching that requires educators to observe and listen to the child. Educators ask questions and listen to the child's ideas and inquiries. After observations are made, educators discuss and interpret the child's ideas to create child-led, educator-supported experiences and projects.

Health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of children

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre understands that the first step in establishing and nurturing health, safety, and well-being for children in our program is through the connections they make with the program staff, volunteers, and students on placement. Each child is given individual attention during the day, and special attention whenever he or she needs it, by our educators who are consistent and gentle. Each group is comprised of children who are developmentally at the same age.

As a licensed centre, Thistleoaks Child Care Centre meets and exceeds all health and safety requirements by the Ministry of Education and local government bylaws. Health and Safety information is posted outside of each classroom on the communication boards. Policies are available in the Parent Handbook and in further detail in the Main Office.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre follows Canada's Food Guide to develop our menus. Menus always include a fruit and vegetable, milk or water, whole grains, and low to no sugar. We accommodate dietary or religious food requirements for the children in our program, and menus can be viewed on our website and on the classroom communication boards.

Relationships among children, families, staff, and community partners

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre strives to promote a sense of belonging for children and their families by creating positive interactions and collaboration of families. We understand that relationships of trust are the basis of learning and cooperation.

Every child is entitled to be given the opportunity to develop personal responsibility and social skills, to learn to problem solve, develop conflict resolution skills, and to learn about diversity and inclusion.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is committed to working in partnership with community partners, as we work together on the mutual goal of providing the best possible child care service to families.

Positive self-expression, communication, and self regulation

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre programming leads to children's sense of belonging. We provide positive learning environments and experiences, focused on play-based learning, encourage children's communication, self-expression, and self-regulation.

In our inclusive learning environments, we welcome children of all abilities. Respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion is fundamental for development and learning.

Here are some of the ways that we create an inclusive environment in our programs:

- We recognize each child as having equal rights to participate in program activities
- We recognize and respect the unique qualities of each child and family, including ancestry, culture, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, family environment, and developmental needs
- We create strategies that value the culture and first language of all children
- We establish program strategies, to promote an inclusive learning environment in which every child can participate
- We view the diversity of children and families as an asset, and plan programs to reflect differences and enrich the environment

Our programs focus on play-based learning as the way that children naturally learn best. It is their natural response to the environment around them. When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they engage in learning through play. Play allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understanding through making connections to prior experiences, opening the door to new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. Play is responsive to each child's unique learning style. It capitalizes their curiosity and creativity.

Our program also supports children's self-regulation, their ability to deal with stress, and remain alert and ready to learn. When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to control their emotions, pay attention, ignore distractions, inhibit their impulses, and understand the consequences of their actions.

Parent engagement and interaction

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre encourages and practices open communication with families about our program and their children's learning experiences. We believe that families are experts on their children. Sharing knowledge is important to your child's success.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre ensures that families have the support of available, affordable, safe, reliable, high-quality licensed child care for their children, which ensures parents' peace of mind while their children are in our program. Values of respect, care, empathy, trust, and integrity are ensured in our interactions with families. In addition to daily interaction with program staff, we offer many opportunities for parent feedback and involvement, such as open houses, monthly newsletters, and parent interviews.

We know that our partnerships with families help our program meet the needs of the children:

- Families form the foundation of a child's early development
- Families know their children best and are the most powerful influence on learning and development
- The needs of each child are considered in the context of their family composition, values, culture and language. This approach enriches relationships between our centre, families, and our community
- Parent involvement connects to their children's early development, and enhances child learning

Community partners

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is committed to involving local community partners and to engaging those partners in supporting our centre's children, family, and staff. We support volunteers and students from the community and provide placement, training, learning opportunities, and practical work experience in the areas of programming and management. Volunteers and students on placement enhance the high-quality care and individual attention given to the children within our program.

Supporting staff in continuous professional learning

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is committed to hiring, training, and fairly compensating staff. We hire staff that have a positive and sensitive attitude towards children. Our non-discriminatory hiring practices provide individuals of all backgrounds the opportunity for employment. We believe that everyone has worth and value and that all staff are entitled to be respected, supported, and treated fairly.

A large majority of our full-time staff have completed the Early Childhood Education program and are registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators. All program staff attend mandatory professional meetings and are committed to continuous professional learning. Thistleoaks Child Care Centre participates in Quality First within Halton, an initiative for quality improvement.

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre staff foster children's inquiry and creativity by planning on a daily basis based on the observations that they make on the children's interests. In this way, learning is extended, leading to deeper investigation with materials and environment. Staff plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported.

Documenting and reviewing the impact of our learning program

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre understands that pedagogical documentation is a way for our program staff to learn about how the children think and learn. Our staff make daily observations of the children in the program and use this information in future planning. The purpose of our documentation is to provide:

- A way to value children's experiences and help them reflect on those experiences
- An opportunity to make children's learning and understanding of the world visible to themselves, to other children, to their families, and to the program staff
- An opportunity for reflection on developmental growth
- A process for staff to co-plan with children about learning
- A dialogue with families about children's learning experiences

- A self-reflection opportunity for staff as they participate in continuous learning

Prohibited disciplinary practices

The following policy is as stated in the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA-8.1-8.5) '48':

No Operator shall permit:

- Corporal punishment of the child
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the children to a high chair, car seat, stroller, or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself, or someone else and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent
- Locking the exits or the child care centre premises for the purpose of confining the children or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity, or self-worth
- Depriving the children of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, and bedding
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will

CWELCC

Thistleoaks is proud to be enrolled in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Care Plan (CWELCC). As part of enrolling in the plan, families will notice that our January 2023 fees have been reduced by 52.75% of our March 2022 fees and we've provided our family rebates for the period of April-September in 2022. With entering in to the plan it is our hope that families will be able to receive greater access to quality affordable child care and we are excited to play a role in that.

Admission

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is a licensed child care centre for children between the ages of 6 weeks to 6 years of age. We admit children into the following programs:

Program	Children	Ratio	Age
Infants – Applewood Room	10	1:3	6wks – 18mos
Toddler – Willow Room	15	1:5	18mos – 30mos
Toddler – Birch Room	15	1:5	18mos – 30mos
Preschool – Spruce Room	16	1:8	2.5yrs – 4yrs
Preschool – Cedar Room	16	1:8	2.5yrs – 4yrs
Preschool – Pine Room	16	1:8	2.5yrs – 4yrs

Waitlist Policy

Thistleoaks is proud to be a workplace child care centre. Central West Specialized Development Service employees will have priority access to the spaces at Thistleoaks Child Care Centre. Thistleoaks accepts applications for admission of children aged 6 weeks to 6 years of age.

Families will be prioritized based on first date of contact. Thereafter, Thistleoaks' priority is as follows:

1. Children of Thistleoaks Child Care Centre and CWSDS employees
2. Families with children currently enrolled at Thistleoaks (existing families)
3. Parents and guardians who live or work in the Oakville community

Please note there is no waitlist fee. Once a family has decided to enroll their child(ren), a non-refundable registration fee of \$100 plus one week's tuition deposit for each child will be charged to guarantee your spot(s). The first week of tuition will be applied against your first invoice.

Procedure

1. The Management shall contact the parent within three days of receiving a request to verify the application and to obtain necessary information.
2. After a tour of Thistleoaks, if eligible, the child is placed on the waitlist until a space is available and, where applicable, financial assistance is confirmed.
3. Thistleoaks does not guarantee a spot for a child once they are placed on the waitlist. Flexibility on a start date can be of value for the perspective client.
4. Thistleoaks does not charge clients a fee to be placed on the waitlist.
5. Management will do their best to accommodate the requested admission date. However, clients may be offered a child care placement earlier than requested. Should the client turn this admission date down, the next client on the waitlist will be offered that spot, and eligibility of admission is then set back.
6. Management will contact prospective clients on the waitlist no more than one month prior to the requested start date to confirm admission into the centre.
7. Once a client receives the purple enrolment package and has paid the \$100 registration fee plus one week's tuition (both non-refundable), the spot is guaranteed. The first week's tuition deposit will be applied to the child's first week of enrollment, but will be kept by the centre if the parents decide to withdraw prior to their start date.
8. Clients are responsible for calling the centre three months prior to their requested start date to confirm their status for enrolment.

General Information

Hours of Operation

Thistleoaks' Main Centre is open all year from 7:30am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday.

Thistleoaks is closed on statutory holidays.

Statutory Holidays

Thistleoaks is closed on all of the following statutory holidays. There is no fee reduction.

- New Year's Day
- Family Day
- Good Friday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- Civic Holiday
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

Fees

Registration Fee

A \$100 program registration fee plus one week's tuition is due at the time of enrollment. Should you decide not to attend Thistleoaks after your child(ren) has been enrolled, the registration fee will not be refunded. The portion of this fee subsidised by CWELCC will be put towards your first bill. Families receiving subsidized care are exempt from this fee.

Payment of Fees

Fees are based on the number of days for which your child is enrolled. Invoices are emailed every two weeks and payments made by automatic withdrawal biweekly. Accounts must be cleared each two-week period unless other arrangements have been made with the Executive Director.

No reductions in fees are made to parents for statutory holidays, family vacations, illnesses, or emergency closures. Missed days may not be exchanged. Children attend the days for which they are registered.

Tax receipts are issued by the end of February.

Fee Schedule

The below fee schedule is accurate as of January 1, 2023

Infant, Toddler & Preschool

	Registration Fee	Full Time 5 days per Week	Part Time 2-4 days* per Week
Infants <i>(6 weeks to 18 months)</i>		\$36.38	N/A
Toddlers <i>(18 months to 2.5 years)</i>	\$100	\$31.66	\$35.44
Preschool <i>(2.5 to 4.5 years)</i>		\$27.41	\$31.19

* Part time spaces will only be granted if an exact match to share the spot is found. In the event that one of the parties should give notice, the other party will be given the opportunity to increase their days to Full Time or the original agreement becomes null and void.

Late Fees

Thistleoaks is currently open from 7:30am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday. Whenever possible, we would appreciate if your child is picked up by 5:20pm, allowing time to obtain information, dress your child, and depart by 5:30pm. Parents who are late and picking up their child past 5:30pm will be charged a rate of \$1 per minute per child. Payment should be made to the late staff whenever possible. If funds are not received at the time of pickup, you will be required to sign the late sheet and will be invoiced for the amount owing.

Fee Structure

The Board of Directors reviews the child care fees annually at minimum. These fees are subject to change generally on either the first day of September or the first day of January each year but may be changed more often.

CWELCC Fees

It is important to note that the Canada Wide Early Learning and Care plan covers the reduction of base fees and is not to be used to reduce non-base fees. Thistleoaks base fees are comprised of families' daily child care rate and all programs offered are included in our base fee Ex. Music, Spanish etc. Examples of non-base fees: Late fee charge, NSF charges. Please note that Thistleoaks includes all it's programs in their base fee and does not charge non-base fees outside of the late fee policy and NSF charge.

Failed Fee Withdrawal

Thistleoaks fees are collected through preauthorized payments. It is each family's responsibility to ensure that their bank accounts are in good standing, with sufficient funds to cover the preauthorized payments as they become due according to the payment schedule specified during registration.

The payment will be drawn from the bank account on the date(s) specified during registration. In the event that the date(s) fall on a weekend or holiday, payment will be drawn on the next business day.

A service charge of \$45 will be levied for failed fee withdrawals, such as insufficient funds, account closure, stop payments, etc.

Arrival and Departure

Always make sure that the educator in attendance is aware of your child's arrival and departure. We cannot accept responsibility for children who are not inside the classroom or playground. If possible, spend a few minutes sharing information as this helps make transition easier. For your information, staff

record your child's daily eating, sleeping, and toileting information (where appropriate). This information is logged in the HiMama app.

A keypad is located at all entrances to the building. You will be given the code upon admission of your child. The code will change periodically.

Emergency Evacuation

In case of an emergency evacuation, Thistleoaks staff will take the children to Central West Specialized Developmental Services gym. Parents will be contacted and are expected to pick up their children at this location.

Release of Children - Emergencies or Alternate Arrangements

In an emergency, you may enlist someone other than yourself to pick up your child. This person must be at least 18 years of age or older. We must be advised and be able to identify the person you have authorized. We will ask for photo identification to verify the individual at pick up, as your child will NOT be released to an unauthorized person. We require the names, telephone numbers, and child's relationship of the adults you wish to authorize and this must be listed on our admission form at the time of registration along with your consent signature. Please advise us of any changes to this list.

Inclement Weather Policy

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre recognizes its responsibility for the safety and welfare of our students and staff during centre hours. We understand that clients share in the responsibility for the safety and welfare of their children, and we realize that occasionally situations of severe inclement weather exist or are predicted during the operational hours of the centre. As such, Thistleoaks Child Care Centre may, on certain occasions and circumstances, have to close the centre.

Thistleoaks takes its inclement weather closure cues from the Halton school boards. In the event where the school board does not close or is not open, the Executive team will make a decision regarding a closure. The closure will be communicated to staff and families through the following means:

- An email message out through HiMama
- Notice posted on our website (www.thistleoaks.ca)
- Notice posted on our Facebook page (@ThistleoaksCCC)
- Notice posted on our Twitter page (@ThistleoaksCCC)

Only when the most severe conditions are predicted or occur, the centre may close during operational hours. This decision will be made by 11:00am by the Executive Director and the Leadership Team. Communication to clients will be completed by 12:00 noon, with a centre closure time of 3:00pm. Notification of this closure can be found on the above-noted channels. Clients picking their children up after 3:00pm will be charged our late fee rate of \$1 per minute.

Families will not be reimbursed for days missed due to severe weather conditions and/or closures.

Absences due to Vacation or Illness

There is no fee reduction for any absence including vacation time or illness.

Pandemic Closure Policy

If a family cannot attend the centre due to pandemic-related sickness, there will be no reduction in fees for missed days, in line with our regular illness policy. However, if during a pandemic if the centre closes a program, there will be no charge to the families for the duration of the closure.

Discharge

Parents are to provide **written** notice of withdrawal, **one month in advance**. Parents are required to pay to the end of this notice period. Thistleoaks may terminate service, with written notice, if policies are not followed or fees are not paid.

Procedure:

- Parents/guardians submit a written withdrawal notice to the Leadership Team
- Parents/guardians pay child care fees to the end of the one-month notice period
- The Executive Director may discharge children if payments are irregular

Sunscreen

Thistleoaks Child Care Centre supplies SPF30 sunscreen for all children. A permission form needs to be signed in order for us to apply centre-provided sunscreen to your child. If you would prefer to provide your own please label the sunscreen with your child's first and last name and inform your child's educators. Sunscreen is not applied to children under six months of age. During the summer, we require you to apply sunscreen to your child prior to arriving at Thistleoaks. We will reapply sunscreen during the day. SPF30 or higher is recommended.

Clothing

Your child's safety is our number one concern. Please adhere to the following clothing guidelines:

- Shoes must be closed-toe and rubber-heeled; Crocs are not permitted
- Rain boots are strongly recommended for wet weather play
- Snow boots are required for winter weather
- All clothing, particularly outdoor wear, must be labelled
- Your child must have separate, dedicated indoor shoes

Please refer to the following chart for seasonal clothing guidelines:

Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Light jacket• Rain boots• Indoor shoes• Sweater/Hoodie• Splash pants• Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water Bottle• Spare clothes• Hat with sun coverage• Sunscreen (if your child needs his or her own)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Light jacket• Rain boots• Indoor shoes• Sweater/Hoodie• Splash pants• Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Winter jacket• Snowpants• Snow boots• Winter hat• Neck warmer (scarves are not permitted)• Gloves• Sweater/hoodie• Indoor shoes

Notes for Summer Play

- If you choose to send your child in sandals in the summer, the sandals must have a covered toe and ankle strap. Open-toe sandals and flip-flops are not permitted
- Summer water play: bathing suit, towel, shoes for water play
- Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen in the morning prior to dropping off their child. Educators will reapply sunscreen in the afternoon.

Meals

Your child will be served a nutritious hot lunch as well as morning and afternoon snacks. Menus are posted online, outside the kitchen, and on each classroom's information board. Outside food is not permitted at Thistleoaks except as per a completed Supplementary Needs form.

Please inform us of all allergies, religious restrictions, dietary restrictions, and other special food requests. Child-specific allergy information is posted in each classroom and in the kitchen. Thistleoaks will attempt to accommodate food requests and restrictions.

In accordance with Halton Region, Thistleoaks is a nut-free facility. NO PEANUT OR OTHER NUT PRODUCTS ARE PERMITTED AT THISTLEOAKS CHILD CARE CENTRE.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis (anna-fill-axis) is a serious allergic reaction. It can be life-threatening. Food is the most common cause of anaphylaxis, but insect stings, medicine, latex, or exercise can also cause a reaction. The most common food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, seafood, egg, and milk products. Anaphylaxis affects multiple body systems: skin, upper and lower respiratory, gastro-intestinal, and cardiovascular. Anaphylactic shock is an explosive overreaction of the body's immune system to a triggering agent (allergen). It can be characterized by swelling, difficulty breathing, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, circulatory collapse, coma, and/or death.

Symptoms of anaphylactic shock tend to develop rapidly, although the initial presentation can be delayed and/or deceptively mild. The victim may become uneasy, upset, and/or red in the face. They may also develop a rapid heartbeat, prickling and itchiness in the skin, hives, throbbing in the ears, sneezing, coughing, and difficulty breathing. Shock may then follow, in which blood vessels become leaky, blood pressure falls, and the person becomes cold, clammy and faint.

Policy:

This policy provides direction to parents, staff, and administrators to help minimize and reduce the risks for those who are identified as being susceptible to anaphylaxis due to individual allergy conditions. The intent of this policy is to develop a safe learning and working environment for all persons with allergies and special medical conditions. In this policy you will find the following:

- a. A strategy to reduce the risk of exposure to anaphylactic causative agents
- b. A communication plan for the provision of information on life-threatening allergies, including anaphylactic allergies
- c. An individual plan for each child with a special health concern, including anaphylactic allergies.
- d. Third party training for the individual procedures of each child with anaphylactic concerns.

Procedure:

1. Thistleoaks Child Care Centre is NUT FREE. We do not serve products that knowingly contain nuts or any nut products. To help us achieve this, we ask that no food be brought into the center.
2. All allergies will be listed in a common area in the classroom. Should a child require an Individual Health Plan, it will be noted on the allergy sheet. Three copies of this plan will be made. One copy will be kept in the classroom attendance binder that stays with the teacher at all times, the second with any medication that needs to administered (if necessary) and the third in a main binder that is kept in the office.

3. Parents may bring in outside food to the centre to support their child's growth and development in addition to the menu Thistleoaks provides. In order to bring in food from outside parents must adhere to our Anaphylaxis policy and ensure that:
 - A Supplementary Needs form has been filled out and submitted to the office
 - Food must be nut free
 - Food must be labelled with the child's name
 - Must be nutritious and meet the recommendations of the Canada Food Guide

Communication Plan/ Individual Health Plan:

1. All students, parents, staff, and volunteers of Thistleoaks Child Care Centre that have medical concerns including anaphylaxis will complete an Individual Health Plan form (attached to this policy). This information will be provided upon enrollment/hiring and updated with the educators and office administration as conditions change.
2. The Individual Health Plan will be reviewed annually and when the child graduates to the next classroom (whichever is sooner). This plan includes current treatment, medication information and location, signs and symptoms as well as a current emergency contact list and training documentation.
3. Classroom Educators will post a photo of any child with an allergy and inform the cook in the kitchen of any and all allergies and alert them when it changes.
4. It is the classroom educators' responsibility to inform any supply and/ or part time staff and/ or volunteers of the children's health and allergy concerns as they enter the classroom.

Third Party Training:

1. It is the obligation of the child's parents or guardian to ensure that the information in the child's file be kept up to date and that staff are trained in the administering of medication and first aid procedures for their child. This will be documented on the Individual Health Plan. In the event that a parent is not able to train a staff, a third party such as a public health nurse or physician will be acceptable.
2. Staff are preauthorized to administer medication in response to an anaphylactic reaction when Thistleoaks has up to date information on the child's individual treatment as well as signed consent from the parent or guardian.
3. If a staff member has reason to believe that a student is experiencing an anaphylactic reaction, the employee may administer an auto injector or other medication prescribed to the student for the treatment of an anaphylactic reaction.
4. All medications (including Epi-Pens) require preauthorization from a parent or guardian before any staff member is allowed to administer them.
5. We ask that parents provide 2 auto injectors when we are taking the children on field trips in the event that EMS response time is increased when we are off of Thistleoaks grounds.

We ask that all staff, volunteers and parents read and abide by this policy. Its intention is not to segregate those children with special health concerns, but for us all to be an active part of prevention, treatment and understanding so that we can live happy and healthy lives without any undue risks.

High School, Co-op, and College Students

Thistleoaks supports our community by providing practical learning experiences. Staffs supervise students from ECE and ECA colleges and high school co-operative programs. These students are not counted in our ratios and are not to be left alone with the children enrolled within the centre. All volunteers must provide a valid Police Check – Vulnerable Sector and sign off on all Thistleoaks policies and procedures.

Toys from Home

Children may bring a toy from home for special planned activities. Your child's educator will provide you with advance notice of such occasions. Otherwise, it is best to leave toys at home. This prevents toys being lost or broken, for which the staff is not responsible. Guns, war toys, or other toys of destruction are not allowed at Thistleoaks.

Rest

All Toddler and Preschool children will rest for 1 to 2 hours in the afternoon. They are not required to sleep, but are required to lie quietly on their cots. Children may bring a blanket or stuffed toy from home to be used during rest time.

Preschool children who do not fall asleep after the first hour are permitted to engage in quiet activities for the final hour of the rest period.

All children have designated cots (cribs for infants). Visual checks are done on all children throughout the rest period and documented accordingly.

Infants between the ages of six weeks and 12 months old will be placed on their back during sleep, following the Joint Statement of Safe Sleep. Should a parent request otherwise, a physician's note must be provided.

Central West Specialized Developmental Services: Grounds and Entrance

Please use the Kerr Street entrance only. The Bond Street entrance is only to be used if the Kerr Street entrance is blocked. Obey all stop signs. They are there to protect the residents and your children.

DRIVE SLOWLY. The speed limit on the grounds is 10km/h.

Obey the following rules with regard to our parking lot:

- Turn off your car engine. Do not leave your car idling in the parking lot
- Do not leave children unattended in your car
- Obey the No Parking signs
- Only cars with an Accessible placard are permitted to use the accessible space at the front of the building. Cars using the spot without a placard are subject to being towed at the owner's expense
- There is no smoking or vaping in the parking lot or anywhere on Thistleoaks property
- Do not block in other cars. If all the parking spaces are filled, please use the alternate lots located to the south of Thistleoaks

Parent and Guardian Information

Parent and Guardian meetings are held with the educators at a time that is convenient to the family.

Thistleoaks hosts events such as our Annual General Meeting and Christmas Open House. These events are held after work hours, typically between 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

Social nights may include a light meal, and child care can be provided for any meeting portion of the night. This is a great time to meet other parents, relax, meet staff informally, and learn more about our child care environment.

If the parking lot is full for these events, please park in the lots located to the south of Thistleoaks. Please do not park on a fire route.

Special Activities and Field Trips

The children occasionally leave the premises for walks or other activities. Please see the program sheet for details which will be posted in the classroom, as well as read any emails regarding such an event.

Children may visit local sites of interest that support the learning environment. We travel on local buses or First Student transportation. Special field trips will be posted for your information in advance. If you object to your child's participation, please speak to your child's educator.

Volunteering

If you would like to join your child's group on a field trip, you will have to review the centre's Behavior Guidance Policy, as well as get a Vulnerable Sector Check at the local police station, at your own cost. It could take days to a few weeks before it's completed by the police and ready for you to pick up.

Should you wish to join your child on a field trip, it would be in your best interest to get a vulnerable Sector Check completed well in advance and have it submitted to the office. It will be kept on file for the duration of your child's enrollment here at the centre and act as valid proof for you to volunteer. Please note that volunteers will be supervised at all times and will not be left alone to supervise children.

Oakville's Police Station Address:

2 District - 20 Division
95 Oak Walk Drive
Oakville, ON, L6H 0G6

Newsletters and Emails

All classrooms at Thistleoaks are equipped with their own email address. Parents and guardians can connect with educators through the classroom emails and educators may share a variety of information through email correspondence with parents and guardians such as programming, special events, how families can support at home, any illnesses, educator absenteeism, and other information. Newsletters and other applicable information are posted regularly on our website and/or Facebook page.

Staff may also forward on any other pertinent information regarding their class or the centre in separate emails for your information and review.

The classroom email addresses are not to be used for immediate communication between families and educators. Educators are only able to check email once or twice per week (not guaranteed) so any important messages should be emailed to the Leadership Team, sent through the HiMama messaging system, or you can call the centre at any time and speak to the office or to the classroom directly. The extensions and email addresses for classrooms are:

Room	Extension	Email
Compliance & Enrollment Supervisor	102	info@thistleoaks.ca
Team & Program Supervisor	102	supervisor@thistleoaks.ca
Kitchen	103	kitchen@thistleoaks.ca
Applewood Room	109	classroom1@thistleoaks.ca
Willow Room	110	classroom2@thistleoaks.ca

Birch Room	112	classroom3@thistleoaks.ca
Spruce Room	105	classroom4@thistleoaks.ca
Cedar Room	115	classroom5@thistleoaks.ca
Pine Room	113	classroom6@thistleoaks.ca
Flexi – Oak Room	111	classroom7@thistleoaks.ca
Maple Room	114	classroom8@thistleoaks.ca

Safe Environment Policy

Thistleoaks has the responsibility, in partnership with the student, family, and community, to provide, promote, and develop:

- A safe, positive, and violence-free environment for everyone in which respect and human dignity are valued
- A sense of self-worth and self-discipline in the children
- A primary prevention strategy and environment that stresses sociably acceptable attitudes and effective social interpersonal skills

It is the intent of our policy:

For parents:

- To teach and instill good values
- To respect the rights of others
- To model a sense of societal responsibility for their children and themselves
- To foster a safe and secure environment

For Children:

- To be respected in both person and beliefs
- To respect the person, safety, property, and rights of others
- To give respect and cooperation to all persons in positions of responsibility at Thistleoaks

Safe Environment Procedure

Behaviour	First Occurrence	Subsequent Occurrences
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>Assault: the act or attempt to do physical harm</p> <p>Defiance of Authority: persistent refusal to comply with persons in positions of authority</p> <p>Disorderly Conduct: behavior that displays persistent opposition to authority, conduct injurious to the moral tone of the centre or to the well being of others in the centre</p>	<p>Letter informing parent or guardian and meeting with family. May result in suspension of child for one day depending on severity</p>	<p>Suspend child at discretion of Executive/Assistant Directors. A meeting will be held with the family before the child is able to return. Child may be discharged from the centre.</p>

Each situation is influenced by the child's age and their abilities. Children are directly responsible for their behavior to Thistleoaks staff while at Thistleoaks or under our authority (e.g., field trips). The primary responsibility for young children's behavior always rests with the parents and guardians.

Reference: Halton Board of Education Policy

Accident Forms

An accident form will be completed by a staff member if your child obtains an injury while at Thistleoaks. If the injury is serious, we will immediately contact you and follow emergency procedures. If the injury is minor, we will administer first aid treatment and document the incident.

- The accident form is comprised of a master copy and a carbon copy
- The staff member will document the incident, first aid treatment administered, and any further actions taken
- A member of the Leadership Team (or designate) will review and sign the form. A parent or guardian will be asked to review and sign upon pick up, and will be given a copy of the report for their records

Emergency Preparedness

Evacuations

In the event that Thistleoaks needs to be evacuated, the two evacuation points are as follows:

Evacuation Site #1

The Gym
Central West Specialized Development Centre (CWSD)
53 Bond Street
905-844-7864

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, parents will be notified when it is safe to do so. Thistleoaks maintains an updated set of procedures for all emergency situations. If you wish to see a copy of these procedures, please request it from the office.

Parent Issues and Concerns

Policy

Thistleoaks encourages parents to take an active role in our child care center and regularly discuss their children's daily development with the Thistleoaks educators and their experiences with our program. All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously by both the educators and management. Every effort will be made to address and resolve all issues or concerns to the satisfaction of all parties as expediently as possible.

Thistleoaks' educators and staff are available to engage parents/guardians in conversation and support a positive exchange during every interaction. Every issue and concern will be treated with confidentiality and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of all parties involved, save and except for concerns relating to immediate health and safety issues pertaining to a child or for legal reasons (for example, to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities, a Children's Aid Society, etc.).

An initial response to an issue or concern will be provided to parents/guardians within two business days. An investigation of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial, and respectful to all parties involved. Thistleoaks will ensure that the person who raised the issue or concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process, while, again, maintaining confidentiality.

Thistleoaks has high standards for positive interaction, communication, and role modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will, therefore, not be tolerated from any party. If at any point a parent/guardian or staff feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused, or belittled, they are asked to immediately end the conversation and report said conversation to the Leadership Team.

We, as members of the public and professionals working closely with children, are required by law to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect. If a parent/guardian expresses concern that a child is being abused or neglected, Thistleoaks staff will advise the parent/guardian to contact Children's Aid Society (CAS) directly.

Procedure

1. Raise the issue or concern:
 - To the classroom educator directly, or
 - To the Executive or Leadership Team
2. Allow two business days for an issue or concern to be addressed.
3. Escalation of issues or concerns:
 - Where the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the response or outcome, they may escalate the issue or concern in writing or verbally to the Board of Directors
 - If the issue or concern is related to compliance and regulation, it is to be reported to The Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch, at:
Ministry of Education, Licensed Child Care Help Desk
1-877-510-5333
childcare_ontario@ontario.ca

Smoking & Vaping

There is no smoking or vaping permitted on Thistleoaks grounds, including in the parking lot. Smoking or vaping is also not permitted if you are representing Thistleoaks off-site (for example, on field trips).

Health

A child can become ill, whether in child care or at home. When illness occurs among a group of children, the situation becomes more complicated. For example, the educator must decide what implications any illness has to the sick child, as well as to the other children and staff at Thistleoaks. The parents and guardians feel torn between the demands of employment and the lack of alternatives for the sick child, and the child may need special care during the course of the illness.

Health Policies

1. The medical and health information sheet, information forms, and emergency cards must be completed prior to child's entry into Thistleoaks Child Care Centre. This is in accordance with the CCEYA and Halton Regional Public Health Department. Thereafter, children are required to have their immunizations kept up to date.
2. Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief for exemption of immunizations must be completed by a doctor or nurse practitioner and must be notarized.
3. Communicable illnesses, suspected communicable illnesses, or prolonged illnesses are to be reported to the staff at Thistleoaks as soon as possible. We require a physician's note stating that

your child is free from infectious or communicable disease before your child is allowed to return to the centre.

4. Children who appear ill do not attend the centre. We ask, as supported by the Public Health Department, that your child be kept at home if they have any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever
 - Vomiting
 - Cough
 - Runny nose, especially with green or yellow discharge
 - Diarrhea

And also display signs of:

- Low activity level
- Decrease in appetite
- Need for more emotional support
- Sleepless nights
- Behavioral changes

These symptoms tell us that your child is NOT well.

We realize that some of the children will have been taken to the family doctor and either:

- Treatment has been prescribed
- No medication ordered, possible virus
- Cause unknown

You will be contacted to pick up your child immediately should one or more of the following symptoms appear while your child is here at the centre:

- Fever of 101°F or higher
- Two bouts of either vomiting or diarrhea
- Lethargic and unable to participate in program
- Lice or signs of larvae or nits – Lice are highly contagious!
 - A note from a doctor or from a lice treatment clinic is required stating that your child is free of lice and a treatment plan is in place before your child will be allowed to return to the centre

We have found that the children's health improves more quickly if they remain at home for 24 to 48 hours at this point. This also prevents other children in the centre from coming down with the same symptoms and reduces the amount of time that the children remain unhealthy.

Therefore, if your child is sent home with above-mentioned symptoms, he or she may not return to the centre on the next business day. Some cases may require the child to remain home longer to ensure symptoms are gone. You will be required to sign an "Ill Child Form" to confirm this.

We understand that there are a number of stresses for working parents. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to arrange for a reliable back-up person or plan for situations when your child is not well. We would appreciate your co-operation in this matter as our common goal is to have our children happy and healthy.

5. Prescription drugs are administered only when accompanied by the parent or guardian's written consent and instructions by way of an Administration of Drug and Medication Authorization Form. The drugs must be kept in their original, labeled containers and dated within the last month. Parents and guardians must sign the medical authorization form for each occasion. Medication can be placed in the locked Medication Box located in the child's classroom, or the fridge in the Maintenance cupboard in the East building located by the cubby room.

6. We do not administer over-the-counter drugs unless for fever or allergic reaction. Over the counter drugs MUST be accompanied by a physician's note and Individual Care Plan. The note must state the child's name, name of medication (fever reducing or allergic reaction), dosage based on weight, and reason (for example, the child's specific fever temperature if for fever, or allergy symptoms).
7. Please note the waist pouches are permitted only in the School Age program for children to carry their own Epi-Pens and/or puffers for quicker access.
8. Notify teachers of symptoms when your child is ill and will be absent – please do not just keep them home without letting Thistleoaks know the reason. This helps us manage illness in the centre and minimize the spread.
9. In case of accidental injury, you will be notified immediately. If necessary, your child will be taken to the hospital by ambulance and accompanied by a staff member. Educators will complete a full report if there is a head injury or other serious injury.
10. Please do not leave food, drink, or medication in your child's cubby for safety, sanitary, and food allergy reasons.
11. We do not use medication such as Bactine, Polysporin, alcohol wipes, or Vaseline for First Aid treatment. We only use soap and water, new band-aids as needed, and ice packs.

In closing...

Welcome again to the Thistleoaks Family!

If you have any questions or comments regarding this handbook or about the centre as a whole, please feel free to approach the Leadership Team at any time.

We appreciate all the feedback we receive!



Parent Handbook

Acceptance and Acknowledgement



Please read and sign the below acknowledgement, detach this page from the handbook, and return it to Thistleoaks with your registration package. The remainder of the Parent Handbook is yours to keep.

Child's Full Name: _____

I/We, the undersigned, have read and understand the Parent Handbook in full, and agree to abide by all policies and procedures outlined within.

I/We understand that failure to comply with Thistleoaks' policies and procedures may result in the termination of child care services for my/our child.

Parent/Guardian 1:

_____ / ____ / ____
Print Name Sign Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

Parent/Guardian 2:

_____ / ____ / ____
Print Name Sign Date (DD/MM/YYYY)