

A. H. A. !

After Hours Activities



Parent Handbook

Revised December 2024
Chea LaMedica - Director

North Canaan Education Foundation
PO Box 1155
North Canaan, CT 06018
Telephone: 860-824-5149 Ext 154
E-mail: ahanorthcanaan@gmail.com

ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

The AHA! Program was created to achieve a convenient and affordable program to school aged children of North Canaan. Our program is committed to offering a flexible structure of indoor and outdoor play, both individual and group activities and arts and crafts. This unique program strives to offer opportunities for all ages to come together for activities and play.

Our dedicated staff is qualified and excited to work with all ages. The Program recognizes the importance of the child's well- being. We strive for parent comfort, encourage involvement and participation as often as possible.

This Program is supported and operated under the North Canaan Education Foundation.

The Board of Directors guiding the NCEF are listed below. Communication is key ! Issues concerning your child should be discussed with the Director. If you feel that you need to talk with any members of the Board of Directors, you are encouraged to contact the Secretary to arrange this.

Director
President / Secretary
Treasurer
Dr Alicia Roy
Beth Johnson

Chea LaMedica
Maribeth Marchi
Sonia Gale
Board Member
NCES Liaison

ahanorthcanaan@gmail.com
NCEFPresident@gmail.com
nceftreasurer@gmail.com

Mission

It is our mission to provide quality, convenient and affordable after school care to all ages, while offering a safe and fun environment for all ages.

Goals and Objectives

It is our goal to bring all ages of North Canaan Elementary School students together to enjoy a fun, caring environment following the school day. The program objective is to allow parents to complete their workday with confidence that their children are in a happy, safe environment filled with friends.

Hours of Operation

Our standard hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 3:15 PM to 5:30 PM

Age Requirements

Our program is open to all NCES students on a first come, first serve basis. Students are encouraged to be in Grade 1 before applying, although this policy is reviewed on a case by case basis during open enrollment time.

Enrollment

Although every attempt is made to accommodate all requests for child care, the Program cannot always meet the demand. Therefore, enrollment will be based on the spaces available.

Open enrollment for fall slots will be shared prior to each school year. Families will receive messages via NCES. Enrollment for our summer program will be shared near the end of the school year.

Those families requesting full time slots for fall and summer sessions will be given priority.

It is our hope to provide the most affordable care possible, cost will be provided at the time of session enrollment.

Communication

Good communication between parents and staff is vitally important to your child's well-being. PLEASE provide us with any information that will help us give your child the best care possible.

Discipline Policy

Resolving conflicts involves positive guidance, setting clear limits, and redirection. The AHA! afterschool program is committed to providing a safe environment where participants are encouraged to make new friends, try new things, learn, and have fun. We believe that all AHA! participants are entitled to a pleasant and harmonious environment while in the program.

Policy Overview

Our services cannot support children who display disruptive behavior. AHA! staff reserves the right to remove a participant from an activity at any time for inappropriate or disruptive behavior, including but not limited to:

- Ignoring or disobeying program rules.
- Bullying, fighting, swearing, stealing, or lying.
- Inflicting physical or emotional harm on other children or staff.

- Creating graffiti (families will be responsible for any expenses incurred in removal or repair).

Reasonable efforts will be made to assist children in adjusting to the program. Disruptive behavior will be addressed as follows:

Discipline Procedures

1. Verbal Warning. The child will receive a verbal warning and a brief activity break based on the severity of the behavior. The behavior will be documented in the child's log.
2. Second Activity Break. If a second activity break is necessary on the same day, the child will be removed from the program activity. A quiet alternative will be assigned, and the child may be asked to write letters of apology and recount the events. This incident will be documented in the child's log.
3. Third Activity Break. If a child receives three activity breaks in one day, staff will complete an incident report. The report will require a parent/guardian signature, and the child may face a one-day suspension, as determined by the Program Director and/or AHA Board President.
4. Three Incident Reports. If a child accumulates three written incident reports, they will be suspended immediately. A meeting with the parents/guardians, Program Director, and Board President will determine the terms of reinstatement into the program. Tuition must be paid during the suspension period or until the child is withdrawn from the program.
5. Removal from the Program. If a child is unable to adjust to the program and behave appropriately, they will be asked to leave for the remainder of the program.

Prohibited Actions by Staff

AHA! staff will never engage in abusive, neglectful, physical, corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment. No child will be physically restrained under any circumstances.

Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the AHA! Afterschool Program's Discipline Policy.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Birthdays

We are always happy to share in the excitement of your child's birthday. The staff will recognize the birthday with child oriented activities for the entire group. Parents are able to provide snacks or treats to be shared with the group, but are asked to consult the director in regards to food allergies prior to planning.

Custody

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the Program Director of the legal status of any custody situations. Please notify the Director immediately of any changes(s) regarding these situations so the Center can act accordingly. The Center must have a copy of the most recent valid court order, signed by a judge, on file. Please do not put the staff in the position of needing to mediate or make decisions as to whether or not your child can leave with a non-custodial parent. We must have explicit directions regarding who can pick up your child. **We will not let your child leave with anyone other than those you designate.**

Termination Policy

If the Program determines to terminate child care, the provider will provide the parents with a written two week notice and a final statement of monies due. The provider will supply parents with resources for child care referrals. In the event that the Program decides to terminate the child due to repeated contract violations, the provider reserves the legal right to terminate the child care relationship without notice. To avoid this unfortunate situation from occurring, parents and legal guardians are required to thoroughly read the child care contract. Parents and legal guardians are required to ask for a detailed explanation of any child care rules and regulations they do not clearly understand prior to enrolling the child in the child care.

Termination Policy - Parents Termination of Services

When a parent chooses to terminate child care for any reason, the parent will be required to submit in writing and provide at least a two-week notice. The full tuition amount for the days in the two-week (minimum) notice period will be due at the time of the written notice. The Program will calculate the balance due according to the contract. If your bill is current, no further amount will be collected.

Policy of Confidentiality

All information about your child and family will be discussed in confidence between the parent and the Director. This information will be shared only with appropriate staff, if necessary. Information will be released to other agencies **only** with written permission of the custodial parent or guardian.

DROP OFF/PICK UP

Parents/guardians will be permitted to enter the facility, once approved using our door accountability system. Parents are asked to be sure to sign out your child using the list directly by the door. All pick-ups should be made by those individuals on the list, please be diligent in keeping your authorization list current. For ease of the staff, please send notification by email if an alternate individual is going to pick up your child, even if they appear on your emergency pick up list. Anyone can be required to furnish ID upon request of the staff members to ensure your child's safety.

No child will be released to a parent or guardian if there is any reason to believe that the situation could result in an unsafe environment for the child. The Staff will attempt to reach one of the other contacts on the emergency form to ensure a safe pick up, or call 911 if another option is not available.

Payments/Fees

Specific rates for services will be outlined in your annual enrollment packet. Please keep your tuition payments current. Repeated late payments may be grounds for termination. Parents who are more than two weeks late on payment may be denied child care until the account becomes current. Your cooperation is appreciated in this matter. Please contact the Treasurer directly if you have any questions regarding your bill. The success of our Program depends upon the prompt payment of tuition/fees.

You will be given timely notice of any increase in tuition fees. A year-end statement of tuition paid during the preceding year will be furnished.

If a check is returned for non-sufficient funds, there will be a fee incurred as a result of the returned check. Childcare may be terminated until full payment of tuition and NSF charges has been made, in cash, bank check or money order.

Connecticut Care 4 Kids

The Connecticut Care 4 Kids program is a tuition assistance program offered through the State of Connecticut for families who meet specific guidelines for income levels, employment, child care enrollment, and residence. *(visit their website at www.connecticutcare4kids.org for application forms and income guidelines)*

MEDICAL INFORMATION

State regulations require us to maintain a current medical record on each child. The required medical information that is included in your enrollment packet must be received before your child attends. In the event of a medical emergency or accident, we will call an ambulance if necessary, and contact you as quickly as possible.

Our Program does not administer any medications under any circumstances. We do provide band aids, ice packs, minor first aide if necessary.

Sunscreen and bug spray will be provided if you have filled out the necessary form in your enrollment packet.

Any food allergies or any other medical concerns should be shared by detailing this information in your enrollment packet.

Illness

Children attending school or care programs are very susceptible to receiving and spreading infectious diseases. In order to ensure good health for the children and staff we request you check your child daily.

While we expect children will have colds during the year, children must be able to participate **fully** in all activities of the day care program. Often the first day or two of a cold is hard on a child and it might be best to keep him/her at home.

The Program reserves the right to request that you pick up child if the staff feels he/she does not belong in a group situation that day. If a child needs to be sent up, pick up should be made within a timely fashion. This policy protects all of us. We thank you for your cooperation in this area. Below are some guidelines and/other health criteria to help you determine whether your child is too ill to attend. You should keep your child home if one or more of the following signs or symptoms of illness appears:

- **A temperature of 100.3° or more. Keep your child home for 24 hours after his/her temperature has returned to normal without the use of fever reducing medication;**
- **Complaints of either a sore throat, a stomach ache, an earache or muscle aches. Keep your child home and observe him for a 24-hour period;**
- **Sluggishness or drowsiness that requires extra sleep during the day;**
- **A rash on the body that is not identified. A doctor's note may be required for your child to return to daycare;**
- **Red, watery and itchy eyes that have pus or are runny, an indication of conjunctivitis;**
- **Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Children must be free of any of these symptoms for 24 hours. We encourage you to keep your child home until his/her appetite has returned;**
- **A constant runny nose and**
- **Constant cough - uncontrolled and worse after play.**

If your child has been ill during the night (i.e. nausea, vomiting, fever, sleeplessness, earache, sore throat, diarrhea) or has had any other problems that may render him/her at risk for a healthy day, please keep your child home for 24 hours to ensure the illness has passed, even if your child wakes up appearing fine.

In the event of a medical emergency or accident, we will contact a parent. If medical treatment is required, we will call an ambulance to transport the child, with a staff member, to the nearest medical facility. **It is extremely important to keep your emergency childcare plans and/or contacts updated in the event we cannot reach you.**

Communicable Diseases

The following is a list of communicable or infectious diseases most common. Please notify the us as soon as possible if you believe your child is ill with one of these diseases so we can take the necessary steps to protect the other children. A note from you medical physician *may be required* for a child to return to the Center if one of the following is suspected:

Chicken Pox. This disease presents itself with small pink spots, which become raised and turn into water blisters. The blisters break and scabs form. The incubation period is usually 14 days. The child must be excluded from day care for at least 8 days and until blisters have scabbed over

COVID-19: If children test positive they should remain out until they have been fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication and other symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours. If upon return to normal activities, individuals develop a fever or start to feel worse they should isolate again until the conditions to return to activity are met.

Fifth Disease. Fifth Disease begins with coughing, high temperature, swollen glands and a flushed puffy face, often described as a “slapped-face” look. There is sometimes a measles-like rash over the entire body.

Impetigo. Impetigo is a highly contagious skin disease. Spots usually appear on the face, nose and mouth. There are raised blister-like areas containing fluid, which is yellowish in color. They are usually spread from one part of the body to another. Specific medication will clear the condition rapidly. Your child should be excluded from school until spots are dry.

Lice. Lice presents itself with severe itching of the scalp. The lice are small, flat, gray-white in color and difficult to see. The eggs (called nits) are small, white and firmly attached to strands of hair (unlike dandruff). Caution your child about using combs, brushes and hats that belong to others. Children may not attend school until they have been treated and are free of lice and nits.

Meningitis. This is a highly communicable disease. The onset is sudden vomiting, fever, headache and a stiff neck.

Pink Eye. This condition causes eyes to itch, burn and tear. The whites of the eyes become a reddish/pink color, matter collects in the corner of the eyes, and many times in the morning the lids will be stuck together. A yellowish crust is present along the lids. **This condition is very contagious.** The child is to be kept home until the eyes are clear.

Ringworm. Ringworm is a contagious disease of the skin, hair and nails. It consists of one or more rounded, scaly, elevated reddish patches. It is itchy and painful. Medication is needed to clear the condition.

Scabies. This is a contagious skin disease with severe itching, especially at night. The rash resembles gray, slightly elevated lines of pores in the skin along with the presence of small red pimples. Scratching causes the pimples to bleed and scab. It usually starts on the hands, between the fingers, on the wrists and under the arms. It responds quickly to medication. The child needs to stay at home until cleared.

Scarlet Fever. This disease is characterized by a sudden onset of a fever, sore throat, headache and vomiting. A red, raised rash, usually on the neck and behind the ears, chest and back are present. Incubation is 2 to 4 days. The child should be seen by a doctor for treatment in order to prevent complications to the heart and other organs. The child must be kept home until the doctor gives permission to attend.

Strep Throat. Strep throat's symptoms are the same as those of scarlet fever, but the rash is missing. The child is to be kept at home until the doctor gives permission to attend. Strep infections can be hard to define since some children have little or no symptoms. Please have any sore throat checked by a doctor to rule out strep. Strep is a very contagious infection.

Croup. Croup is a common respiratory problem in young children. Its main symptom is a harsh, barking cough. Croup causes swelling and narrowing in the voice box, windpipe, and breathing tubes that lead to the lungs. This can make it harder for your child to breathe.

Hand/Foot/Mouth Disease. Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a highly contagious infection. It's caused by viruses from the Enterovirus family, most commonly the coxsackie virus. These viruses can spread from person-to-person through direct contact with unwashed hands or surfaces contaminated with feces. It can also be transmitted through contact with an infected person's saliva, stool, or respiratory secretions. Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than 5 years old. However, it can sometimes occur in adults. It usually starts with a fever, reduced appetite, sore throat, and a feeling of being unwell (malaise). One or two days after the fever starts, painful sores can develop in the mouth (herpangina). They begin, often in the back of the mouth, as small red spots that blister and can become ulcers. A skin rash with red spots, and sometimes with blisters, may also develop over one or two days on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; it may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital area. Some people, especially young children, may get dehydrated if they are not able to swallow enough liquids because of painful mouth sores. Not everyone will get all of these symptoms.

ATTENDANCE

If your child will not be attending on any given day for any reason, please send an email to the AHA! Program at ahanorthcanaan@gmail.com. Notification of schedule change to NCES should not be considered notice. Direct contact using the email address above is required.

Children **must be picked up promptly** at the end of the day. We will contact the parent if there has not been any effort to contact the staff to notify there is an issue. In the event a parent is unreachable, we will contact the designated emergency pick up person(s). In the event we are unable to reach either a parent or an emergency contact person, at 6:00 PM we will contact the State Police. *Failure to pick your child up from the Program by the specified time is a form of child abandonment.*

If there is an emergency that will impede you from picking your child up on time, please call 860-824-5149 ext 154 to report this issue.

A charge of \$15.00 for each 15-minute increment will be applied for late pick up.

Schedule Notes

AHA ! does not open on school holidays or during set vacations during the school year. Camp AHA will be run during specific weeks during the summer.

We do not accept drop-ins. Your child should be attending during the days agreed upon. If you are in need of extra coverage, you may contact the Director to check availability ahead of time.

Depending on availability, the Director may offer open spots to families that are currently enrolled for special events/field trips during the year. This option will only be available if space allows and cannot be guaranteed.

Snow Days, Early Closing

If Region 1 or specifically North Canaan Elementary School is closed due to weather conditions or an emergency situation, AHA ! will not be open. If school is dismissed early, AHA! will not operate. Please be sure to monitor the status of school due to inclement weather, and be sure to notify the school of alternate dismissal arrangements.

Field Trips

We normally take walks around town and the school grounds, we ask that you sign a general form for these outings at registration. All other trips will require a separate permission form signed by a parent.

Child Abuse/Neglect

As mandated reporters by the State of Connecticut, our staff is thoroughly trained in the signs and symptoms of any form of child abuse and/or neglect. Staff is also trained to treat this subject with proper sensitivity and not to overreact. Whenever we suspect an incident has occurred, we will follow procedure. Our priority is the safety and well-being of the children in our care.

All our staff have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of any child involved in our program.

Definition:

Child Abuse occurs where a child has had physical injury inflicted upon him or her other than by accidental means, has injuries at variance with the history given of them, or is in a condition resulting in maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment. (Connecticut General Statutes §46b-120)

Child Neglect occurs where a child has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, emotionally, or morally, or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being. (Connecticut General Statutes §46b-120)

Staff Responsibilities:

By Connecticut State law, employees of AHA ! are mandated reporters for all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect or a child at risk and receives training annually. The Connecticut Abuse and Neglect “Careline” number is 1-800-842-2288. Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm. (Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a)

The Program staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers do not maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children, including, at a minimum that:

- No child will be left alone or unsupervised while in care.
- No one will engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child.
- No one will bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child’s mouth.
- No one employs methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward or the denial of basic needs or using training methods for toilet training that punish, demean, or humiliate a child.
- No one will use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward.
- No one will use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child’s family.

Our Program supports a zero tolerance for abuse and neglect and will implement immediate action, up to and including discharge, should there be an allegation that a staff member abused or neglected a child.

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

For Observed Abuse:

- Immediate dismissal.
- Notification to parent, Board of Directors and DCF (a written report will be filed and kept on premises)

For Alleged Abuse:

- Notification to parent, Board of Directors, DCF (a written report will be filed and kept on premises)
- While the Program conducts an internal investigation, the staff member will be placed on administrative leave pending the results of the internal and DCF investigation. The privacy of the child and the staff member will be protected.
- The investigation will include but may not be limited to the following:
 - The Director, Board of Directors, and their legal counsel will interview the staff member and any witnesses.
 - The Director, Board of Directors, and their legal counsel will meet with the child and his/her parents or write up a report of allegations against the staff member. (pending guidance from DCF)
 - Department of Children and Families
- Office of Early Childhood
- If the allegations are proven true, immediate dismissal will follow.

Specifics on Reporting a Suspected Case of Abuse or Neglect:

- Call the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Careline at 1-800-842-2288
- Call the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) at 1-800-282-6063 or 1-860-509-8045 (for staff abuse or neglect only)

- Information needed:
 - Child's information (name, address, date of birth)
 - Parent's or Guardian's information (name, address, phone number)
 - Relevant information (physical or behavioral indicators, nature and extent of injury, maltreatment, or neglect)
 - Exact description of what the reporter has observed
 - Time and date of incident
 - Information about previous injuries, if any
 - Circumstances under which reporter learned of abuse
 - Name of any person suspected of causing injury
 - Any information reporter believes would be helpful
 - Any action taken to help or treat the child (seek medical attention for the child if needed)

Mandated reporters must report orally to DCF or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected. Within 48 hours of making the report, the mandated reporter must submit a written report (DCF-136) to DCF.

Staff are protected by law from discrimination or retaliation from reporting suspected abuse or neglect (CT General Statutes, Section 17a-101e). Staff making a report will be required to give their name, but may ask for it to be confidential.

All phone calls to DCF shall be documented and kept on file by the Secretary of the Board of Directors and will be on file on premises. A copy of all statements from staff and the DCF-136 shall also be kept on file.

Staff Training:

Staff training to prevent abuse and neglect and to increase staff awareness will include but not be limited to the following:

- Staff will periodically review and discuss the policy on abuse and neglect.
- Staff will be required to attend annual staff training or take the on-line course of the Mandated Reporter Training.
- The Program will post indicators of abuse and neglect and will review its policy annually.

Visitors and Special Guests

The Program encourages visitors for special events and activities throughout the year. All visitors are required to be invited and/or approved by the Director.

Parents and Legal Guardians of children enrolled are welcome to visit during the hours of the Program.

Visitors displaying inappropriate behavior will be asked to leave and will be excluded from future invitations.

WHAT TO SEND WITH YOUR CHILD EACH DAY

Food

We ask that families provide an extra snack for your child to eat during the afterschool time. We understand that this may not be possible, therefore we will offer one snack each day. The Program is a Peanut Free environment based for the safety of children who may have a peanut allergy.

Each child should have a water bottle with them every day.

Clothing

Dress your child appropriately. We recommend comfortable clothes, that can be worn outside. In the Winter, we spend lots of time outside. Please be sure that your child has boots, gloves a hat and a warm coat. If your child is attending Camp AHA, more items may be required.

Photos

Staff may take pictures to share during activities. These photos may be sent to parents, or used to promote the Program on social media, in the newspaper, grant applications or in fundraising material. If you would rather not have your child included in these photos, please be to indicate this on the form included in your enrollment packet.

A. H. A. !

After Hours Activities



PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I received the Parent Handbook (revised December 2024). I have read and understand the policies and information that is included in the handbook at this time.

PARENT NAME: _____

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

North Canaan Education Foundation
PO Box 1155
North Canaan, CT 06018
ahanorthcanaan@yahoo.com