



GROWING TOGETHER: PARENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027



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Dear Families,

Welcome to Rita's Norwood Daycare! We are honored that you are considering us as a partner in your child's early learning journey. Choosing childcare is one of the most important decisions a family can make, and we appreciate the trust you place in us each day.

Rita's Norwood Daycare was founded on a simple but meaningful vision: to create a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where every child feels valued, respected, and inspired to learn. Located in the Norwood neighborhood of the Bronx, the home our family has proudly owned since 2001, our daycare is deeply rooted in the community we proudly call home.

Our program is named in honor of Rita, a retired New York City educator with more than twenty years of teaching experience. Her passion for children, commitment to education, and belief that every child deserves encouragement and opportunity continue to inspire everything we do. As a family-owned and Latino-owned Group Family Daycare, we are proud to carry forward her legacy of compassion, dedication, and lifelong learning.

Our Montessori-inspired program combines structured learning with hands-on exploration, encouraging children to become independent thinkers, confident problem-solvers, and compassionate members of their community. We also proudly offer bilingual learning opportunities that help children develop language skills while embracing cultural diversity and inclusion.

Everything we do is guided by our core values:

- **Honesty & Respect** – We build trusting relationships through kindness, integrity, and mutual respect.
- **Positivity & Determination** – We encourage children to embrace challenges with confidence, resilience, and optimism.
- **Caring & Growth** – We nurture each child's unique abilities while supporting continuous learning and personal development.

Thank you for allowing us to become part of your family's journey. We look forward to learning, growing, and celebrating many milestones together.

With gratitude,

The Family of Rita's Norwood Daycare



Every great journey begins with a story, and ours begins with family.

Rita's Norwood Daycare was founded to honor the legacy of Rita, a retired New York City educator whose passion for teaching and dedication to children inspired our family for more than two decades. Her belief that every child deserves to feel seen, supported, and encouraged continues to shape everything we do.

For more than twenty years, our family has called the Norwood neighborhood home. As parents ourselves, we understand the trust it takes to place your child in someone else's care. That understanding, combined with Rita's lifelong commitment to education, inspired us to create a program where children are welcomed with kindness, encouraged to explore, and cared for like family.

Opening Rita's Norwood Daycare is our way of giving back to the community that has given so much to us. It is our hope that every child who walks through our doors feels valued, every family feels supported, and every day is filled with opportunities to learn, grow, and create lasting memories together.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your family's journey. **We look forward to growing together.**

MISSION, VISION & CORE VALUES

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide a safe, welcoming environment where children feel valued, build confidence, and develop a love of learning through meaningful experiences and caring relationships. We support each child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development while creating a strong foundation for lifelong success.

Our Vision

We envision Rita's Norwood Daycare as a trusted place where children discover their potential, families feel supported, and a strong sense of community inspires learning, kindness, and growth for generations to come.



Our Core Values

Honesty & Respect

We build trusting relationships by treating every child, family, and team member with kindness, honesty, and respect.

Positivity & Determination

We encourage children to approach new experiences with confidence, resilience, and a willingness to keep trying.

Caring & Growth

We create an environment where every child feels supported, encouraged, and inspired to learn each day.

OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Every child is born with a natural sense of curiosity. We believe every child deserves the opportunity to explore, ask questions, make discoveries, and develop confidence at their own pace. Our role is to provide a welcoming environment where children feel encouraged to try new things, solve problems, and celebrate their accomplishments.

Our approach is inspired by Montessori principles and grounded in hands-on learning, purposeful play, and meaningful experiences. Rather than expecting every child to learn the same way, we recognize that each child brings unique interests, strengths, and abilities. By encouraging independence in everyday routines and providing opportunities for exploration, children develop confidence, responsibility, and a genuine joy for learning.

As a bilingual program, we naturally introduce both English and Spanish through conversations, stories, songs, and daily experiences. By celebrating language and culture, children gain an appreciation for diversity while building communication skills in an engaging and supportive environment.

Every activity has a purpose, every child has a voice, and every day is an opportunity to discover, grow, and flourish.



ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

The information below provides a quick overview of our program. Additional details about our policies, curriculum, and daily routines can be found throughout this guide.

Program Information	
Hours	Monday–Friday, 7:30 AM–6:00 PM
Ages Served	6 weeks–12 years
Meals Provided	Morning Snack, Lunch & Supper
Learning Approach	Montessori-inspired, bilingual, hands-on learning
Setting	Family-owned Group Family Daycare
Licensed By	New York State
Communication	Parent app, daily updates & family partnership

Each day balances learning, creativity, movement, rest and play. Consistent routines help children feel secure while allowing flexibility to meet each child's developmental needs and interests.

Children participate in hands-on experiences that encourage independence, creativity, problem-solving, and meaningful social interactions. Whether exploring a new concept, creating artwork, reading together, or enjoying outdoor play, each activity is designed to support learning through experience.

As a bilingual program, children are naturally introduced to both English and Spanish through songs, stories, conversations, and everyday routines. Language is woven into the day in a way that feels engaging, comfortable, and developmentally appropriate.

Most importantly, we strive to create an environment where children feel safe, respected, encouraged, and excited to return each day.



THE GROWING TOGETHER LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Learning at Rita's is guided by our **Growing Together Learning Framework**—an approach that recognizes every child learns differently while celebrating the joy of learning together.

Rather than expecting every child to learn the same way, we introduce shared themes that are thoughtfully adapted to each age and stage of development. This allows children to explore the same ideas through experiences that are engaging, challenging, and appropriate for them.

Whether a child is discovering colors through sensory play, creating artwork, conducting a simple science experiment, or completing a STEM challenge, every activity is designed to encourage exploration, creativity, independence, and confidence.

This approach creates a shared learning experience where children grow together while learning in ways that are meaningful to them.

One Theme, Many Ways to Learn

One Theme, Many Ways to Learn is the heart of our Growing Together Learning Framework.

Each month, children explore a shared theme together, but the learning experiences are thoughtfully adapted to each age group. This allows children to share in a common learning experience while participating in activities that are appropriate, engaging, and meaningful for them.

For example, during an ocean-themed week:

- *Infants* may explore ocean textures, sounds, and colors through sensory experiences.
- *Toddlers* may create finger paintings, sing themed songs, and discover sea animals through interactive play.
- *Preschoolers* may investigate marine life through stories, simple science experiments, dramatic play, and creative art projects.
- *School-age children* may paint ocean landscapes on canvas, build marine habitats, research sea creatures, or complete STEM challenges inspired by the week's theme.

While every child participates differently, everyone shares the same learning journey. This approach encourages children to learn alongside one another, celebrate each other's discoveries, and grow with confidence at their own pace.



OUR DAILY RHYTHM

A consistent daily routine helps children feel secure, build independence, and know what to expect throughout the day. While our schedule may be adjusted to meet the needs of different age groups, each day includes opportunities for learning, creative expression, outdoor play, rest, and meaningful social interactions.

Time	Daily Experience
7:30-9:00	Arrival & Free Play
9:00-9:30	Morning Meeting & AM Snack
9:30-10:00	Learning Invitations
10:00-10:15	Personal Hygiene
10:15-11:00	Small Group Learning
11:00-11:45	Outdoor Exploration
11:45-12:00	Personal Hygiene
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-2:30	Rest & Quiet Activities
2:30-3:30	Active Growth
3:30-4:00	Supper
4:00-4:15	Personal Hygiene
4:15-6:00	Choice Centers & Departure

Children enjoy experiences throughout the day that include:

- ♦ Literacy
- ♦ Science
- ♦ Creative Arts
- ♦ Music & Movement
- ♦ Outdoor Exploration
- ♦ Practical Life
- ♦ School Readiness
- ♦ Social-Emotional Learning
- ♦ Bilingual Learning



HEALTH, WELLNESS & SAFETY

The health and safety of the children in our care guide everything we do. To help maintain a healthy learning environment, our program follows New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations and established health and safety practices. Our daily health and safety practices include handwashing, routine cleaning and sanitizing, safe food handling, active supervision, and age-appropriate safety procedures.

This section outlines our procedures for illness, medication administration, nutrition, emergency preparedness, and other important health and safety policies. These guidelines help us provide consistent care while supporting the well-being of the children in our program.

A Note About Our Policies

Rita's Norwood Daycare is committed to maintaining the highest standards of health and safety for every child in our care. The policies in this section are based on current New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations for Group Family Day Care Homes and may be updated as licensing requirements or public health guidance change. Families will always be notified of significant policy updates.

Daily Health Checks

To help maintain a healthy environment for all children and staff, a brief health check will be conducted for each child upon arrival every day in accordance with New York State regulations.

During the daily health check, caregivers will observe each child for signs of illness, injury, or changes in behavior that may affect their ability to participate comfortably in the day's activities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Fever or unusually warm skin
- Persistent coughing or difficulty breathing
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Unexplained rashes or skin conditions
- Red, swollen, or draining eyes
- Unusual fatigue, irritability, or lethargy
- Signs of pain, discomfort, or injury
- Any symptoms that may indicate a communicable illness



If a child becomes ill during the day, they will be cared for in a comfortable area under the direct supervision of a caregiver while awaiting pick-up. Parents or authorized emergency contacts will be notified promptly and asked to arrange for the child's pick-up as soon as possible.

To help protect the health of our daycare community, we kindly ask families to keep children at home if they are not feeling well or are unable to comfortably participate in the day's activities. Working together helps reduce the spread of illness and ensures a healthier environment for everyone.

Please contact us before arrival if you're unsure whether your child should attend. We're happy to help you determine whether they're ready for the day.

ILLNESS & EXCLUSION POLICY

While we understand that unexpected illnesses can be challenging for families, these guidelines help reduce the spread of communicable illnesses and protect the health of our daycare community.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Please do not bring your child to daycare if they have any of the following symptoms or conditions:

- A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent or severe coughing
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- An undiagnosed rash or skin condition
- Red, swollen, or draining eyes (conjunctivitis/pink eye)
- Mouth sores with excessive drooling
- Head lice, scabies, or other contagious infestations until appropriate treatment has begun
- A communicable illness that requires exclusion under New York State or local public health guidance
- Any illness or condition that prevents your child from comfortably participating in daily activities or requires more individual care than staff can safely provide

If you're unsure whether your child should attend, please contact us before arrival. We're happy to help you determine whether your child is ready for the day.



If Your Child Becomes Ill During the Day

If a child develops symptoms of illness while attending daycare, they will be cared for in a comfortable area under close supervision while minimizing exposure to other children. A parent or authorized emergency contact will be notified promptly and will be expected to arrange for the child's pick-up as soon as possible.

If a child's condition requires immediate medical attention, emergency medical services (911) will be contacted first, followed by the child's parent or guardian.

Returning to Daycare

Children may return to daycare when they:

- Have been free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Have been free from vomiting and diarrhea.
- Can comfortably participate in normal daily activities.
- No longer pose a risk of spreading a communicable illness to others.
- Meet any return-to-care requirements established by their healthcare provider, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), or the local health department, when applicable.

In some cases, Rita's Norwood Daycare may request written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider before a child returns to care. This may be necessary following certain communicable illnesses, prolonged absences due to illness, or when required by New York State regulations or public health guidance.

Communicable Illnesses

If a child is diagnosed with a communicable illness, families are expected to notify Rita's Norwood Daycare as soon as possible. When appropriate, we will notify families of potential exposure while maintaining the confidentiality of the affected child and family. Our program will follow all applicable reporting requirements and guidance issued by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and local public health authorities.

By working together, we can reduce the spread of illness and support the well-being of our entire daycare community.



Allergies & Individual Health Care Plans

Children with allergies, asthma, diabetes, or other medical needs are welcome in our program. Families are responsible for informing us of any medical conditions before enrollment and whenever health needs change.

Individual Health Care Plans

When required by New York State regulations or recommended by a child's licensed healthcare provider, an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) and any necessary emergency care plans must be provided before the child begins attending or as soon as the condition is identified.

The plan should include information such as:

- The child's diagnosis or medical condition
- Signs and symptoms that require attention
- Emergency procedures and response instructions
- Required medications or medical equipment
- Instructions from the child's licensed healthcare provider
- Emergency contact information

Our staff will review each plan carefully and work collaboratively with families to support the child's health needs while maintaining a safe environment for all children.

Food Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

The safety of children with food allergies is a shared responsibility. Families are asked to notify us of any food allergies or dietary restrictions during enrollment. We work closely with families to reduce the risk of accidental exposure by following each child's Individual Health Care Plan and established food safety practices.

Because we care for multiple children with varying dietary needs, we cannot guarantee that our program is completely free of specific allergens. Families should discuss any concerns with the daycare before enrollment so we can determine whether we can safely meet their child's needs.



Emergency Medications

When prescribed, emergency medications such as epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens), rescue inhalers, or other emergency medications must be provided by the parent or guardian along with all required authorizations and documentation. These medications will be stored in accordance with New York State regulations, so they remain secure, readily accessible to authorized staff, and available in the event of an emergency.

Medication Administration

Rita's Norwood Daycare **does not administer prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, supplements, or herbal remedies** to children in care. It is the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to administer any medications before arrival or after the child leaves daycare whenever possible.

If a child requires medication during daycare hours that cannot reasonably be administered outside of care, parents should discuss their child's needs with the provider prior to enrollment to determine whether the program is able to safely meet those needs.

Our Responsibilities

In accordance with New York State regulations:

- Medication will only be administered by authorized staff who have received the required training.
- All medication administration will be documented and maintained in the child's record.
- Medications will be stored securely and according to manufacturer instructions.
- Emergency medications, such as epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens) and rescue inhalers, will remain readily accessible to authorized staff while safely stored out of children's reach.

Medication cannot be administered without the required authorizations and documentation. We ask that families discuss any questions or concerns regarding their child's medication needs before attendance so we can work together.

Meals & Nutrition

Healthy eating habits support children's growth, development, and ability to learn. Our program participates in the *Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)* and follows USDA nutrition guidelines to provide balanced meals and snacks that support the health and well-being of every child.



Children attending our program are offered:

- Morning Snack
- Lunch
- Supper

Fresh drinking water is available throughout the day and offered regularly to help children stay hydrated.

Infant Feeding

Families provide breast milk, formula, bottles and any other feeding supplies needed for their infant. All items must be clearly labeled with the child's name.

Meals Provided by Families

Families who choose to provide meals or snacks for their child are welcome to do so. To help protect the health and safety of all children, outside food must be free of common allergens identified by the daycare, including nuts and peanut products, and should not include candy or other foods of minimal nutritional value.

If your child has special dietary needs, allergies, or medical restrictions, please notify us during enrollment so we can work together to determine the safest and most appropriate accommodations.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are a special part of our community, and we enjoy celebrating each child's milestone with their classmates. Families wishing to bring food or treats for a birthday celebration must receive approval from the daycare at least one week in advance. To help ensure the safety of all children, all items must comply with our allergy and food safety guidelines.



Emergency Preparedness

We prepare for emergencies before they happen. Staff receive ongoing training and participate in regular emergency preparedness activities to help ensure a calm and effective response.

We maintain written emergency plans in accordance with New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations and regularly review our procedures to promote the safety and well-being of every child in our care.

Fire & Evacuation Procedures

Fire and evacuation drills are conducted regularly as required by New York State regulations. Children are guided through these drills in a calm, age-appropriate manner so they become familiar with emergency routines without creating unnecessary fear or anxiety.

If our facility must be evacuated due to fire, a utility emergency, or another unsafe condition, children will be safely relocated to our designated emergency meeting location. Parents or guardians will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so, and reunification procedures will be initiated promptly.

Shelter-in-Place Procedures

Certain emergencies, such as severe weather, environmental hazards, or other situations identified by emergency officials, may require us to remain safely inside the daycare rather than evacuate.

During a shelter-in-place event, children will remain indoors under close supervision while staff follow established emergency procedures. Essential emergency supplies are maintained on-site, and communication with families will be provided as soon as circumstances safely allow.

Medical Emergencies

If a child experiences a medical emergency, staff will immediately assess the situation and provide appropriate care within the scope of their training. Emergency medical services (911) will be contacted whenever necessary, followed immediately by notification of the child's parent or guardian and emergency contacts.

Communication During Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, every effort will be made to communicate with families as quickly as possible using the most appropriate available method, including telephone calls, text messages, email, or our parent communication platform. We ask that families ensure their emergency contact information remains accurate and up to date.



Emergency Contact Information

Parents are required to provide current emergency contact information for themselves and at least two additional authorized emergency contacts. Any changes to contact information should be reported to the daycare immediately to help ensure we can reach families without delay if an emergency occurs.

Thank You

In the next section you will find Family Enrollment Forms to be filled out by a Parent or Guardian. Thank you for trusting Rita's Norwood Daycare to be part of your family's journey. We look forward to learning, growing, and celebrating with your child.

Growing Together.