

**HALIFAX & REGION  
MILITARY FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE**

# CASUAL CARE

## PARENT HANDBOOK

### **HALIFAX SITE**

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**CASUAL CARE ROOM**

902-722-4663

**CASUAL CARE COORDINATOR**

902-427-7796

### **SHEARWATER SITE**

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**CASUAL CARE ROOM**

902-720-1038

**CASUAL CARE COORDINATOR**

902-720-1040

### **RESPITE/EMERGENCY CHILD CARE**

24/7 FIRST team 902-427-7788

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**[WWW.HALIFAXMFRC.CA](http://WWW.HALIFAXMFRC.CA)**

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## CASUAL CARE

The casual care program is an on-site non-licensed child care program for children 3 months to 12 years. We offer a variety of child care services for our military families. These include:

- Weekday Casual Care
- Saturday Casual Care
- Program/Special Event Child Care
- Respite and Emergency Child Care

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Halifax: Monday through Friday from 9am – 12pm and 1pm – 4pm

Shearwater: Monday through Wednesday from 8:30am – 1pm. Thursday – Friday from 1 – 4pm

Halifax & Shearwater: Selected Saturdays 10am – 3pm

The casual care staff will be in the classrooms prior to the start of each session; however, we are unable to accept children early. Staff are in the classroom to set up activities and ensure the classroom is ready and are not able to adequately supervise children during this time. Classrooms will open five minutes prior to the beginning of each session.

If you are attending program related child care you may drop your child(ren) off 15 minutes prior to your program starting.

## CHILD CARE PHILOSOPHY

At the H&R MFRC we believe children learn through active discovery and interactive play. To meet the needs of each developing child we will provide an active, inclusive environment with stimulating activities to enhance all areas of development. The children will be encouraged to direct their own play experiences through the use of adult arranged activities. These activities are chosen for their potential to engage and challenge, while promoting the child's choice.

### ***Our child care programs strive to:***

- Foster independence;
- Provide indoor play to help develop gross and fine motor skills;
- Promote self-esteem;
- Provide age appropriate activities, which foster cognitive and social growth;
- Enhance language skills and foster creativity through self-expression;
- Consider each child's skills, talents, challenges, etc;
- Assist children in expressing positive and negative feelings in appropriate ways;
- Encourage participation;
- Promote the concept of turn taking and cooperation;
- Encourage social interaction; and
- Expose children to cultural diversity

## INCLUSION STATEMENT

Research indicates the proportion of children with disabilities in child care is 10-15%; this is consistent with occurrences in the general population. Therefore, it is our goal to provide an inclusive child care program with developmentally appropriate group experiences for all children.

We recognize children have unique needs; some reflecting their family's background or culture. We will work directly with families of children with disabilities to ensure our program will best meet the developmental needs of the child; ensuring participation in all activities.

The H&R MFRC will work in partnership with community professionals, such as early interventionists and speech language pathologists. Families and/or professionals are required to consult with the Casual Care Coordinator prior to setting up professional visits in order to best support the child and family goals within the program guidelines.

## INCLUSION INFORMATION

Casual care is an inclusive child care program. In the case where a child who requires extra supports is starting in the program, a meeting may be required with the family (including the child) and Casual Care Coordinator prior to the child's first session. This meeting will help to ensure the program is the best fit for the child; providing an exchange of information and knowledge which will include us learning about your child; expectations, involvement with external professionals, our program philosophy, goals and curriculum, and a Centre tour. The information gathered will assist the casual care staff to ensure the child is fully included in the program.

We view parents as partners, who lead the decision-making process, this is predicated on the family being the expert on their child; what they would like for their child and how best to meet their needs.

So in keeping with an inclusive philosophy, should your child require extra supports, have a diagnosis or in the process of an assessment, we ask that you disclose this information upon registration as this is valuable information that allows us to make any necessary program adaptations or modifications to ensure that your child benefits from all aspects of the program.

Our casual care staff will collaborate with many external professionals (Early Interventionists, Speech Therapists, EIBI, and Occupational Therapists etc.) to work directly with children within in the classroom. In these instances, parents must ensure that “Consent to Release and Receive Information” forms are completed and on file prior to external professionals requesting to visit the Centre.

## OUR TEAM

Casual care staff are screened through the Child Abuse Registry, Police Criminal Records checks and Vulnerable Sector check. The providers have current First-Aid training and are encouraged to regularly attend workshops to enhance their knowledge of child care trends and practices.

## RATIO

We believe in providing quality care to all children attending our casual care programs. Ensuring appropriate level of staffing is essential in attaining this goal. We work within the following provincially approved ratio guidelines when scheduling the appropriate number of staff for the provision of care. Ratios may change based upon circumstances as authorized by Child & Family Services.

1:4 Infants (3 months – 18 months)

1:6 Toddlers (18 months – 3 years)

1:8 Preschoolers (3 years – 5 years)

1:15 School aged children (up to 12 years)

## REGISTRATION FOR CASUAL CARE

### WEEKDAY

**Halifax site registration:** Call Casual Care room at 902-722-4663.

**Shearwater site registration:** Call Casual Care room at 902-720-1038.

### SATURDAY

24/7 Family Information Referral Services team at 902-427-7788 between 6am and 7pm or the Shearwater site office 902-720-1885 between the 8am and 4pm.

Children must be pre-registered to attend. Children who arrive without pre-registering will be accepted only if there is adequate space, staffing, and resources. This will be left up to the discretion of the casual care staff. Pre-registration can happen up to one week in advance. If you have specialist appointments we will accommodate registration prior to the one week policy.

If the casual care program is full on the day you have requested, you can request to be placed on our waitlist. If a space becomes available you will be called and offered the space.

Weekday casual care will not run if there are less than two children booked into the program. Saturday casual care will not be offered if less than six children are registered. Session cancellations are made the day before the scheduled session by noon and casual care staff will call families to let them know the session has been cancelled.

## CHILD INFORMATION FORM / FIRST VISIT

All children MUST have a completed child information form prior to the child being left in our care.

All forms are required to be updated every six months or as information changes (phone numbers, addresses, emergency contacts, allergies/special needs, etc.). It is important for parents to let us know any allergies, medical conditions, diagnoses, and other conditions a child may have so we can provide the best care and support to the child. All information is kept confidential and used only for the purposes of casual care. The H&R MFRC adheres to the Privacy Code for the Military Family Services Program.

First-time users of casual care are encouraged to bring children in for an introductory visit and to meet with the Casual Care Coordinator to talk about the needs of the child and the policies of casual care. To set up an appointment please call the Casual Care Coordinator.

To ensure a child's safety and well-being, parents arriving and departing from any of the casual care programs are required to sign their child/ren IN and OUT with the casual care child care provider.

## **RESPITE & EMERGENCY CHILD CARE**

During a work related separation or deployment families may be eligible to access respite child care.

Emergency child care service is available 24 hours, 7 days per week, please call the 24-hour line at 902-427-7788 or toll free at 1-888-753-8827.

## **FEES / PAYMENTS**

The Halifax & Region MFRC makes every effort to provide quality care at affordable prices to participants. Casual care is a subsidized program; child care fees help to offset some of the staff wages and program operating costs.

### **HALIFAX WEEKDAY CASUAL CARE**

*Children 3 months – 18 months: \$15 per session*

*Children over 18 months: \$12 per session*

### **SHEARWATER WEEKDAY CASUAL CARE**

#### **Monday – Wednesday**

*Children 3 months – 18 months: \$5 / hour with a minimum charge of \$15 per session*

*Children over 18 months: \$4 per hour with a minimum charge of \$12 per session*

#### **Thursday – Friday (pm)**

*Children 3 months – 18 months: \$15 per session*

*Children over 18 months: \$12 per session*

### **HALIFAX & SHEARWATER WEEKEND CASUAL CARE**

*Children 3 months – 18 months: \$5 / hour with a minimum charge of \$15 per session*

*Children over 18 months: \$4 per hour with a minimum charge of \$12 per session*

Payments are due at the time of picking up the child/ren. Payments are made with the FIRST-team or at the main office in Shearwater. In Shearwater, during the afternoons please pay for your child care before picking up your child. The casual care program is unable to bill on a weekly or monthly basis. We accept cash, debit, Visa, MasterCard and cheques made payable to: Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre.

If families do not pay the amounts owing, future registration will not be done until the outstanding balance is paid in full. If there are challenges meeting these payment guidelines, parents should discuss this with the Casual Care Coordinator at the respective site prior to registering.

### **TIPS**

Please no tipping; there are many people that are responsible for your children while in our program.

### **RECEIPTS**

We will only issue families one receipt at the end of each of their casual care sessions. It is your responsibility to keep the receipts safe for tax purposes.

## **CANCELLATIONS / LATE FEES**

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Please pick your children up on time. Failure to do so will result in you being charged \$5 for each ½ hour (minutes are rounded to ½ hour).

If you know your child is unable to attend, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required to avoid any charges. There are often waitlists and we would like to offer the space to another family. In addition, the casual care program is staffed based upon number of children, ages, and ratios. Families will be responsible for this payment prior to using casual care. Failure to cancel will result in you being charged for that session. In order for us to be able to recover some of our costs.

Casual child care is an extremely popular program. In order to accommodate as many families as possible this program is intended to be used on a casual basis only. We ask that families access casual care a maximum of three times a week.

### **HALIFAX SITE CANCELLATIONS**

All casual care in Halifax please call the Casual Care room 902-722-4663.

### **SHEARWATER SITE CANCELLATIONS**

All casual care in Shearwater please call the Casual Care room 902-720-1038.

## **AUTHORIZED PICK UP**

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Parents are required to indicate who is allowed to pick up their child(ren). It is important that the names of all who are authorized to pick up your child are kept current. Any changes must be provided to child care staff in writing. We are unable to release a child to anyone not on the list. In addition, for safety reasons, we will not release a child to anyone under the age of 16 years.

Staff will request identification if the person picking up the child is unfamiliar to them.

Legal documentation will be required in any case where a parent and/or legal guardian are not permitted to pick up a child from the centre.

\*MFRC staff (including casual care, child care, preschool and programmers) cannot pick up or drop off children from the part-day preschool program and/or any other programs within the centre.\*

## **WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS**

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### **CLOTHING**

As part of the learning process, the children may be involved in messy activities. Please send your child in clothes appropriate for an active session. When possible the children use the playground and may go for walks outside

- Children should be dressed appropriately for the weather. Children may play outside daily and must be protected from the elements;
- Spring/summer will require a hat and sunscreen;
- Fall/winter children will need a hat with ties, two pairs of mittens, snowsuit, and boots;
- Wet weather requires rainboots, and splash pants; and
- All of these items must be clearly labelled with child's name

In addition, based on the child's age, we request the following:

### **INFANTS (3MOS TO 18MOS)**

- Bottles of formula or breast milk; please label with child's name, date and contents;
- Baby food is to be provided by parents until children can be introduced to regular food at which time they will be fed food provided to casual care from the child care centre's menu;
- Diapers and wipes;
- Any cream or ointment required for diaper rash;
- Special blanket or toy;
- Indoor sneakers or other rubber soled shoes are required for the winter months (no slippers please); and
- 2-3 changes of clothes, including undershirts, socks, and outer wear

### **TODDLER (18MOS TO 3 YRS)**

- Diapers and wipes;
- Any cream or ointment required for diaper rash;
- Indoor sneakers or other rubber soled shoes are required for the winter months (no slippers please);
- Two full changes of clothing (more if toilet training), including underwear, socks, and shoes; and

### **PRESCHOOL/SCHOOL AGE (4 YRS AND UP)**

- Indoor sneakers or other rubber soled shoes are required for the winter months (no slippers please)
- Change of clothes, including socks and underwear
- We encourage parents to send Velcro sneakers for their child; it is part of our program to promote self-help skills
- Outside clothing appropriate for the weather i.e. snow suit and boots, splash suit and rubber boots, mittens, hat with ties, etc.

### **TOYS FROM HOME**

Please do not bring toys from home as they may not be appropriate for all children and it can be hard to share a special toy with other children. We provide a wide variety of toys for the benefit of all children. The casual care program is not responsible for any lost or damaged toys.

## **NUTRITION**

Participants are asked to refrain from sending nuts or products containing nuts. Some children may be allergic to nuts and we are a nut sensitive facility.

The Weekday Casual Care program provides children with a healthy snack, which is prepared by the H&R MFRC Children's Centre (in accordance with the Standards for Food and Nutrition in Regulated Child Care Settings from the Department of Community Services). Parents are asked to provide premixed bottles or breast milk and infant food until the child is eating table food.

If you are registered for Saturday or program child care please provide a snack/meal for your child. We ask that the snack/meal provided are healthy choices for children such as fruits, vegetables, regular milk, 100% fruit juices, whole grains, and foods low in fat, salt and sugar. Food which is considered a treat will be tucked away until the child's pick-up time.

Parents need to advise staff if their child requires special attention due to allergies or for religious reasons. Please label all food items with the child's name, date, and contents.

The H&R MFRC is a breastfeeding-friendly centre and mothers are invited to breastfeed anywhere in the centre. Staff can also recommend comfortable spaces for breastfeeding moms.

Tim Horton's food products are not permitted in the classroom due to possible contamination of nut products.



## **NAPTIME**

This program is a multi-age setting and children are only here for a short period of time so we have no set naptime in our routine. If children require a nap, we will do our best to set up a sleep area.

## **BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE**

Behaviour Guidance techniques will be implemented as a method of re-enforcing positive behaviour rather than punishing negative behaviour. Careful consideration will be given to the child's age and developmental level. Our staff will demonstrate a positive attitude and will assist children in learning appropriate behaviour by showing consistency when setting limits.

Every effort will be made to positively re-direct children when they are exhibiting inappropriate behaviour. This may include removing a child from one activity in which they are being disruptive and introducing them to a new activity.

The following forms of Behaviour Guidance shall be used:

- Limits set will be enforced consistently and fairly
- Under certain circumstances, staff may use physical contact to guide behaviour, for example, gently holding a child to prevent disruptive behaviour. An adult's touch during a frustrating situation may have a calming effect on the child
- A break/rest period may sometimes be required. A child will never be placed alone in a room, but may be redirected from an activity for a period of calm down.
- Positive behaviour reinforcement will be used at all times; staff will refrain from statements using "NO"
- Staff will assist children in resolving conflict by discussing the behaviour with the children immediately following the incident
- Staff will watch for potential conflicts that are arising and redirect child/ren to another activity before problems occur

The following forms of discipline shall not be used:

- Corporal punishment, including but not limited to the following:
  - striking a child directly or with any physical object,
  - shaking, shoving, spanking or other forms of aggressive physical contact; and requiring a child to repeat physical movements,
- Harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, emotional, or physical;
- Confinement of and/or isolation of child or children;
- Deprivation of a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding i.e. withholding food, taking a child's blanket away at naptime, etc.;
- Food is not offered to reinforce positive behaviors, or withheld as a consequence for inappropriate behaviors. Food is not used as a reward for completing a task or finishing a meal; and
- Should a child's behaviour cause continual disruption, the child may be asked to leave the program.

## **ILLNESS AND MEDICATION**

Sick children should not be brought to casual care; this includes but is not limited to high fever (101F or 38.3C), vomiting, diarrhea, and other communicable diseases. Parents are required to notify the staff if their child has, or has come in contact with, a communicable disease.

If a child becomes ill while at the centre, including but not limited to fever (101f or 38.3C), vomiting, diarrhea and other communicable diseases, the parents will be contacted immediately for arrangements to be made for pick up. For these reasons it is vital to leave an emergency contact number with the casual care staff when dropping off your child(ren). Children cannot return to the program for 24 hours should they be sent home with



these symptoms. As well, if your child has been prescribed antibiotics please keep your child home for 24 hours after the first dosage. This will ensure they are feeling well enough to join in upon their return.

Staff reserve the right to turn away children from the program if they are generally unwell and unable to participate in the casual care routine. This is not done often and it's for the protection of all children and staff.

Casual Care staff are not authorized to administer non-prescription medication. If a child requires prescription medications parents are to fill out a Medication Authorization form.

All prescription medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, prescribed dosage, and doctor's name. All medications must be given directly to a staff member for proper storage. For risk management these cannot be stored in your child's bag. Any prescription medication which states "as needed" (puffers) will not be given to children unless accompanied with a detailed description of what signs describe the "as needed" state from the child's doctor.

Children who do not come in with their required medication (i.e. puffers/epi pens) or come in with expired medication will not be accepted into the program.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication between parents and staff is essential for providing quality care. During the sign-in process we encourage parents to share information on their child's home routines that morning and the previous night (sleeping, eating, moods, etc.).

Parents are encouraged to bring comments and/or concerns to the Casual Care Coordinator.

Any concerns staff have will be communicated to parents in person or by phone calls from the Casual Care Coordinator.

## PHONE CALLS

The staff's first priority is caring for the children so some phone calls may go directly to voice mail during regular casual care hours. please leave a detailed voicemail and Casual Care staff will return your call as soon as possible. If it is an emergency you should call our FIRST Team in Halifax 902-427-7788 or in Shearwater 902-720-1885.

## HOLIDAYS

The Halifax & Region MFRC will normally be closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Good Friday	Easter Monday	Victoria Day
Canada Day	Natal Day	Labour Day	Thanksgiving Day
Remembrance Day	Christmas Day	Boxing Day	Heritage day

Casual care will normally close for a period of 2 weeks during the Christmas holidays.

## STORM POLICY

When the H&R MFRC is open and schools are closed due to weather the following programs will be cancelled: Casual Child Care program, New Baby, Parent & Tot, Gymboree.

When schools are closed due to weather the following Adult programs may be running without Child Care: Café Francais, Coffee Connections, and Second Language Training.

## **POWER / WATER OUTAGE POLICY**

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In the event of a power/water outage where the centre cannot ensure the safety and health of children (i.e. no heat, unable to provide meals, prolonged outage) the program will not open / will close. If children are already present parents may be contacted in cases of prolonged outages. In the event parents can not be reached those listed as emergency contacts will be contacted.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

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Our Centre has emergency procedures in place for the following:

- Fire; monthly fire drills are conducted;
- Evacuation; (Shearwater's secondary emergency site is the PSP Recreation Centre, Halifax's secondary emergency site is the Band Building); and
- Hold & Secure and Lockdown

## **CAREGIVERS UNDER THE INFLUENCE**

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A parent who appears to have been drinking and intends to drive will be asked to make alternate transportation arrangements i.e. call the other parent, call a friend, or a taxi. If the parent rejects this request, it will be necessary for the staff to call the Military Police immediately. In the case where a parent is intoxicated to the point that staff may have concerns about the child's safety, regardless of the method of transportation, the above procedure will be followed.

## **CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT PROTOCOL**

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All persons are required to report suspected child abuse. The duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect overrides the confidentiality of all professional relationships and includes information considered to be privileged. Every person in Nova Scotia is required by law under the Children and Family Services Act to report child abuse and neglect.

Suspected cases of child abuse will be reported to the Department of Community Services.

## **HIRING STAFF AS AFTERHOURS CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

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Due to conflict of interest, code of ethics, confidentiality, and professional parent/staff boundaries, parents are strongly discouraged from asking our staff to provide child care services. Our staff are highly valued and have a professional relationship with you. Please help us all respect boundaries.

## **SUPERVISION**

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As a public access facility with multiple exits, the safety of all children is a priority. Therefore the H&R MFRC requires children to be supervised at all times. This includes keeping your children with you at drop off and pick up times not allowing them children to wander or run in the hallways, and ensuring you are attending to them when they are near an exit. In cases where children are found unattended in the hallways, any staff of the MFRC will direct them back to the parent.

## **PARKING LOT**

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The H&R MFRC discourages parents from leaving children unattended in vehicles in the parking lot. The H&R MFRC cannot be held responsible/liable for accidents/incidents resulting from children being left unsupervised in vehicles.

## **PROGRAM / SPECIAL EVENT CASUAL CARE**

We realize that one of the greatest barriers for families is finding quality, affordable child care during evenings and weekends so they may attend a program, deployment activity, workshop, training or other special event at the centre. When registering for events don't forget to ask about the availability of casual care. The H&R MFRC tries to offer program child care when possible. This service is for ages 3 months to 12 years.

During evenings and weekends, older children 8 – 12 years enjoy fun activities and age appropriate games.

The H&R MFRC's Best Practice for evening casual care is that care will conclude no later than 9:00 pm; children are to be picked up immediately following the end of the program.

Programs offering child care have registration deadlines usually at least 3 days prior to the program being held. Your child care space will not be guaranteed unless you have pre-registered your child for the program.

Program child care fees are based upon the length of workshops/program as follows:

1-2.5 hours = \$3/child or \$6/family

3-5.5 hours = \$6/child or \$9/family

6-7.5 hours = \$15/child or \$25/family

## **CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REGISTRY**

We offer a child care resource and registry for military families who may be new to the area or are looking for child care providers. The Halifax & Region MFRC collects names of interested child care providers that provide child care in their homes. These people live in different areas throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality. We do not screen or endorse any of the child care providers on this list as we believe only a parent is capable of finding the right fit for their family. Parents or guardians are responsible to interview and screen all potential child care providers and check their references.

## **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS / EXTRA SUPPORT**

The H&R MFRC recognizes that families might have unique circumstances which may require casual care support outside the regular guidelines outlined in this document. Special Arrangements may be considered by the Casual Care Coordinator in consultation with Child, Youth & Parenting Supervisor and the Executive Director. Families wanting to inquire about special arrangements are to contact Child & Family Services at 427-7209 (Halifax) or 720-1040 (Shearwater). The Casual Care Coordinator may also approach families if they determine that extra supports are required to provide quality care for a child.

## **CASUAL CARE HANDBOOK**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I (we) \_\_\_\_\_ have read, understood, and will adhere to the Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre Casual Care policies as outlined in this handbook.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

H&R MFRC Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

