

**Touching Hearts,  
Changing Lives Together.**



# Family Handbook

**2025-2026 School Year**

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## Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2025–2026 school year! We are thrilled to welcome our new families and warmly welcome back our returning ones. This is an exciting time as your child begins a new chapter in their educational journey.

We are pleased to provide you with the **VCLC Family Handbook**, a guide to help you understand what to expect this school year. Inside, you will find important information about our curriculum, policies, procedures, and more. We encourage you to read it carefully and keep it handy throughout the year.

At VCLC, we use a curriculum aligned with the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards, tailored to meet the unique needs of each learner. During **Back-to-School Night**, you will receive more information about your child’s curriculum, classroom management strategies, and daily schedule.

### Instructional Model

All VCLC campuses will offer **full in-person learning** for center-based students. **Remote learning** will only be implemented in the event of a school closure due to inclement weather or emergency, to ensure continuity of instruction. Please note that **remote instruction will not be available** for students absent due to illness or vacation; such absences will be marked accordingly.

If your child does not have access to a computer at home, you may email **Chromebooks@vclc.org** to request a school-issued Chromebook. Our devices are pre-configured to provide access only to educational applications. You will be contacted with instructions for pickup. At the end of the school year, **students leaving VCLC must return their Chromebook**, while returning students may keep theirs for continued use.

### Social-Emotional Learning and the Pyramid Model

Since 2016, VCLC has proudly participated in **Cohort 1** of the **Pyramid Model** initiative. This positive behavior support system emphasizes social-emotional development, problem-solving skills, and strong relationships. The Pyramid Model provides a framework of evidence-based practices to foster children’s emotional and social competence.



Our school-wide expectations—**Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible**—are posted throughout our campuses. Your children may talk about these expectations at home, as well as our mascots, **Roary the Lion** and **Squeaky the Mouse**, who help reinforce these positive messages. We invite you to embrace these values at home as well.

### Supporting Families

VCLC is committed to fostering strong connections between school and home. Social-emotional growth depends on meaningful relationships with adults and peers.

Our **Family Association** (similar to a PTA), led by our Social Workers, offers families the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and contribute to our community. Through special events and fundraisers, you can support VCLC and build lasting relationships with other families. Stay informed by checking your child’s backpack, visiting the VCLC website, following messages on **SEESAW**, and looking out for notifications from **Alert Now**.

### Attendance Matters

Consistent attendance is vital for your child’s learning and development. You will receive the **2025–2026 school calendar**, along with your child’s teacher assignment, in August. The calendar is also accessible on our website at [www.varietyclc.org](http://www.varietyclc.org). Please ensure your child arrives on time and stays for the full day to avoid disruption to their instructional schedule and related services. We also ask that you plan vacations around the school calendar whenever possible.

### **A Few Last Notes**

The **VCLC Family Handbook** contains essential information about our school, policies, and procedures. We encourage all families to review it carefully. If you have any questions or need clarification, please contact your **social worker**. For UPK students, reach out to the **education coordinator**.

We are excited to partner with you in supporting your child's growth and success. Here's to a wonderful year ahead!

*Anna Ciccari*  
Principal, Syosset

*Gabrielle Genna*  
Principal, Levittown

*Kerri Okula*  
Principal, Northport

*Maria Freeman*  
Director of Social Work Department

*Stacey Trotti*  
Assistant Director, Social Work Department



## ***Mission Statement***

At Variety Child Learning Center, we are dedicated to supporting the development, education, and inclusion of children with diverse learning needs. Through collaborative partnerships with families, schools and the community, we provide a variety of services and programs designed to help young learners meet their educational milestones, build life skills, enhance social connections and foster independence. Our mission goes beyond helping children overcome challenges, empowering every child to grow, thrive, and reach their fullest potential with confidence and joy.

## ***VCLC Motto***

**Be Safe, Be Responsible and Be Respectful**





Variety Child Learning Center (VCLC) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to serving young children from birth to age 7 with learning, language, social, and behavioral disabilities—including autism spectrum disorders. Founded in 1966 by Judith Bloch, VCLC was established on the foundational belief that **early identification, early intervention, and strong partnerships with families** are critical to improving outcomes for children.

These guiding principles continue to shape VCLC’s comprehensive programs and services, which are designed to meet the individualized needs of each child and family. Central to our mission is fostering **Home/School Collaboration**, recognizing that engaged families are essential partners in a child’s developmental journey.

VCLC is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. Its programs are regulated by the New York State Education Department (SED), Department of Health (DOH), Bureau of Early Intervention, and Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Each of these agencies establishes specific requirements that guide and impact VCLC’s daily operations, ensuring we maintain the highest standards of care and education for your child.

As part of our commitment to meeting these standards, **parents/guardians are required to complete and update various forms and documentation** throughout the year. This includes medical, educational, and developmental paperwork that may be mandated by one or more regulatory bodies.

You will find detailed information regarding **required forms, deadlines, and submission instructions** throughout this handbook. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us maintain compliance and, more importantly, in supporting your child’s development and success.

### **Programs, Funding, and Family Support**

Variety Child Learning Center (VCLC) offers a wide range of programs designed to support both children and families. Families are not responsible for any tuition costs related to programs in which a child is placed through New York State procedures. These placements and related services are funded by tuition dollars provided by the New York State Education Department (SED), in accordance with your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP).

In addition to state-funded educational programs, VCLC also offers optional services such as childcare and enrichment programs. These are fee-based programs, available to families who choose to enroll.

To go beyond what state funding covers, VCLC relies on fundraising to enhance and enrich your child’s school experience. Thanks to the generosity of our community, past fundraising efforts have supported projects such as playground installations, classroom renovations, technology upgrades, and indoor gym and play equipment.

We encourage all families to participate in the efforts of VCLC’s Family Association and to support our fundraising events throughout the year. Information about upcoming events and donation opportunities will be shared via your child’s backpack, the SEESAW app, our website, and through mail and email updates.

Your involvement—big or small—makes a meaningful difference. We truly hope you’ll join us in supporting VCLC and helping to create the best possible learning environment for all our children.

## SUCCESSFUL BEGINNINGS



### Preparing for a Smooth Start to the School Year

The beginning of a new school year can bring a mix of excitement and uncertainty—for both children and families. It's natural for parents and caregivers to feel a bit anxious, especially when wondering how their child will separate from them and adjust to a new environment. Common questions may arise: *Will the school staff understand and accept my child? Can I trust them to care for my child the way I do?*

Whether your child is new to VCLC or returning to a new classroom with different teachers and peers, this transition period can be an adjustment. Some children adapt quickly, while others may find the process more challenging. Your child may respond in various ways—protesting, showing signs of distress, or even walking into the classroom without hesitation. It's also not uncommon for a child who seems to adjust easily at first to experience difficulties a few weeks later. They may become more reluctant to separate or begin showing challenging behaviors.

Our staff is well-versed in the separation process and ready to support you and your child through this important developmental milestone. We recognize that every child is unique and will adjust at their own pace.

### Readiness Activities to Try Before School Begins:

- **Visit the school** with your child shortly before the start of the year. You're welcome to explore and use the playground together.
- **Point out minibuses** while walking or driving around your neighborhood. This can help build familiarity.
- **Use a toy school bus** at home to role-play the experience. Talk with your child about riding the bus to school and coming back home afterward.
- **Choose a comforting object** your child can hold on the bus (e.g., a small stuffed animal, or a photo of a family member or pet). It should fit easily inside their backpack. *Please note: toys from home cannot be brought into the classroom.*
- **Talk about favorite activities** your child enjoys at home—like reading books, playing with toys, or spending time outside—and let them know they'll be able to do similar things at school.
- **Show your child a photo of their teacher** to help make the face more familiar before the first day.

Separation is a significant early learning experience that lays the foundation for future school success. By working through this transition together, we can help your child feel secure, confident, and ready to learn. If you have any concerns about your child's adjustment to school or the separation process, please reach out to your **social worker or teacher**. We are here to work with you in creating a supportive plan that meets your child's needs.

# CONFIDENTIALITY



## Confidentiality and Your Rights as a VCLC Parent or Guardian

At Variety Child Learning Center (VCLC), we respect and understand your need for privacy and confidentiality. We believe that protecting personal information builds trust between families and our staff—something we consider essential to our shared work in supporting your child’s education. Confidentiality is not only our ethical obligation—it is also a legal requirement under **FERPA** (the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and **New York State Education Law §2-d**.

### VCLC’s Responsibilities

- VCLC keeps all student and family records secure and confidential.
- Only VCLC staff who have a **legitimate educational interest** or “need to know” may access your child’s records to plan and support your child’s learning and care.
- **School districts**, as well as regulatory agencies (e.g., New York State Education Department, Department of Health, Medicaid, Office of Children and Family Services), may access student records as required by law.
- All VCLC staff are **trained** in confidentiality policies and practices.
- Copies of all reports and evaluations generated by VCLC will be shared with families.

### When Information May Be Shared Without Written Consent (As Permitted by FERPA):

While written permission is generally required to release any student information, **FERPA permits VCLC** to disclose educational records without consent to:

- School officials with a legitimate educational interest
- Schools where a student is transferring
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
- Organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of VCLC
- Accrediting organizations
- Appropriate officials in health or safety emergencies
- Law enforcement or judicial authorities with a valid subpoena
- State and local authorities within the juvenile justice system
- Your school district and/or county



**We do not share full names or contact information of families without written consent.**

**□ We only discuss your child with you and cannot disclose information about other children or families.**

### Parent Responsibilities

To help us maintain confidentiality for all students and families, we ask for your cooperation in the following ways:

- Discuss personal or sensitive topics with staff **privately**—schedule a time with your social worker if needed.
- **Only observe or comment on your own child.**
- **Only take photos or videos of your own child.**
- Do **not** take photos or videos of other children under any circumstances.
- Please **do not post** any pictures or videos taken at school on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok.

## Your Rights Under FERPA

As a parent, your rights include:

1. The right to **inspect and review** your child's education records within 45 days of a request.
2. The right to **authorize a representative** to review records on your behalf (requires written authorization).
3. The right to **request an amendment** to records you believe are inaccurate or misleading.
4. The right to **consent to disclosures** of personally identifiable information (except where FERPA allows disclosures without consent).
5. The right to **file a complaint** with the U.S. Department of Education if you believe your FERPA rights have been violated.

File here: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint>.

These rights apply to all parents unless legal custody restricts one parent's access. Written requests must be submitted to the Social Work Department.

## Your Rights Under Education Law §2-d & NYCRR Part 121

This law protects your child's **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)**. VCLC is committed to data privacy and security.

### Highlights of Your Rights:

- Your child's PII **cannot be sold or used for commercial purposes**.
- Only data **necessary for educational purposes** will be collected.
- VCLC is **prohibited** from reporting to NYSED any student information related to:
  - Juvenile delinquency
  - Criminal records
  - Medical and health records
  - Biometric data
- **Complaints** about possible data breaches can be sent to:

**VCLC Compliance and Data Protection Officer**

47 Humphrey Drive, Syosset, NY 11791 ♦ Email: [compliance@vclc.org](mailto:compliance@vclc.org)



Complaints related to the NY State Education Department can be sent to:

### Chief Privacy Officer

NYSED, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234 ♦ Email: [privacy@nysed.gov](mailto:privacy@nysed.gov)

If a **third-party contractor** misuses student data:

- They must notify VCLC **within 7 days** of the breach or unauthorized release.
- Contracts involving third-party data access will include supplemental information attached to the **Parents' Bill of Rights**.

Access the full **Parents' Bill of Rights** for Data Privacy and Security:

Education Law §2-d Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security (NYSED.gov)

## School District & County Notifications

VCLC is legally required to notify your **school district and/or county**, as well as VCLC Administration, when:

- Your child's **residency** changes.
- Required **prescriptions** for OT or PT are not received.
- A student is **absent for more than 5 days**.
- A student **misses more than 5 related services** (Speech, OT, PT, counseling).

## Learn More

For more detailed information, please refer to the **Confidentiality Policy** and **Student Privacy and Security Policy** available at [www.varietyclc.org](http://www.varietyclc.org).

# GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

VCLC has three main campuses: Syosset, Gallow (Levittown) and Bellerose (East Northport) with satellite sites at Fred J. Sparke Elementary School and Stephen E. Karopczyc building in Levittown. Policies and procedures stated in this handbook apply to all sites, unless noted.



## Important Building Information

### **Syosset**

47 Humphrey Drive, Syosset, NY 11791  
PH: (516) 921-7171 Fax: (516) 921-8130

### **School Hours**

Preschool & SCIS: 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM  
Syosset UPK: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

### **Gallow**

72 Farnedge Road, Levittown, NY 11756  
PH: (516) 490-3301 Fax: (516) 490-3303

Childcare: 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM  
Preschool & SCIS: 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM  
School-age: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

### **Bellerose**

253 Bellerose Avenue, East Northport, NY 11731  
PH: (631) 651-7272 Fax: (631) 651-7286

Preschool & SCIS: 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM  
East Northport UPK: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

## **Offsite Locations**

### **Karopczyc School**

74 Farnedge Road, Levittown, NY 11756  
PH: (516) 368-9100 Fax: (516) 490-3303

Karopczyc SCIS: 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM  
Karopczyc UPK: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

### **Sparke Elementary School**

100 Robin Place, Levittown, NY 11756  
PH: (516) 490-3301 Fax: (516) 490-3303

Sparke UPK: 8:15 AM to 2:15 PM  
& 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

*Based on classroom assignment.*

## Name Tags

To help ensure your child's safety and a smooth transition, please place a **name tag on the back of your child's shirt** each day during the **first few weeks of school**. Tags will be sent home in your welcome packet.

Before sending your child to school, be sure to:

- **Write your child's name clearly**
- **Add your child's teacher's name**

VARIETY CHILD LEARNING CENTER 47 Humphrey Drive • Syosset, NY 11791 516-921-7171
Child's Name: _____
Teacher's Name: _____
PLEASE ATTACH TO THE BACK OF YOUR CHILD'S SHIRT FOR THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF SCHOOL

The name tag already includes VCLC's address and phone number.

Thank you for helping us keep all children safe and supported during arrival and dismissal times.

## Student Attendance

To ensure the safety and well-being of all students, **VCLC requires that families notify the Attendance Office** whenever a child will be **late or absent**, whether due to illness or any other reason.

☎ **Attendance Line:** 516-921-7171, press **3** and follow the prompts.

🕒 **Please call by 7:00 AM** for all classes.

When leaving a message, include:

- Your **child's full name**
- Your **child's teacher's name**
- The **reason** for the absence or lateness



**Important:** Please do **not** call your child's social worker or teacher to report an absence. All absence-related calls must go through the Attendance Office.

For guidance on when a **doctor's note** is required for your child to return to school, please refer to **VCLC's Health Policy** (page 21).

### Follow-Up for Unreported Absences

If your child is absent and no message has been left on the attendance line, a staff member from the Attendance Office, Nurse's Office, or your Social Worker will contact you to confirm your child's status. Your child's safety is our top priority, and we must account for all students each day.

### Planned Absences and Extended Time Away

Please review the school calendar when planning any vacations or extended family visits. If your child will be absent for a planned reason, kindly notify your child's teacher in advance so we can record the absence appropriately.

⚠ **Note:** If your child is absent for more than **five (5) consecutive school days or therapy sessions**, VCLC is required to **notify your school district and county** of the extended absence.

## Alert Now System

**Timely communication** is a top priority at VCLC. We use the **ALERTNOW Notification Service**, which enables us to send telephone calls, emails, or text messages regarding:

- Emergency situations
- Important school announcements
- Weather-related closings
- Delayed openings
- Early dismissals

## School Closures



Inclement and unpredictable weather can affect transportation and building safety. VCLC's **primary concern is the safety of children, families, and staff** when deciding whether to:

- Close school
- Dismiss early
- Delay opening
- Remain open

The **New York State Education Department (SED)** allows schools to declare:

- A **school closure day** (no services), or
- A **remote learning day** to avoid loss of instructional time.

The Alert Now message will **specify the type of day** (closed or remote).

## Preschool Transportation (Nassau and Suffolk Counties)

**Swissport** is the contracted transportation provider for both counties. They follow these guidelines during inclement weather:

- **Transportation will NOT be provided if:**
  - The school district where the child's pick-up location is situated is closed.
  - The school district where the VCLC provider site is located is closed.

*Even if VCLC is open, Swissport will not transport children under these conditions.*

- **No transportation is provided for delayed openings.** If VCLC opens late, Swissport will not run buses. Parents who bring their child to school during a delayed opening **must also pick them up. There will be no bus service.**

## School-Age Transportation

Transportation decisions for **school-age children** are made by their individual **school districts**, not by VCLC.

## Weather Notification

In the event of **severe weather**, VCLC will send updates via the **ALERTNOW Notification System** regarding:

- School closures
- Delayed openings
- Remote learning days

**To receive these alerts**, you must be enrolled in the Alert Now system. The enrollment form ("N - AlertNow Notification") can be found in the **PowerSchool Parent Portal**.

Additionally, you can check Optimum Channel 12 ([longisland.news12.com](http://longisland.news12.com)); VCLC ([vclc.org](http://vclc.org)); Radio: 94.3 The Shark; WALK 97.5 FM (1370AM); KJOY 98.3; WBAB 102.3; 103.1 MAX FM; WBLI 106.1; WHLI 1100 AM / 104.7 FM for VCLC school closure updates.

## Clothing Guidelines

Children should be dressed comfortably in appropriate clothing and shoes for both indoor and outdoor play. We strongly recommend that your child wear sneakers to school for safety and ease of movement. Clothing should allow your child to fully participate in physical activities such as recess, movement groups, and playground time. Please avoid open-toed shoes, flip-flops, or shoes without backs, as they can pose safety risks.



Please send in a complete change of clothing, including an extra set of underwear and socks. All clothing must be clearly labeled with your child's name. We recommend placing your child's clothing in a clear, plastic, closeable bin or a large Ziploc plastic bag, also labeled with your child's name.

## Diapers

For children who wear diapers or pull-ups, please note that the family/caregiver is responsible for sending in a sufficient supply of diapers on an ongoing basis. These must be placed in a separate, large, clear, sealable Ziploc bag labelled with your child's name. **VCLC does not supply diapers.** In addition, please send in an ongoing supply of baby wipes.



If you would like staff to apply diaper ointment or cream (non-medicated) to your child, a signed parental consent form must be on file. The ointment or cream must be in its original container, labeled with your child's name, and not expired. If you need another copy of the consent form, please contact your social worker or classroom teacher.

## Food



Please send your child to school each day with a snack and lunch in a lunchbox labeled with their full name. All classes have a morning snack, an afternoon snack, and lunch daily. Your child's teacher will share the classroom schedule and advise on how much food to send each day.

Snacks and lunches should be healthy, nutritious and include a drink. **Please label all personal items sent to school including sippy cups, thermoses, lunch boxes and utensils with your child's first and last name.**

Staff understand that children have favorite foods and may only eat specific items. However, staff cannot prepare or heat any food. Cooking and preparation of your child's food must be done at home. Please pack foods that need to be served warm in thermos containers to maintain the proper temperature.

***PLEASE NOTE: VCLC makes every effort to maintain a "nut or nut product free school." No peanut butter, peanut-based foods, nuts of any kind, or foods prepared on machinery that may process foods containing nuts are permitted in the classrooms or offices. Please carefully check the packaging labels on all foods sent to school.***

***Please be aware that certain foods pose a choking hazard and are not allowed to be brought to school. These include, but are not limited to, raisins, seeds, carrot sticks, lollipops, hot dogs with the casing on, chunks of meat or cheese or meat on the bone, sticky hard sucking candy, small pieces of candy, grapes, chocolate kisses, chewing gum, gummy bears, Skittles, marshmallows, fruit gushers, and mini fruit gels. The school nurse will provide a more comprehensive list. If you are unsure whether a food is a choking hazard, please contact the school nurse.***

## Sleeping/Naptime



Students in Preschool Special Education classes do not have a regularly scheduled naptime. The instructional day includes time for related therapies as outlined in their IEPs. If a child falls asleep, a mat will be made available.

If a child who usually does not fall asleep, or whose parent(s) have not indicated difficulty sleeping the night before, falls asleep at school, they will be brought to the school nurse to rule out illness.

Please refer to VCLC's Sleep Policy for more information.

## Classroom Supplies

Your child's teacher will send home a monthly supply request for much-needed items such as paper plates, paper towels, napkins, tissues, and more. The specific needs may vary from month to month. Thank you in advance for your contributions.

## Photo Releases

Photographs and videos of children serve many important purposes. In the classroom, they support learning by helping children increase self-awareness and recognize their peers and teachers. They are valuable tools for curriculum and therapy activities, assisting in the development of social, cognitive, and language skills.

Additionally, photos and videos help the agency share stories about our children and highlight the importance of early identification, early intervention, special education, and ongoing funding for programs like VCLC.

Each family completes a photo release, which allows you to decide if your child may be photographed and how those images can be used. Providing consent is voluntary. If you choose not to sign the full release, please consider signing the limited release so your child's photos can still be used for classroom learning purposes. The photo release form ("K – Photo Release") can be found in the **PowerSchool Parent Portal**.

## Holiday Celebrations



VCLC's goal is to expose children to the wide range of holidays observed by the diverse cultures in our community. By acknowledging some of these holidays and traditions at school, children learn about both the diversity and commonalities that unite us all. Teachers present holidays within the context of seasonal changes and create activities and environments that help children expand their understanding of these special days. Religion does not play a role in these celebrations.

At the beginning of the school year, each teacher will send home a form regarding holidays and cultural celebrations. If you would like to share your family's celebrations or have any concerns about these observances, please contact your social worker or your child's teacher to discuss.

## Medicaid in Education

VCLC's contracts with Nassau and Suffolk Counties, school districts, and New York City require us to collect Medicaid information for each child at the beginning of the school year. **Families must complete the Medicaid Consent for Release of Information form regardless of Medicaid eligibility.** It is essential that you complete this form each time it is sent home. If the form is not received, your social worker will contact you.



## SCHOOL SECURITY

VCLC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children in accordance with regulations from the New York State Office of Children and Families (OCFS), the Education Department (SED), and the Department of Health, Bureau of Early Intervention. We take building security and the safety of children, staff, and families very seriously.

In accordance with SED guidelines, VCLC has established policies and procedures to ensure everyone's safety. We ask for your cooperation in following these policies and procedures as outlined below. **Building access is limited to staff and essential visitors only.**

### Entering and Exiting the Building

Entrance and exit are through the front main door only. All other outside doors leading into the building are locked and alarmed. There are special doors designated for children who ride the bus to and from school. When children are entering or leaving the building by bus, a staff member monitors the bus doors. **Please do not attempt to enter through the bus doors. Staff will stop and redirect you to the main front entrance. For security reasons, please do not ask staff to open locked doors or hold doors open for others!**

### Building Visitors

All visitors, including family members, must be buzzed into the building and sign the visitor log. The receptionist will ask to see an official photo ID (e.g., driver's license), the purpose of the visit, and the name of the person they wish to see. Visitors will be buzzed into the lobby once this information is verified. No one will be allowed to enter the building without proper identification.

While on VCLC premises, visitors must follow Emergency Response Procedures, such as evacuation drills. Visitors are expected to conduct themselves in a safe, respectful, and responsible manner.

### Emergency Response Drills

SED and OCFS regulations require schools to have emergency drills throughout the school year. There are three types of drills:

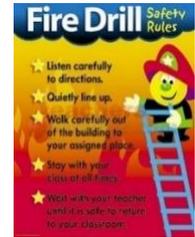
- Evacuation drills
- Lockdown Drills
- Lockout Drills

Throughout the year, teachers discuss and practice all "emergency drills" with the children so they can be prepared and feel safe.

It is essential that all staff and visitors to the building follow procedures and directions given by emergency personnel and administrators.

## Evacuation Drills

During an evacuation drill, everyone in the building must evacuate through the nearest exit and move away from the building. The State Education Department (SED) requires eight evacuation drills between September 1st and December 31st, and at least four more during the rest of the school year. If the school is in session during the summer, two additional drills are required. The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) requires one evacuation drill per month.



Each classroom has an evacuation map showing the location of the room and two routes to exit the building. Drills take place throughout the year so that children and staff practice exiting the building through different routes and at various times of the day.



**LOCKDOWN**

## Lockdown Drills

A **Lockdown** occurs when there is an imminent threat within the building. This means that there is no movement within the building. Everyone stays and remains where they are currently located. SED requires that there be four (4) lockdown/lockout drills during the school year. OCFS requires two (2) “shelter-in-place” (lockdown/lockout) drills annually.

The following procedures must be followed by everyone in the building:

- Lockdown will be announced by intercom, public address system or other approved communication system.
- 911 will immediately be notified to report the situation.
- Staff will immediately gather students and visitors from hallways and other nearby areas, including common areas and restrooms adjacent to their location, and bring them inside their classrooms or offices.
- LOCKDOWN WILL END ONLY WHEN EMERGENCY RESPONDERS OR OTHER AUTHORITIES UNLOCK YOUR ROOM AND YOU ARE PHYSICALLY RELEASED TO MOVE ON.



**LOCKOUT**

## Lockout Drills

A **Lockout** occurs when there is a threat outside the building. In this situation, all exterior doors are locked, and entry and exit from the building are limited. The administration will inform staff if normal activities can continue. During a lockout, no one is allowed on the playground.

The following procedures must be followed by everyone in the building:

- Lockout will be announced by intercom, public address system or other approved communication system.
- Designated staff will call 911 and report the situation.
- If the school is in lockout because of notification by the police or other emergency personnel, 911 does not have to be called.
- All exterior doors and windows will be locked.
- All outside activities are terminated immediately. Children will be brought back into the building through the nearest door.
- The lockout is lifted when the external threat is resolved. Notification of the end of the lockout will be made by administration and/or emergency personnel through the intercom or public address system or by other approved communication systems.



**SHELTER**

## Off-Site Evacuation

In some situations, it may be unsafe for anyone to remain in the building. If this occurs, children, staff, and visitors will be immediately evacuated to an off-site location. Families will be notified through VCLC’s Alert Now System with information about the evacuation and the location of the reunification site.

	<b>Syosset Building</b>	<b>Gallow Building</b>	<b>Karopczyc Building</b>	<b>Bellerose Building</b>
<b>Primary Site</b>	Syosset Gospel Church 266 Jackson Avenue Syosset, NY 11791	Stephen E. Karopczyc Building 74 Farmedge Road Levittown, NY 11756	Gallow Building 72 Farmedge Road Levittown, NY 11756	Fifth Avenue Elementary School 1157 5th Ave, East Northport, NY 11731
<b>Secondary Site</b>	St. Edward the Confessor Church 205 Jackson Avenue Syosset, NY 11791	Fred J. Sparke Elementary School 100 Robin Place Levittown, NY 11756	Fred J. Sparke Elementary School 100 Robin Place Levittown, NY 11756	East Northport Middle School 1075 5th Ave, East Northport, NY 11731

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Arrival, Dismissal, and Transportation Procedures**

Parents may choose to have their child take the bus to school or transport their child themselves. Please note that arrival and dismissal can be busy, as buses and cars typically arrive within a short timeframe. During these times, **we ask all parents to remain alert and aware of their surroundings**, as the parking lot and entryways can become congested. For safety, please hold your child’s hand while walking through the parking lot and be mindful of moving vehicles and buses.

### **Parents Who Drive Their Child to School**

Many families drive their child either one-way or round-trip. If you drive your child to school, **you may be eligible for transportation reimbursement** through your county of residence (not applicable to UPK students). To inquire or enroll in this reimbursement program, please contact your school district’s **CPSE (Committee on Preschool Special Education) chairperson**. VCLC does not administer this reimbursement; our only role is to **verify your child’s attendance for the county**. All questions regarding payment or eligibility should be directed to your **school district or your county’s Department of Health, Office of Children with Special Needs**.

Families who drive their child should **park in an available parking spot** and escort their child to the **lobby area**. The receptionist will notify your child’s classroom, and a staff member will meet your child in the lobby and walk them to class. At dismissal, please check in with the receptionist and wait in the lobby for a staff member to bring your child to you.

**Timeliness is important.** Please make every effort to ensure your child arrives and is picked up on time. Prompt arrival supports the development of consistent routines, and many of your child’s services begin immediately at the start of the school day.

### **Authorized Pick-Up by Others**

If someone other than a parent will be picking up your child, **you must notify VCLC in writing**. Please send a note to your child’s teacher indicating the date, time, and full name of the person picking up your child. That individual will be required to show **valid photo identification**, and the name provided must **exactly match** the name on the ID.

### **Transportation Through Your School District**

Your school district will discuss transportation options with you during your child’s **initial or annual review meeting**. The district is responsible for:

- Informing you of transportation options
- Completing and submitting the necessary paperwork
- Indicating the approved mode of transportation on your child’s IEP
- Forwarding paperwork to the county and/or Swissport

Please note: **Swissport**, not VCLC, is responsible for creating bus routes. If you have general questions or concerns about your child’s transportation or route, please contact **Swissport directly**.

## Parents Who Opt for Bus Transportation

VCLC does not operate or manage school bus transportation. Bus service is provided by **your county of residence**, which contracts with **Swissport**, the agency responsible for establishing routes and assigning drivers and driver assistants. The bus company will contact you directly with details about your child’s **bus route**, including the **approximate pick-up and drop-off times**. If you have **not heard from the bus company at least five (5) days prior to the start of school in September or July**, please reach out to the appropriate contact for assistance:



### Nassau County Preschool Children

Bus Company: We (Towne) Transport, Inc.  
Contact Swissport – Nassau County  
(516) 433-4500

### Suffolk County Preschool Children

Bus Company: We (Towne) Transport, Inc.  
Contact Swissport, LLC – Suffolk County  
(631) 737-0600

### School Age Children

Bus Company: Assigned by individual school district  
Contact: Transportation department at your home school district

## VCLC’s Transportation Policy

VCLC does **not manage or assign** school bus transportation. When transportation is authorized on your child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), it is arranged and administered by your **municipality and school district**. Once your child boards the bus, the **transportation company, municipality, or district** assumes responsibility for your child during transit.

Although VCLC is **not directly involved** in transportation, we are notified if there is a **bus issue or accident** involving your child.

### **Drop-Off Procedures When No Authorized Adult Is Present**

If the bus arrives at your home and no one is there—or the person present is not on the authorized pick-up list—the **bus company will contact VCLC**. At that point, we may try to call the parent or check whether the individual is authorized to receive the child.

To avoid issues, **any changes to your child’s authorized pick-up list must be submitted in writing**—via fax, email, or a signed note. We **cannot accept verbal permissions**. The person picking up your child must present **valid photo ID**, and the name must match exactly with what was submitted in writing.

If no authorized adult is available, the driver will usually continue the route and return to your home later. If the situation remains unresolved, the transportation company will follow its established protocol, which may include notifying local authorities.

### **Making Transportation Changes**

Parents sometimes need to change pick-up or drop-off locations, or update the list of authorized adults. All requests must be made in writing and may take up to **two weeks** to process.

- For **preschool children at Syosset**, please contact Erika Ramos, Transportation Coordinator, at 516-921-7171 ext. 2197 or email [transportation@vclc.org](mailto:transportation@vclc.org).
- For **preschool children at Gallow and Karopczyc**, contact Marlita Craven at 516-490-3301 ext. 3155 or use the same email above.
- For **school-age children**, contact your school district’s transportation office and also inform Marlita Craven.
- For **preschool children at Bellerose**, contact Christy Antilus at 631-651-7272 or use the same email above.

## Bus Route Changes by the Bus Company

As the school year progresses, new students may enroll from across Nassau and Suffolk Counties. When this happens, **Swissport**—not VCLC—may need to adjust bus routes to accommodate the new students.

We understand that changes in routines can be difficult. VCLC staff, including your child’s teacher and social worker, will work with you to help ease transitions. For specific concerns or questions about your child’s bus route, please contact the **bus company directly**, as they are responsible for routing decisions.

## Picking Up Your Child from School

Occasionally, families of children who typically ride the bus may choose to pick up their child directly from school. To ensure student safety and a smooth dismissal process, **VCLC requires written notification in advance** any time your child will not be taking the bus home.

### Important Reminders:

- Written notification must be sent to your child’s **teacher** indicating the **date and time** of pickup and the **full name** of the individual who will pick up your child.
- If someone **other than a parent** is picking up your child, they must follow all **arrival and dismissal procedures** and present a **valid photo ID**.
- The name on the ID must **match exactly** the name provided in your written note.
- **Verbal consent will not be accepted.** Without proper written authorization, VCLC will not release your child.

## Bus Safety Regulations for All Children

VCLC works closely with bus companies, drivers, and driver assistants to support and maintain **safe and consistent transportation practices** for all students.

Please review the following safety guidelines carefully:

- A **“bus” tag** will be attached to your child’s backpack, indicating their classroom. This tag helps staff identify where your child should go upon arrival. **Please do not remove this tag.**
- According to **Nassau County Preschool Special Education Bus Guidelines**, buses will wait **no longer than three to five minutes** for a child to board at pickup or drop-off.
- Children must always be **accompanied by an adult** to and from the bus.
- Children are **not allowed to eat or drink** on the bus. This includes food, snacks, and candy to avoid choking hazards.
- If your child brings a toy to school, it must be **small enough to fit inside their backpack or lunchbox**. Loose or very small toys can be dangerous during transportation.
- Some children may benefit from holding a comfort item during the ride. **Soft items**, such as a blanket or stuffed animal, are permitted as long as they are **clearly labeled** with your child’s name and fit inside of their backpack. *Please note: toys from home cannot be brought into the classroom.*
- Children must remain **seated and properly secured** using either a **car seat** or the bus’s **safety belt** for the entire ride.



## PRESCHOOL CHILDREN ONLY

### **Emergency Drop-Off Procedures for Suffolk County Preschool Children**

Parents must complete an emergency drop-off information sheet and submit it to the school district before transportation services start. These designations should be within the same school district and close to the child's regular drop-off location. Information should be updated regularly. This information will not be used for routine changes but will only be used when an emergency prevents the parent from meeting the bus. The designation of an emergency site within the same school district as your child's regular drop-off is important. In this way, your child will not have to spend an excessive amount of time on the bus should a situation occur which requires that the child be taken to the emergency drop-off location. It should be noted that if all else fails and no one is available to meet your child, your child may have to be taken to a local emergency services location.

Swissport - *Suffolk County*

### **Please Note the Following Regulations for Nassau County Preschool Children**

If a parent, guardian or other authorized person is not available to receive a child at the scheduled drop-off time:

- A) The child must remain on the bus while it drops off the remainder of the children, and then it returns to the original drop off location, or
- B) The child has to be taken to the Emergency Drop-Off location without prior notification to Swissport and school, or
- C) The child has to be returned to the school. *Please Note: VCLC will advise the bus company that children cannot come back to the school after the child's school day has ended.*

The first time that this occurs, VCLC will issue a warning to the parent. Should there be any re-occurrence within the same school year, transportation will be suspended according to the following Nassau County Preschool Transportation Rules:

- 2nd Incident - Transportation suspended for two days
- 3rd Incident - Transportation suspended for three days
- 4th Incident - Transportation suspended for the remainder of the school year. (The school year, for this Nassau County regulation, shall be either September through June, or July through August.)

### **Emergency drop-off procedure for Nassau County Preschool Children**

An emergency drop-off is an address, other than the home address, where a child may be dropped off because of an emergency. The parent must call the school as soon as the emergency occurs. If the emergency drop-off is listed on the child's transportation form, the school will call Swissport, to arrange for the temporary change. If the drop-off is not listed, the school must change the transportation form and fax the information to Swissport. If the emergency drop-off does not fit into the scheduled route, the child will be dropped off last.

**NO EMERGENCY PICK-UPS WILL BE MADE.**

Swissport – *Nassau County*

# HEALTH & MEDICAL INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE



The nursing staff at VCLC is committed to the safe, competent, and compassionate care of all children and staff. To uphold these standards—and to comply with regulations from the New York State Education Department (SED), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and the Department of Health (DOH)—families are asked to review and follow the policies outlined below.

## Medical Exams

All students are required to have a medical exam each year. This exam must be documented on the NYS OCFS official medical form and must include the results of the examination along with an up-to-date list of immunizations. **If immunizations are delayed for medical reasons, a letter from your child’s healthcare provider is required. The letter must be on official letterhead, signed by the doctor, and must include the provider’s license number, Medicaid number, and NPI number.** Religious exemptions are no longer accepted. Any request for exemption must be reviewed and approved by VCLC’s Administrative Team.

The school nurse will notify families in writing two months before a new medical exam is due. Families must submit an updated medical form no later than one month after the current form expires to ensure continued compliance with state and agency requirements.

For newly enrolled students, a completed medical form must be submitted to VCLC prior to the child’s first day of attendance.

## Emergency Contact List

To ensure the safety of every child, VCLC must have a current **Emergency Contact List** on file. This is a requirement of the **Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)**. Emergency contact information must be updated **three times a year**—in **September, January, and June**—or sooner if your contact information changes.



Each family is required to provide **at least three valid phone numbers** for individuals who can be reached in case of an emergency and are available to pick up your child from school. These individuals must be **over 18 years of age**, have a valid driver’s license, and be able to **drive to and from school**. When selecting emergency contacts, choose people your child knows, who live within a reasonable distance, and who can arrive at school **within one hour** if needed.

If your child becomes sick at school and a parent cannot be reached, the school nurse or designated staff member will begin contacting the individuals listed on your emergency form. The person who comes to pick up your child must check in at the front desk, show a valid photo ID, and sign your child out before they can leave.

Keeping your emergency contact information accurate and up to date helps ensure a quick and safe response during any unexpected situation.

## School Health Policy

### Sick Children

VCLC is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all children and staff. Please review and follow the guidelines below:

- **Children who are ill must not attend school.** If a sick child arrives at school, the nurse will contact you to pick up your child.
- **Call the attendance line at 516-921-7171** (press 3 and follow the prompts) to report your child's absence.
- If your child becomes ill during the day, the school nurse will assess whether they are too sick to remain at school or may be contagious to others. If so, you will be contacted to pick up your child.
- **Children must be picked up within one hour** of receiving a call from the school. If you are unavailable, VCLC will contact the individuals on your child's **Emergency Contact List**.
- If no one is available to pick up your child and the situation requires it, **911 will be called**.
- **Children with a fever over 100.4°F will not be permitted to ride the school bus.** You must arrange for alternate transportation home.



Your cooperation helps us keep everyone in our community safe and healthy.

## Children Cannot Come to or Remain at School with the Following Illnesses

### When Children Must Stay Home from School

To protect the health of all students and staff, children **may not come to or remain at school** if they have any of the following:

- A diagnosed **infectious or communicable disease**
- A **fever of 100.4°F or higher**
- **Vomiting or diarrhea** (as assessed by the school nurse); children may return **24 hours after the last episode**
- **Symptoms that prevent full participation** in school activities, including excessive fatigue, lack of appetite, frequent coughing or sneezing, headache, body aches, sore throat, earache, or eye infections

### Specific Conditions That Require Staying Home

- **Head Lice:** May return after treatment with anti-lice shampoo and **manual nit removal**. A parent note is required stating the date of treatment and confirming no new nits were found.
- **Pinworms:** May return the day after treatment with Pyrantel, Mebendazole, or Albendazole. A **doctor's note** is required.
- **Ringworm:** May return 24 hours after treatment begins. A **doctor's note** with diagnosis and treatment recommendation is required.
- If your child is diagnosed with a **communicable disease**, the school nurse will notify families of other children in the class and on the bus as necessary.

### When Children Can Return to School

Children may return to school under the following conditions:

- **Fever-free for 24 hours** without fever-reducing medication (such as Tylenol or Motrin)
- **For Bacterial Infections:**
  - **Impetigo:** 24 hours after starting treatment
  - **Conjunctivitis (non-allergy related):** No eye discharge and 24 hours after beginning treatment
  - **Strep Throat:** After 24 hours on antibiotics and fever-free
- **For Viral Infections:**
  - **Influenza (Flu):** Fever- and symptom-free for 24 hours. Symptoms of flu may include sudden onset of high fever, chills, body aches, headache, earache, nausea, vomiting, and dry cough. Contact your doctor at the first sign of illness.
  - **COVID-19:** Fever-free for 24 hours without medication and no remaining symptoms

- **Fifth Disease:** Fever-free for 24 hours
- **Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease:** Fever-free for 24 hours with no open sores
- **Diarrhea:** No diarrhea for 24 hours if different from your child's usual bowel pattern
- **Colds:** Keep your child home if they have a persistent runny nose or severe cough (not allergy-related), especially if sleep has been disrupted. Colds are most contagious in the first 48 hours. Returning too soon may slow recovery and increase exposure to others.



### Doctor's Notes Are Required to Return to School When:

- A communicable disease has been diagnosed
- The child has had anesthesia or a surgical procedure
- The child has stitches, a cast, or an injury that could be worsened by normal school activities
- The child was hospitalized
- The doctor's note must clearly state that your child is **cleared to return to all school activities**, including **gym, outdoor play, OT, and PT**. If there are any limitations, these must be clearly listed.

Please submit the doctor's note **before your child returns** to school. Notes can be emailed, faxed, or brought to the school for review.

### Home and Off-Site Services During Illness

Children who are ill **may not receive** home-based or off-site services, including **SEIT (Special Education Itinerant Teacher)** or **related services** such as speech, OT, PT, or counseling. All illness-related criteria outlined earlier in this section also apply to any services delivered outside of the school setting.

If your child is sick and will not be attending school, they **cannot receive any home or off-site services** during that time.

Please remember to **notify your home care provider, SEIT teacher, and/or therapist directly** to cancel scheduled services if your child is unwell. This helps providers plan accordingly and ensures everyone's health and safety.

### Medications in School

There are times when children may need to take medications during the school day. The school nurse is the only person legally authorized to administer medications at VCLC.



To ensure safe and proper medication administration, certain forms must be kept on file and updated according to New York State Education Department (SED) and Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations:

- **Medication/Supplements Form:** Parents must list any medications or supplements their child takes. If your child does not take any medications, please check the box indicating "My child is on no medications/supplements." This form must be completed, signed, and dated by the parent or guardian annually or whenever there is a change in your child's medications or supplements.
- **Parent and Healthcare Provider's Authorization for Administration of Medication in School and School Activities:** This form must be completed regardless of whether your child will receive medication at school. If your child will not receive medication during school hours, please check the box stating "My child will not receive medication in school." If medication will be administered, parents complete Section A and the child's healthcare provider completes Section B. **This authorization must be updated every six months or sooner if there is a change in the medication.**
  - The form must be signed by both the parent and the child's physician.
  - The physician must complete Section B listing the medication, dosage, frequency/time to be taken and route of administration.
  - The physician must list possible side effects and adverse reactions.
  - The physician must sign the form, provide his/her license number, and stamp the form.

All medications, including over-the-counter products such as Tylenol or topical creams, require a doctor's order specifying the child's name, medication name, dosage, and administration schedule. Please ensure medications are current and not expired before sending them to school.

Medication consent must be renewed every six months. Without an updated authorization, the nurse cannot administer medications, and families will be reminded when new consent is needed. If authorization expires and no updated form or written notice of discontinuation is received, the child will not be allowed to attend school until proper documentation is provided.

If medication is discontinued, a note from the parent and/or healthcare provider is required.

## Handling Medications

Parents must bring all medications, including EpiPens, directly to the nurse's office. Children are not permitted to carry medications in their backpacks. All medications must be in the original pharmacy container with the original pharmacy label intact. The nurse will not accept any medication that does not meet these requirements. Additionally, verbal instructions for medication administration will not be accepted.

Upon receiving any controlled medications, the nurse will count the number of pills. The nurse performs a daily count before administering doses and again when medications are returned to the family.

All medications are recorded in the medication log and labeled with the child's name. Medications are stored securely in a locked cabinet in the nurse's office. Medications requiring refrigeration are kept in a locked, medication-only refrigerator. Access to all medications is restricted to the nurse and substitute nurse.

Each time medication is administered, the nurse logs the time and dosage on the medication log. Any observed reactions are documented, and appropriate actions, including calling 911 if necessary, will be taken immediately.

## Special Health Needs

The school nurse reviews every child's medical information to identify special health needs, such as allergies, seizures, diabetes, and others. An individualized health care plan is developed in collaboration with the parent and the child's healthcare provider.

Once the plan is finalized, the nurse meets with the classroom team, therapists, and specialists to train them on the child's specific health needs. All staff members involved sign off to confirm they have received training. For children with food allergies, a notice will be posted outside their classroom.

Parents are encouraged to contact the school nurse promptly to discuss any special health needs their child may have.

## INCIDENT REPORTING

Parents are promptly notified by phone and written communication in the event of any accident, serious condition, incident, emergency medical care, or injury involving their child. If a parent cannot be reached, the designated emergency contacts will be notified. We ask that you provide an expected time of arrival when contacted.



Parental consent for VCLC to obtain emergency health care for your child is required upon admission to the childcare program. In cases of urgent medical need, VCLC will call 911, and the child will be transported to the hospital. Parents will be notified immediately and are encouraged to meet their child at the hospital.

# ALLERGY AND ANAPHYLAXIS PREVENTION POLICY

## Medical Information and Documentation

Upon enrollment and whenever changes occur, parents/guardians must provide up-to-date information about their child's medical conditions, including any allergies and emergency medications prescribed for potential anaphylaxis. Parents will collaborate with the program and the child's physician to complete required documents that guide staff on how to respond to allergic or anaphylactic reactions.

A copy of these documents, along with the child's epinephrine auto-injectors, will travel with the student throughout the day and be carried by a responsible adult. Updated paperwork may be requested as necessary.

## Required Documents:

- NYS OCFS Form 7006 – Individual Health Care Plan for a Child with Special Healthcare Needs (or equivalent)
- NYS OCFS Form 6029 – Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (or equivalent)
- NYS OCFS Form 7002 – Medication Consent Form (or equivalent)

The child's allergies will also be noted on their medical forms. In the event of an anaphylactic reaction, staff will call 911 and follow the instructions on these documents.

## Staff Training

All staff are trained upon hire and annually thereafter in the prevention, recognition, and response to allergic reactions and anaphylaxis. A staff member certified in CPR, First Aid, and medication administration is present during school hours at all times.

For children requiring epinephrine or other emergency medications, the school nurse trains any staff member who cares for that child on proper medication administration.

## Reducing Risk of Exposure

Each classroom maintains a confidential list of children's allergies visible only to staff and volunteers working directly with those children. Staff take precautions to prevent exposure to allergens, such as reading food labels carefully. Children are taught about food allergies and safety measures.

Handwashing, cleaning, and all allergy-related regulations per OCFS Childcare Regulations are strictly followed.

## Communication

Upon enrolling a child with allergies, all relevant staff and volunteers are informed about the child's allergy, medication needs, and risk-reduction strategies. Families and children in the classroom are also informed of allergies present, while maintaining strict confidentiality and never sharing personally identifiable information.

## Annual Family Notification

Families receive a copy of the Allergy and Anaphylaxis Prevention Policy in the Family Handbook. This policy is reviewed and updated annually, and families are provided with updated copies whenever changes occur.

## Stock Epinephrine Auto-Injectors

The program maintains non-patient-specific epinephrine auto-injectors for emergency use in suspected anaphylaxis cases. Available doses include:

- Infant/toddler dose (0.1 mg) for children weighing 16.5–33 lbs.
- Pediatric dose (0.15 mg) for children weighing 33–66 lbs.
- Adult dose (0.3 mg) for individuals weighing 66 lbs. or more.

*Note:* The program will **not** administer epinephrine to children weighing less than 16.5 lbs.; instead, 911 will be called immediately. We maintain and update a list of each child’s weight every three months.

Annual training for unlicensed personnel on the use of these stock auto-injectors is provided by a certified NYS trainer.

After administering epinephrine, 911 will be called immediately. The child’s parent and the OCFS licensor or registrar will also be notified.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

VCLC developed and upholds the motto, **“Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible.”** This motto forms the foundation of conduct for our entire school community. The kindness and respect shown by students, staff, and visitors enrich our community and create a positive environment where everyone feels valued.

Whether we meet on VCLC’s school premises or at events held off campus, all members of our school community commit to maintaining a safe and respectful environment by following this Code of Conduct.

### Students’ Rights and Responsibilities

VCLC is committed to safeguarding the rights given to all students under state and federal law. To foster a safe, healthy, and supportive school environment, every student has the right to:

1. Participate in all VCLC activities regardless of actual or perceived race, weight, color, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, gender, sex, sexual orientation or disability.
2. Be respected as an individual and treated fairly and with dignity by other students and school staff.
3. Access school policies, regulations and rules and, when necessary, receive an explanation of those rules from school personnel.

Each VCLC student has the responsibility to:

1. Be familiar with and abide by all classroom rules and the Code of Conduct.
2. Work to the best of their ability in all developmental and academic areas.
3. Conduct themselves in accordance with VCLC’s motto “Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible”
4. Communicate with respect, allowing opportunity for all to be heard. Students practice social greetings and manners to their communicative abilities.
5. Come to school ready to learn, make friends, and challenge yourself.
6. Take care of the classroom environment to show due respect to other persons and property.
7. Seek a teacher when you do not know what to do, have a problem, and/or feel upset, angry, frustrated or scared.
8. Learn and practice strategies to support negative emotions like frustration, sadness, boredom, stress, etc.
9. Wear clothes and shoes that are safe for all activities in school and are respectful to self and others.
10. Tell and/or show a teacher when someone is not following the rules.



### Student Dress Code

All students are expected to maintain personal cleanliness and dress appropriately for school and school functions. Students and their parents hold the primary responsibility for acceptable dress and appearance. Teachers and other staff will model and reinforce appropriate dress, helping students understand what is suitable in the school setting.

A student’s dress, grooming, and appearance—including hairstyle/color, jewelry, and nails—shall:

- Be safe, appropriate, and not disrupt or interfere with the educational process.
- Ensure underwear is completely covered by outer clothing.
- Include footwear at all times; footwear that poses a safety hazard is prohibited.
- Not include headgear inside any building except for medical or religious reasons.
- Avoid offensive items or messages that denigrate others based on race, weight, color, religion, creed, national origin, ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.
- Not promote or endorse the use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or encourage illegal or violent activities.

### Prohibited Student Conduct

- Use of offensive language, including discriminatory slurs or cursing.
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination of any kind.
- Retaliation against anyone reporting a violation of the Code of Conduct.
- Bringing harmful items, such as illegal substances or weapons, to any VCLC school community function.
- Engaging in physically aggressive or violent behavior that may harm self or others.
- Persistent disruption of the learning or work environment.

### Disciplinary Consequences

- Parents/guardians will be notified the same day of any code of conduct violation involving their child, via phone call and/or email.
- Discipline is individualized, age-appropriate, and focuses on teaching corrective behaviors to replace inappropriate actions.
- Students with disabilities cannot be removed or transferred from center-based programs without approval from the student’s school district.
- In cases of persistent or dangerous violations, VCLC may impose disciplinary actions consistent with Article 89 of NYS Education Law and other applicable laws.
- Students in VCLC’s UPK programs with East Northport, Island Trees or Syosset School Districts follow their respective district’s Code of Conduct. Please consult your district’s website for details.
- If a crime is suspected, local law enforcement will be notified immediately.



For the complete VCLC Code of Conduct, including policies for all school community members, please visit [varietyclc.org](http://varietyclc.org) or contact your child’s school principal.

## MANDATED REPORTER POLICY

All VCLC employees are Mandated Reporters as per New York State regulations and are required by law to report any suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment. As per the current law, mandated reporters must make the required verbal reports directly, or with the support of a team member or administrator, to the **New York State Child Abuse and Maltreatment Hotline at 1-800-635-1522.**

Further information and support can be found in the Office of Children and Family Service website: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/cps/>.

# HOME/SCHOOL COLLABORATIVE MODEL (HSCM)

VCLC was founded on the principles of early identification, early intervention, and strong home/school partnerships. The New York State Education Department recognized VCLC's Home/School Collaborative Model (HSCM) as a "Sharing Success Validated Model," making it a recommended approach for replication and adaptation.



**"If children are to succeed in school, home and school must work together..."**

This model supports family involvement in a child's educational journey from the very first contact with VCLC through transition to other school settings. It is based on three core principles:

- Including parents in screening, evaluation, assessment, goal setting, and remediation
- Providing family support and parent education
- Creating a family-friendly school environment that encourages parental involvement

When your child enters the program, your family will be assigned a social worker who is a vital part of your child's team. Social workers at VCLC have specialized knowledge in early childhood development and understand how a child's special needs affect the entire family. Since concerns about one family member impact everyone, your social worker will maintain regular communication with your child's teacher and serve as a liaison between your family and the classroom team.

We recognize that many families have outside teachers, therapists, or consultants working with their child. If you want VCLC staff to communicate with these non-VCLC professionals, please provide a signed consent form that allows us to share and discuss your child's learning strengths, needs, interventions, and goals.

Home/school collaboration is a cornerstone of VCLC's programs. Parental involvement is essential to your child's success. You can participate by attending parent-teacher conferences and education groups, meeting regularly with your social worker, and joining the Family Association. Together with your social worker, you can tailor your involvement to best support your child and your family.

## PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

There are two scheduled parent-teacher conferences each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. During the fall conference, you will meet with your child's teacher and social worker. Prior to the meeting, each therapist working with your child will prepare a brief write-up that may include the goals they are focusing on and suggestions for activities you can do at home. During the conference, your teacher and social worker will review this information with you and provide you with copies of the write-ups to take home. This conference typically lasts about 30 minutes and is held via teleconference or on TEAMS.



The spring conference takes place sometime between January and April, usually lasting about 45 minutes. At this meeting, you will again meet with your child's teacher and social worker, and related service therapists will be invited to join as well. The focus of the spring conference is to discuss your child's current level of functioning and to prepare for the annual review conducted by your school district. Your child's teacher will review progress toward IEP goals, discuss your child's strengths and areas of need, and share successful classroom strategies. If the therapists cannot attend, their reports will be presented by the teacher or social worker.

**It is important to note that all decisions regarding your child's future educational placement are made by your district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) or Committee on Special Education (CSE). VCLC staff cannot make placement recommendations. These matters will be addressed during your child's CPSE or CSE meetings.**

While there are only two scheduled conferences each year, you are encouraged to reach out to your child's teacher, therapists, or social worker at any time throughout the school year if you have questions, concerns, or would like to discuss your child's progress.



## THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

Social workers will contact each family to gather information about your child in order to offer programs and services that will benefit you and your family.

The Social Work Department offers many options for parents:

- **Parent Education and Training:**  
Programs are offered throughout the school year to educate parents in the skills and knowledge needed to raise a child with special needs. Topics include behavior management strategies, sibling issues, transitioning from one system to the next (EI to CPSE and CPSE to CSE), routines such as bedtime and mealtime, toilet teaching, and more. Social workers will meet with parents and/or caregivers to discuss how this information can be best utilized in their own family.
- **Parent Support Groups:**  
Parents meet with a social worker and other parents to share information and concerns pertaining to raising a child with special needs. Families will receive notices in their child's backpack about the day, time, and location of the group.
- **Counseling:**  
Social workers are available to meet with parents and other family members to discuss their child's overall functioning and develop skills and strategies to foster growth and support all areas of their child's development.

## FAMILY ASSOCIATION

VCLC's Family Association is a group of parents, guardians, and other family members who support the school through community building and fundraising.



Staff advisors communicate regularly about ongoing fundraisers and events. Meetings are held monthly. Families will receive notices in their child's backpack with the time and location of each meeting.

Please watch your child's backpack for more information about the Family Association, how to join, and upcoming fundraisers.

## THE CLASSROOM

Each teacher sets up their classroom to optimize children's learning and engagement. A typical day in any classroom includes structured playtime, individual instructional time, small and large group lessons, circle time, snack and/or lunchtime, and playground (weather permitting) or gym. Each week, children participate in music therapy, art therapy, computer time, physical education/gross motor activities, or movement. Visuals such as photos and icons are used throughout the day and across settings to help children become familiar with routines, transitions, and behavioral expectations.

Curriculums are age-appropriate and aligned with the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards. In preschool, the focus is on building early foundations of learning through a variety of rich experiences where

children learn through play and interactions, addressing communication, cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills development. In the school-age program, materials prepare children to acquire specific reading, writing, and math skills to help them succeed as they progress.



VCLC has adopted the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based framework that emphasizes supportive environments and relationships, social-emotional development, and a proactive approach to behaviors. Your child's teacher will share more information about the Pyramid Model, classroom curriculum, schedules, and routines during Back-to-School Night.

### Education Coordinators

Each class is assigned an Education Coordinator who plays a vital role in overseeing and guiding your child's education team. Their primary goal is to ensure that students receive specialized instruction tailored to their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) within a safe and supportive environment. The Education Coordinator guides your child's teacher to effectively implement curriculum, classroom management techniques, and instructional methods. They also serve as an additional resource for you to provide support as needed.

## RELATED THERAPIES



VCLC offers related therapies in accordance with each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). These services may include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, child psychological counseling, psychological counseling, and parent training. Each therapist is an integral part of your child's educational team and collaborates closely with the teacher and other team members. Therapists share strategies being used in their sessions to help promote the generalization of skills across classroom and school settings.

Parents will receive photos and contact information for their child's therapists. Open communication between therapists and families is strongly encouraged and supported.

### Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

At VCLC, we understand the critical importance of providing every child with a means to communicate. Communication is how we express ourselves, connect with others, and engage with the world—and we believe that all students deserve access to communication in a way that works for them.

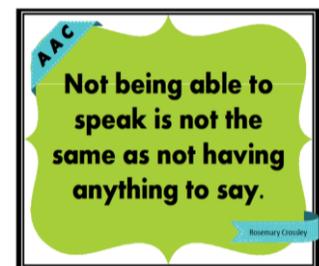
Our Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are trained in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), which supports students who may have difficulty using verbal speech or are not yet speaking. AAC ensures that each child has a way to share their wants, needs, thoughts, and feelings.

AAC may include a variety of supports, such as:

- iPads equipped with communication apps
- Speech-generating devices
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)

Each AAC system is customized to meet the unique needs of the individual child. These supports do not replace spoken language; rather, they enhance a child's ability to communicate and provide them with a voice as they continue to grow and develop.

If you have questions about AAC or think it may be appropriate for your child, please reach out to your child's Speech-Language Pathologist, who will be happy to guide and support you.



# FEE FOR SERVICE PROGRAM



## Childcare

VCLC operates a New York State OCFS-licensed childcare center at its Levittown location for young children ages 6 weeks through 5 years. The childcare center is open Monday through Friday, from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM, and offers full-day care in infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms.

Enrollment is available for five days per week only; partial-week options are not offered. Childcare follows its own dedicated calendar, which may differ from the school-year calendar used by VCLC’s educational programs.

For current availability, rates, or additional information, please contact the Childcare Director at **516-490-3301, Ext. 3149**.

## ACRONYM GLOSSARY

Families often encounter documentation about their children and/or information about special education that use acronyms. Here is a glossary that may help you navigate through reports, program descriptions and regulations.

AAC	Augmentative Alternative Communication	LD	Learning Disability
ADA	American with Disabilities Act	LEA	Local Education Agency (school district)
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder	LEICC	Local Early Intervention Coordination Council
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	OCFS	Office of Children and Family Services
ADL	Activities for Daily Living	OPWDD	Office of People with Developmental Disabilities
AIS	Academic Intervention Services	PLP	Present Level of Performance
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder	PSD	Preschool Student with a Disability
AT	Assistive Technology	PT	Physical Therapy
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services	PTA	Parent Teacher Association
BIP	Behavioral Intervention Plan	ROM	Range of Motion
BOE	Board of Education	RS	Related Services
CA	Chronological Age	SC	Service Coordinator
CCC	Child Care Council	SED	State Education Department
CLD	Culturally & Linguistically Divers	SCIS	Special Class in an Integrated Setting
CPSE	Committee on Preschool Special Education	SEIS	Special Education Itinerant Services
CSE	Committee on Special Education	SI	Sensory Integration
DD	Developmentally Disabled	SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
DOB	Date of Birth	SSA	Social Security Administration
DOH	Department of Health	SSD	Social Security Disabilities
DSS	Department of Social Services	SSI	Supplemental Security Income
ED	Emotional Disturbance	TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
EI	Early Intervention	TC	Total Communication
EIO	Early Intervention Official	VI	Visual Impairment
ELL	English Language Learners	WNL	Within Normal Limits
ESL	English as a Second Language		
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education		
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment		
HI	Hearing Impairment		
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act		
IEP	Individualized Education Program		
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan		
IQ	Intelligence Quotient		

## HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

<b>Syosset Campus</b>	<b>516-921-7171</b>
<b>Gallow Campus</b>	<b>516-490-3301</b>
<b>Karopczyc Campus</b>	<b>516-368-9100</b>
<b>Bellerose Campus</b>	<b>631-651-7272</b>

To report a child's absence: Attendance Office (516-921-7171, press 3, follow prompts)

		<b>Extension</b>
Janet Koch, CEO		2130
Theano Kehayes, CFO		2131
Corey Lein, Director of Programs		TBD
Principal, Syosset	Anna Cicciari	2201
Principal, Levittown	Gabrielle Genna	3121
Principal, Bellerose	Kerri Okula	631-651-7272
Director of Social Work	Maria Freeman	3177
Assistant Director of Social Work	Stacey Trotti	2184
Director of Evaluations, Placement and Services (Early Intervention, Related Services, SEIS)	Barbara Pirnat	2105
Compliance Director	Sonia Puertas-Galletta	2115
Bilingual (Spanish) Coordinator	Maria Ariss	2212
Child Care Director Levittown	Irene Jimenez	3149
Child Care Director Syosset	Karen Lauda	2159
Child Care Director Karopczyc	Jill Marks	1102
Child Care Director Bellerose	Kerri Okula	631-651-7272
Evaluation Department	Georgia Kaitery	2113
Health Office / Nurse Syosset	Laurie Librizzi	2110
Health Office / Nurse Levittown	Maria Henlon	3122
Health Office/ Nurse Bellerose		631-651-7272
Occupational & Physical Therapy Department	Lori Christianson	2200
Psychology Department	Virginia Blum	2225
Speech/Language Department	Jackie Nicollet	2221
Transportation Office Syosset	Erika Ramos	2189
Transportation Office Levittown	Marlita Craven	3155
Transportation Office Bellerose	Christy Antilus	631-651-7272

**Visit us at our website:**

[www.varietyclc.org](http://www.varietyclc.org)

**for information about children and families, calendar, events, school closings and more.**

**Join us on social media:**

<https://www.facebook.com/Variety-Child-Learning-Center>

<http://linkedin.com/company/vclc/>

<https://www.instagram.com/varietychildlearningcenter>