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Dear Families,

Welcome new families and welcome back returning families! It is an exciting time as your child begins the new school year.

As we begin the 2021-2022 school year, we know that COVID is still a presence that impacts our daily living. Our policies and procedures are guided by our regulatory agencies including the New York State Education Department (SED), the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and the New York State Office of Children and Families (OCFS). We stay up to date on CDC (Center for Disease Control) guidance and best practice. In addition, VCLC has contracts with over 50 school districts, the New York City Department of Education and the Nassau and Suffolk Departments of Health. As an employer of over 420 staff, VCLC must also be compliant with guidelines and regulations from the Department of Labor and OSHA. VCLC must always abide by the strictest standards if any of our regulatory agencies’ policies and procedures do not agree.

VCLC will continue to provide full in-person learning for all center-based students in all our locations. Remote learning will be limited to only those times if and when a class is quarantined due to COVID or if a snow day becomes a remote day to avoid loss of any instructional time. If a student is absent from school due to illness, quarantine for COVID exposure outside of the school setting, COVID or vacation, the student will not be entitled to remote services and will be marked absent.

Administration and staff are very excited about the coming school year. We will continue to use the new curriculum introduced during the last school year that will meet the needs of each learner. You will receive more details about the curriculum, classroom management strategies and the classroom schedule at Back-to-School Night. At this moment, we are anticipating that Back-to-School Night will be remote.

In addition, each student will receive a Chromebook which is pre-programmed. Families of new students will receive information about when to pick up their Chromebooks. Returning students will keep their Chromebooks. Any updates will be made remotely. The teachers will continue to use the SeeSaw platform.

In 2016, VCLC was selected to be part of Cohort 1 to implement the Pyramid Model, a positive behavior support system which focuses on social/emotional development, problem solving and building relationships. This model provides a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices to promote young children’s social-emotional competence. VCLC is committed to supporting the Pyramid Model. Our Leadership team has developed program-wide expectations that will promote relationships, shared expectations and a safe environment for all. You will see these expectations posted throughout the buildings: BE SAFE, BE RESPECTFUL, BE RESPONSIBLE. Your children may come home and talk about them, as well as our lion school mascot named Roary. All staff, as well as the children, are embracing these expectations. We hope that you can adopt them at home as well.

Each child’s social/emotional development is critical, particularly after the COVID pandemic. Relationships with significant adults and caregivers as well as peers are important to children’s developmental growth.
The Family Association will be back in action. We are not sure of all the particulars. Our social workers, who will help organize the Family Association, are beginning to brainstorm and put together ideas for fundraisers and events. Please watch your child’s backpack, VCLC’s website and messages on Alert Now for details.

Your child’s attendance at school is important. A copy of the school calendar for 2021-2022 school year is included in this handbook. Please check the calendar before planning any vacations. It is important that students arrive on time for the entire day. Lateness and early dismissal may impact your child’s related services.

VCLC’s Family Handbook includes important information about VCLC and its policies and procedures. It is important that you read the handbook and become familiar with its content. If you have any questions or you lose your copy, please contact your social worker.

We are looking forward to working with you and your child in the coming year. Together, we hope to make a significant difference in your child’s growth and development.

Janice Friedman
CEO

Andrea Rieger
CFO

Maria Freeman
Director of Family Services

Corey Lein
Principal, Levittown

Jolie Shah
Principal, Syosset

Stacey Trotti
Coordinator of Family Services

Barbara Pirnat
Director of Evaluations, Placement & Services
Vision

VCLC is committed to providing high quality programs for young children with disabilities and their families that focus on the educational, social-emotional and physical growth of the children, and home/school collaboration.

We believe that all children are capable of learning. Our programs respect each child’s individuality. Staff is responsible for developing relationships with each child and his/her family. Decisions about programs and interventions must be based on the needs of the children. Always ask “Whose needs are being met?”

Mission

- Promote the development, education and inclusion into the community of children with or at risk of disabilities
- Increase the capabilities of families whose children have or are at risk of disabilities and reduce the stresses on those families
- Initiate improvements in the delivery of services to children and their families
- Provide training and technical assistance to early childhood personnel
- Promote programs, research, attitudes, policies and collaborations that improve child development and family life

Motto

“Helping children become the best that they can be”
# 2021-2022 SCHOOL CALENDAR

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<tr>
<th>SEPT. 2021</th>
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<td>DECEMBER 2021</td>
<td>JANUARY 2022</td>
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## OPENINGS / CLOSINGS

<table>
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<th>2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 1 – Staff Conference Day</td>
<td>January 17 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</td>
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<td>September 2 – First Day of School</td>
<td>February 21-25 – Winter Recess</td>
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<td>September 6 – Labor Day</td>
<td>March 16 – Staff Conference Day</td>
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<td>September 7-8 – Rosh Hashana</td>
<td>April 14-22 – Spring Recess</td>
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<td>September 16 – Yom Kippur</td>
<td>May 30 – Memorial Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 11 – Columbus Day</td>
<td>June 20 – Juneteenth Celebrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2 – Staff Conference Day</td>
<td>June 24 – Last Day of School</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 11 – Veterans’ Day</td>
<td>June 27-28 – School Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 25 &amp; 26 – Thanksgiving Recess</td>
<td>July 4 – First Day of Summer Program / Independence Day (School Closed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 24-31 – Holiday Recess</td>
<td>August 12 – Last Day of Summer Program / September 1 – Staff Conference Day / September 6 – First Day of School</td>
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## SCHOOL HOURS: MONDAY – FRIDAY

- Preschool: 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM
- School Ages: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

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### EMERGENCY CLOSINGS ON INTERNET, TV AND RADIO:

- VCC (www.vcc.org), Optimum Channel 12 (104.3 FM): Radio: 94.3 The Shark, WALK 57.5 FM (1370AM), KJOY 98.3, WBAL 102.3, 103.1 MAX FM, WBUR 101.1, WHJU 1100 AM.
- You will receive an Alert Message about closings via phone, text and/or email if you have enrolled in our Alert Now System.

This calendar has been developed by Administration following SBO requirements for the number of school days. Administration has the right to change the calendar if emergency closings during the school year require additional days.
Variety Child Learning Center (VCLC) is a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) agency that provides programs and services for young children (birth to 7 years) with learning, language, social and behavior disabilities, including autism, and support services to families. Judith Bloch founded the school in 1966 based on the beliefs that early identification, early intervention and partnerships with families make a difference in the outcomes for young children. These beliefs continue to be the cornerstones of VCLC’s philosophy and programs. Opportunities for Home/School Collaboration are key in our work.

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). The Sunday and Vacation Respite Programs are regulated by the New York State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and Medicaid. Students must meet OPWDD eligibility to be considered for enrollment in the program.

Each regulatory agency has requirements that effect VCLC’s daily operations. SED, DOH, OCFS and Medicaid require that VCLC adhere to health and safety standards, specific classroom ratios and paperwork requirements. Parents will also be required to complete paperwork periodically throughout the year. You will find information about mandatory paperwork and timetables throughout this handbook.

VCLC offers an array of programs for children and families. Families have no out-of-pocket expenses but are responsible for the fees/costs associated with childcare and/or VCLC’s fee-for-service enrichment programs.

The tuition dollars that are received for the programs and services your child receives cover his/her/their IEP services. VCLC relies on fundraising to enhance your child’s school experience. Over the years, these funds have been used for items such as playgrounds, technology, indoor play equipment for the gyms and classroom renovations.

During the school year, VCLC hopes that you will support the Family Association’s and VCLC’s fundraising drives and events. Watch your mail, our website and your child’s backpack for information about our fundraisers. We hope you will join us and support VCLC!
SUCCESSFUL BEGINNINGS

The beginning of each school year can be both exciting and challenging at the same time. Parents may feel anxious about this new experience, wondering how their child will separate from them or their caregiver and will these strangers understand and accept their child. Can we trust them to take care of our child?

Children, new or returning students who are moving into a new classroom with a new teacher and peers, face a period of adjustment. Some adapt easily. Others have a more difficult time and need more time to make the adjustment. Your child may protest loudly, become clingy or cranky, or just walk into the new situation without looking back. Some children adapt easily at first but may react weeks later to the new situation. They may not want to separate from you, or their behaviors may become challenging. Staff is aware of the separation process and are available to work with you and your child to ease the situation.

You may want to do a few readiness activities prior to the start of school:

- Visit the school with your child shortly before school begins. You can show and use the playground.
- Point out mini-buses as you are riding in the car or walking in the neighborhood.
- If you have a toy school bus at home, play with it and talk about how your child will be taking the bus to school and coming home to his/her family.
- Help your child choose an object that may be comforting for him/her to hold on the bus (e.g., a stuffed animal, picture of a family member or pet) and will fit easily into the backpack. At this point in time, no toys from home can be brought into the classroom. They will have to be placed in your child’s backpack.
- Talk about favorite activities your child does at home that he/she may do at school such as looking at books, playing with toys, or going outside.
- Show your child the picture of the teacher.

Separation is an important beginning school task. Dealing with this successfully leads to other successful school experiences. If you drive your child to school, say good-bye when you take your child out of the car. Clear good-byes build trust. When you are saying good-bye, tell your child quietly and briefly that you are going and will see them later.

If school adjustment and/or separation appears to be an issue, contact your social worker. She will partner with you to work on a plan to ease the process.
CONFIDENTIALITY

As parents of a child attending VCLC, it is important for you to know that we are aware and respectful of your need for privacy and confidentiality. Confidentiality is a concept that ensures privacy and protection against disclosure of personal information. The way privacy and confidentiality are respected is an important factor in establishing trust between our staff and our families. Respect for confidentiality is required by FERPA, the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Our staff takes this very seriously. Please help us follow our policy and be mindful of where and when you talk about your child with staff. You can schedule an appointment with your social worker to discuss personal and confidential issues.

- All staff is trained in our confidentiality policy and practices.
- We do not share full names and telephone numbers of the children and their families without written permission.
- We will only discuss your child with you and cannot disclose any information about another child or family.
- We request that parents only observe and comment about their child.
- We request that parents only take pictures/videos of their child.
- Taking pictures/videos of other children is not permitted.
- We request that parents do not post pictures/videos on any social networking sites including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, chat rooms and others.

Student Records

- All children’s records are kept in locked files and are available to professional staff who have a legitimate educational interest or “need to know” for the specific purpose of appropriate planning of programs and activities for your child. These staff include: teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, social workers, school nurse, adaptive physical education teacher, behavior specialists and VCLC Administrators (CEO and CFO). An access log is maintained in each child’s folder, specifying the name of the staff reviewer, date and purpose of review.
- School districts for CPSE and CSE students and VCLC’s regulatory agencies such as the New York State Education Department, Department of Health, Medicaid and Office of Children and Family Services have the right to access a student’s file.
- Copies of reports and evaluations generated in this program will be provided to and shared with families.
- VCLC must have written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student’s education record to anyone other than authorized individuals. However, FERPA allows VCLC to discuss educational records without consent to:
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
Accrediting organizations
- Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoenas
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.
- VCLC and your county and/or school district.

VCLC is regulated by the New York State Department of Health, Education Department and Office of Children and Family Services and has contracts/agreements with your county, school district and the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Early Intervention to provide your child’s educational program according to his/her IFSP or IEP. Therefore, as stated above, your child’s county and/or school district has access to his/her educational records and all reports generated by VCLC.

Parents may add an amendment to their child’s record and the amendment will be so labeled on the specific material and maintained along with the child’s record.

If a parent with a child receiving Early Intervention (EI) services wants to amend the record, the parent must notify the OSC (Ongoing Service Coordinator) or EIOD (Early Intervention Official Designee) in writing:
- Nassau County: EIO, Director, Office of Children with Special Needs, DOH, 60 Charles Lindbergh Blvd., Suite 100, Uniondale, NY 11553-3783, 516-227-8661.
- Suffolk County: EIO, Director, Office of Children with Special Needs, DOH, 50 Laser Court, Hauppauge, NY 11788, 631-853-3100.
- If the municipality decides not to amend the record as requested, you are informed of this decision in writing and you have the right to a hearing.
- The information in the record found to be inaccurate will be amended, and you will be informed in writing by the municipality.

Parents and eligible students may request copies of the materials in the student’s record at a cost of $.50 per page.

Parents may have a representative review their child’s record upon presentation of parent’s written authorization to do so.

The above-mentioned rights pertain to all parents, except in the case of a custodial situation where the custodial parent may be required to give permission. Request forms are available in the Family Service Department. All requests must be in writing.

School District and County Notifications

As required by the above authorities, VCLC staff are required to notify VCLC Administration as well as your school district and/or your county when:
- A student’s residency changes
- Required prescriptions for OT and PT services are not received
- A student is absent for more than 5 days
- A student misses more than five (5) related services (Speech, OT, PT, psychological counseling).
VCLC has two campuses: Syosset and Levittown. Policies and procedures stated in this handbook apply to both sites as well as classes provided offsite.

**Important Building Information**

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

Hours: Monday to Friday: 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM

**Levittown**
72 Farmedge Road  
Levittown, NY 11756  
(516) 490-3301  
Fax: (516) 490-3303

Hours: Monday to Friday: 6:30 AM to 6:45 PM

**School Hours**

**Syosset**
Full-day Preschool Classes: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

**Levittown**
Childcare: 6:45 AM to 6:45 PM  
Full-day Preschool Classes: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM  
Preschool SCIS Classes: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM  
School-age Classes: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

**Off-Site SCIS (Special Class in an Integrated Setting) Classes**
Oyster Babies in Oyster Bay: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM  
Oyster Babies East in Huntington: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM  
Island Trees SCIS: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

**UPK Classes**
Island Trees: 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM
Name Tags
Please place the enclosed nametag on the back of your child’s shirt for the first few weeks of school to ensure your child’s safety. Remember to fill in your child’s name and teacher’s name. The tag already includes VCLC’s address and phone number.

Student Absences
VCLC policy requires that families call the attendance office, at 516-921-7171, Ext. 2193, whenever your child will be late or not in school because of illness or any other reason. Please call by 8:00 AM for all classes. When leaving a message, please state your child’s name, teacher’s name and the reason for the absence. Please see VCLC’s Health Policy for details when a doctor’s note is required for return to school.

If your child does not come to school and there is no message on the attendance line, the attendance office, nurse or your social worker will call you to check on your child. Your child’s safety is important, and we want to make sure that we account for each child enrolled at school.

Please note: If your child is absent for more than five consecutive days/sessions of school or related therapies, VCLC must notify your county and school district of your child’s absence. For early intervention children, your on-going service coordinator will be notified if more than three consecutive days/sessions are missed.

Your child’s attendance at school is important to his/her/their educational program. Please review the school calendar when planning any vacation or extended family visits. VCLC is obligated to notify the county, school district and/or your on-going service coordinator as described in the previous paragraph. Remote services will not be given for absences or vacations.

Alert Now System
Because communication is a top priority, VCLC has adopted the ALERTNOW Notification Service that allows us to send a telephone, email or text message to you regarding important school information including weather related closings, delayed openings or early dismissals. It is the only way that we will be able to communicate with you with regard to school closings, emergency information and school announcements.

School Closures
School is in session according to the established calendar included in this handbook. Unpredictable and inclement weather can create many problems. Our primary concern is for the safety of the children, families and staff in deciding when the school should be closed, remain open, delay opening or dismiss early. Road conditions may vary throughout the region. SED has given schools the option to declare a snow/weather emergency day as school closed with no services or a remote learning day. Our Alert Now message will state what kind of day it will be.
Nassau and Suffolk Counties decide if there is transportation for early intervention and preschool students. Swissport is under contract with Nassau and Suffolk Counties to provide transportation for early intervention and preschool students. As of November 2018, Swissport has issued the following guidelines about transportation in inclement weather:

- To ensure the safety of children receiving transportation services, **transportation will not be provided under the following conditions:**
  - The school district (in which a child’s designated pick-up is located) is reported closed.
  - The local school district in which a Provider site is located is reported closed.

Even if VCLC is open, Swissport will not provide transportation in the above cases.

- Swissport will not provide transportation if VCLC has a delayed opening. **Swissport cannot provide transportation for a delayed opening schedule. If the provider school is open with no transportation and the parent/guardian transports their child to school on adverse weather days, the parent/guardian must also provide transportation for their child home. THERE WILL BE NO BUS SERVICE.**

School districts decide if there is transportation for the school age children from their district. This is not a decision made by VCLC.

In the event of severe weather conditions, VCLC will use our ALERTNOW Notification System to let you know school status. **You must be enrolled in the system to receive notification.** If you need an enrollment form, please contact the Education Department in the Syosset or Levittown building to request a form.

In addition, closings, delayed openings or early dismissals will also be on Cablevision Channel 12 News (news12.com), vclc.org, and radio stations 94.3 The Shark, 97.5 WALK FM (1370 AM), KJOY 98.3, WBAB 102.3, 103.1 MAX FM, WBLI 106.1 and WHLI 1100 AM. VCLC has no control when the media posts the school’s status.

**Clothing**

Children work hard at play. They should be dressed comfortably with appropriate clothing and shoes for outdoor and indoor play. We strongly suggest that your child wear sneakers to school.

Please send in a complete change of clothing plus an extra set of underwear and socks. All clothing must be labelled with your child’s name. You should put your child’s clothing in a clear plastic closeable bin or a large Ziploc plastic bag labelled 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 put in a separate large clear sealable Ziploc bag labelled with your child’s name. **VCLC does not have a supply of diapers.**

In addition, please send in an ongoing supply of baby wipes. If your child needs diaper ointment or cream, you must supply these items in the original container labelled with your child’s name.

Please make sure the expiration dates on the ointment or cream are current. Staff will apply the ointment or cream if you have completed and returned the consent form to apply diaper ointment. If you need another copy of this 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 labelled with his/her name. Some full-day classes have two snacks and lunch each day. Your child’s teacher will let you know about the classroom schedule and how much food to send to school each day.

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

**Staff is aware that children have their favorite foods and sometimes they will 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 in order to maintain the proper temperature.**

**Please be aware that certain foods have the potential to be 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, 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 send home a more comprehensive list. If you are unsure whether a food is a choking hazard, please contact the school nurse.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** VCLC makes all attempts to maintain a “nut or nut product free school.” No peanut butter, peanut-based food, nuts of any kind or foods prepared on machinery that may process foods with nuts are permitted in the classroom or offices. Please check the packaging labels on all foods sent into school.
Sleeping/Naptime
Students in Preschool Special Education classes do not have a regularly scheduled naptime. The children’s instructional day includes time for related therapies as per their IEPs. If a child falls asleep, a mat is made available. A child who usually does not fall asleep or whose parent(s) have not indicated that the child had difficulty sleeping the night before will be brought to the school nurse to rule out illness. Please refer to VCLC’s Sleep Policy.

Classroom Supplies
Your child’s teacher will send home a supply request monthly to include much needed supplies, such as paper plates, paper towels, napkins, tissues, etc. The needs of each class differ month to month. Thank you in advance for your contributions.

Photo Releases
Photographs (including videos) of children fill a variety of important needs. In the classroom, they support learning with opportunities to increase self-awareness and recognition of their peers and teachers. They are a curriculum aid in the classroom and therapy areas. Photos assist in the acquisition of social, cognitive and language skills.

The photos and videos of the children also help the agency. They tell stories about our children and the work we do in an effort to persuade the community of the value of early identification, early intervention, special education and the critical need to continue funding programs like VCLC.

Each family receives a photo release, which provides you with options to decide if your child can be photographed and how the photos are used. Consent is voluntary. If you choose not to sign the full release, please consider signing the limited release so that your child’s photo can be used for classroom learning. If you need another copy of the photo release, please contact your social worker.

Holiday Celebrations
VCLC’s goal is for the children to gain an understanding of the wide range of holidays observed by various cultures and to become aware of the customs and symbols associated with different holidays and cultural celebrations. In school, the teachers create an environment where children can begin to expand their understanding of these special days. By acknowledging some of these holidays and traditions at school, the children have the opportunity to learn about traditions, diversity and commonality. Religion does not play a role.

In school, the emphasis is on celebration of family, diversity, special traditions, and the common cores of tradition that bind us all together: sharing, helping and caring. The holidays are
discussed in the context of the seasonal changes, integrating holiday activities, keeping them relevant and meaningful to the children’s age and developmental levels.

Each teacher will send home a form in the beginning of the school year regarding holiday and cultural celebrations and activities. If you would like to share your celebrations or if you are concerned about these celebrations, please contact your social worker or your child’s teacher to discuss this.

Medicaid in Education
VCLC’s contracts with Nassau and Suffolk Counties, school districts and New York City require us to collect Medicaid information about each child at the beginning of the school year and each time there is a change in your child’s IEP. Families must complete the Medicaid Consent for Release of Information form whether or not your child is Medicaid eligible. It is essential that you complete this form each time it is sent home. Your social worker will contact you if the form is not received.

SCHOOL SECURITY
VCLC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children in accordance with regulations provided by the New York State Office of Children and Families, Education Department and Department of Health, Bureau of Early Intervention. Today, the world around us can be chaotic and frightening. VCLC views building security and the safety of the children, staff and families very seriously.

In accordance with SED’s guidelines, VCLC established policies and procedures to ensure the safety of all. We ask your cooperation in following these policies and procedures as outlined below. Please be aware that due to COVID and the uncertainty of the times, VCLC will be limiting building access to staff and essential visitors. Anyone who enters the building must complete the Daily Health Check. If anyone leaves and re-enters the building, he/she/they will need to have their temperature taken.

Entering and Exiting the Building
Entrance and exit from the building are through the front main door. All outside doors that lead into the building are locked and alarmed at all times. Children who ride the bus to and from school will enter the school through the busing doors, which are locked and alarmed before and after busing. When children are coming into the building, a staff member monitors the door. No one other than the staff involved in busing and the children can use the door. The door is locked immediately after busing is complete. Please do not try to come into the building during this time through the busing door. Staff will stop you and redirect you to the main front entrance. Please do not ask staff to open a locked door for you.
Building Visitors
VCLC’s concern about the safety of all supports OCFS regulations that all visitors, including family members, be buzzed into the building and sign the visitor log. The receptionist will ask the visitor the purpose of the visit and the person they want to see. He/she/they will also ask to see an official photo ID, such as a driver’s license, to verify identity. The visitor will be buzzed into the lobby as soon as this information is verified. No one will be allowed to enter the building without proper identification. All visitors must sign in and be buzzed into the lobby area.

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

- Fire Drills
- Lockdown Drills
- Lockout Drills

VCLC has a fire alarm system that is linked to the fire department. VCLC notifies the fire department when a drill is scheduled, and the alarm is taken offline. At the end of the drill, the department is notified, and the alarm is put back online. In the event that the alarm goes off at a non-drill time, the fire department is notified and will come to the scene. No one is allowed back into the building until the fire chief clears the building. When the alarm is sounded, VCLC’s telephone system goes off-line to clear the lines for emergency calls.

Fire Drills
During a fire drill, everyone in the building must evacuate through the nearest exit and move away from the building. SED requires that there are eight fire drills between September 1st and December 31st and a minimum of four (4) more during the remainder of the school year. Two additional drills are required if the school is in session in the summer. OCFS requires one fire 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 the children and the staff practice exiting the building through different routes as well as at different times of the day.

In the beginning of the year, teachers spend time discussing the fire drill. They talk about the loud bell and walking safely out of the room holding a teacher’s and/or peer’s hand. Visuals are used to help the children understand the routine. Additional staff are assigned to each class to help with the drill. Initially, the drills are scheduled so the teachers can prepare the children. As the year goes on, the drills are unannounced. All staff know that they must get everyone out of the building whenever the alarm rings.

Each drill is timed and recorded on a form that is reviewed by SED and OCFS. Staff not directly assigned to a classroom will check the building to make sure that no one is left in any of the rooms.

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 locks down where they are. For example, if a therapist is with a child away from the child’s class, the therapist and child would stay where they are. They cannot leave to find the class. Support staff and administrative staff will also stay where they are and not go to their
assigned classes to help. Lockdown drills are scheduled and practiced throughout the school year. These drills are documented as required by SED and OCFS.

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.
- **Call 911 and report situation.**
- **Immediately, gather students, staff and visitors from hallways and other areas near your room, classroom or office and bring them inside your space.** This includes all common areas and rest rooms immediately adjacent to your classroom.
- **Do not cover the outside windows.**
- **Leave the window blinds and lights as they are.** If the lights were out, leave them out. If they were on, leave them on.
- **Document and attend to any injuries as well as possible.**
- **NO ONE should be allowed to enter or leave a classroom or office under any circumstances.**
- **DO NOT answer or communicate with anyone through your locked door.**
- **DO NOT allow anyone into your “secured” area.**
- **DO NOT answer a classroom telephone.**
- **DO NOT use your cell phone—voice or text.**
- **DO NOT respond to a Fire Alarm unless imminent signs of fire are observed.** Doing so could compromise the safety of those already secured.
- **DO NOT talk within your secured area, except only as absolutely necessary.**
- **DO NOT respond to the intercom, public address system or other announcements.**
- **Take attendance.** Add names of anyone in your room who is not on your original attendance sheet. Include missing student’s last known locations.
- **Keep this record.** It should be given to emergency personnel and/or administration when the lock down is over, and you are released from the lockdown.
- **LOCKDOWN WILL END ONLY WHEN EMERGENCY RESPONDERS OR OTHER AUTHORITIES UNLOCK YOUR ROOM AND YOU ARE PHYSICALLY RELEASED TO MOVE ON.**

**Lockout Drills**

A **Lockout** occurs when there is a threat outside of the building. This means that all exterior doors are locked, with limited entry and exit from the building. Administration will let staff know if normal activity can be continued. No one will be allowed on the playground.

Lockout drills are scheduled and practiced throughout the school year. These drills are documented as required by SED and OCFS.

In a Lockout as well as in any emergency situation, it is essential that all staff and visitors to the building follow procedures and directions from emergency personnel and administrators.

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.** Keep the police informed about any changes in the situation.
- **Lock all exterior doors and windows.**
• Pull down blinds on outside classroom windows.
• All outside activities are terminated immediately. Bring all children into the building from the playground through the nearest door to your present location.
• Go immediately to your classroom.
• Take attendance. Report to the principal, administration or emergency personnel if anyone is missing.
• Entry into the building is very limited and is gained only on a one-on-one basis through a locked and monitored door (the main entrance door). **DO NOT OPEN ANY CLASSROOM DOORS OR OTHER BUILDING DOORS** even if you know the person requesting entrance into the building.
• Classes and activities can continue as normal unless instructed otherwise.
• 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.
• Designated staff will call 911 to inform them of the termination of the lockout.

Off-Site Evacuation

There may be situations where it might be unsafe for anyone to be in the building. If this occurs, children, staff and any visitors in the building will be immediately evacuated to an off-site location. VCLC has made arrangements with other facilities in the immediate area. Children and staff will leave the building and go to a pre-determined off-site location.

Families will be informed about the evacuation through VCLC’s Alert Now System and will be told the location of the reunification site.

**SCHOOL VISITS—OPEN DOOR POLICY**

Home/school collaboration is an important cornerstone of VCLC’s programs. Until the COVID pandemic, VCLC maintained an open-door policy that enabled families to visit the school and observe their child in the classroom or therapy rooms.

However, while COVID continues to be an issue, VCLC has suspended the open-door policy and is restricting visitors to the building.

Parental involvement in your child’s education is still a key component of our program. During these unprecedented times, you can still be involved by participating in our annual assessment with The Five P’s, parent-teacher conferences and parent education groups, meeting with your social worker and joining the Family Association. You and your social worker can discuss and plan your involvement in a way that supports you, your child and your family.

As we move forward through the COVID crisis, VCLC will revisit our open-door policy. You will receive notification of any policy changes through Alert Now, backpack mailings and our website.

VCLC is aware that you may have outside teachers, therapists and consultants working with your child. If you would like VCLC staff to talk with non-VCLC staff, please sign a consent form that gives VCLC staff permission to share and discuss your child’s learning strengths and needs, interventions and goals.
TRANSPORTATION

Parents can choose whether their child takes a bus to school or they drive their child. Either way, arrival and dismissal times can be hectic as all the buses and cars get to school within a short period of time. Egress in and out of the building can be congested. During arrival and dismissal time, VCLC asks parents and staff to be aware of what is going on around them. Hold children’s hands in the parking lot and be aware of moving buses and cars.

Your school district will discuss transportation with you at your child’s initial and/or annual review meeting with your school district. The district is responsible for informing you about your transportation options, completing the paperwork and indicating the mode of transportation on your child’s IFSP or IEP. They are also responsible for forwarding bus transportation paperwork to the county and/or Swissport.

Parents Who Drive Their Child to School

Many parents drive their children round trip or one-way to or from school. If you drive your child to school, you may be eligible for reimbursement from your county of residence. Please contact your district’s CPSE chairperson to enroll in the reimbursement program. VCLC does not control this reimbursement. Our only role is to verify your child’s attendance for the county. If you have any questions about your reimbursement, please contact your school district or county’s Department of Health, Office of Children with Special Needs.

Prior to the first day of school, you will receive information about VCLC’s drop-off and pick-up procedures. This will be included in the packet mailed to you the week before school begins. You will also receive a name card to put in the front window of your car.

Parents should follow the designated route and remain in their cars until a staff member reviews your daily health check and takes your child’s temperature. At this point, staff will ask you to take your child out of his/her/their car seat. Make sure that you say good-bye to your child before staff escorts him/her/them into the building.

Parents will follow the designated route and wait in line at dismissal time. A staff member will check you in and call the classroom to bring your child to your car. It is your responsibility to buckle your child into his/her/their car seat. Please stay in line until staff direct you to move.

There may be times when someone other than the parent will be picking up your child from school. To maintain a safe environment, you must inform VCLC in writing that someone other than you will be picking up your child from school. The note should be sent to the teacher indicating when your child will be picked up and the name of the person who will pick-up your child. This person will have to show a valid picture ID before the child will be released.
Parents Who Use Bus Transportation

VCLC does not operate or control bus transportation. Bus transportation is provided by your county of residence. The counties have contracts with Swissport who establishes routes and assigns the drivers and driver assistants to the buses. The bus company will notify you of your child’s bus route and approximate pick-up time and drop-off time. If you have not heard from the bus company five days prior to the start of school in September or July, please contact:

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 has no responsibility for oversight and assignment of bus transportation. The municipalities and school districts arrange for and administer transportation for each child when transportation is authorized on the IFSP or the IEP. Once the child is on the bus, transportation companies, the municipalities and/or the school districts are responsible for the child.

VCLC is informed if there is a transportation issue or an accident. If the bus arrives at a child’s home at drop-off time and either no one or an unauthorized individual meets the bus, the bus driver or company will contact VCLC:

- To call the parent
- Or check to see if the individual is on the authorized list

VCLC must receive a written authorization through fax, email or a note ahead of time that states a person other than those on the list can take the child off the bus. VCLC will not accept verbal authorizations from a parent. The bus driver will not release a child to someone without authorization to accept the child and will follow company or district protocol that may include involving the police.

More often than not, the bus driver will continue on the route and come back to the child’s home after the last drop-off to see if a parent or authorized person is there to take the child off the bus. If the situation has not changed, they will follow their protocol as described above.

Bus Changes Requested by Parent

Parents may need to make changes to pick-up and drop-off locations or to add or delete the names of people who are authorized to take their child off the bus. Prior to making any of these changes, contact:

Preschool Children at Syosset:  
Contact Alyssa Kahn, VCLC Transportation Coordinator, 516-921-7171, Ext. 2189 or email transportation@vclc.org.
Preschool Children at Levittown:
Contact Marlita Craven at 516-490-3301, Ext. 3155 or email transportation@vclc.org.

School Age Children:
Contact your school district transportation office and Marlita Craven.

Please be aware that it may take up to two weeks for these changes to take effect. All changes must be in writing.

Route Changes Made by the Bus Company
Children from all areas of Nassau and Suffolk Counties may enroll in VCLC classes throughout the school year. This may cause a change in your child’s bus route as Swissport makes adjustments to accommodate all students. Staff understand that this may cause some stress for your child and you. VCLC does not assign the routes. The bus company is responsible for routing. However, your child’s teacher and social worker can help prepare your child for the change. If you have any questions about the changes, please contact the bus company.

Picking Up Your Child from School
From time to time, parents of children taking the bus may want to pick up their child from school. To maintain a safe environment, you must inform VCLC in writing that your child will not take the bus home and if someone other than a parent will be taking your child home. Without written notification, VCLC will not release your child. Verbal consent will not be accepted.

- The note should be sent to the teacher indicating when your child will be picked up and the name of the person who will pick-up your child.
- This person will have to follow the arrival/dismissal procedures and show a valid picture ID before the child will be released.

Bus Safety Regulations for All Children
VCLC works closely with the bus companies, drivers and driver assistants to ensure your child’s safety. Each year, VCLC gives the drivers and driver assistants a handout with guidelines for interacting with the children.

- A “bus” tag will be attached to your child’s backpack indicating his/her classroom. This helps us identify where your child will be taken when coming off the bus. PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE this tag.
- Nassau County Preschool Special Education Bus Guidelines state that the bus is not to wait longer than three to five minutes for a child to board.
- All children must be accompanied to and from the bus by an adult.
- Children are not permitted to drink or eat any food or candy on the bus.
- If it is necessary for a child to bring a small toy to school, please be sure that it can fit into the child’s lunch box or backpack. Loose toys can be dangerous. However, some children have the need to carry or hold something during the bus ride. As long as the item is soft, for example a blanket, stuffed animal or other items of that nature, your child can hold it during the ride to and from school. Be sure to label the item with your child’s name.
- Children must remain seated and strapped into their car seat or the bus’s safety belt at all times during the bus ride.
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 prior to the start of transportation services. These designations should be within the same school district and in close proximity to the child’s regular drop-off location. Information should be updated on a regular basis. 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 has to 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

VCLC’s nursing staff prides itself in the safe, competent and compassionate care of all children and staff. In order to ensure these goals, comply with both VCLC medical and health polices and those of our regulatory agencies (SED, OCFS, and DOH), please review and adhere to the following.

**Medical Exams**

Students are required to have a yearly medical exam that must be documented on VCLC’s medical form. Documentation must include the results of the exam and a list of current immunizations. If immunizations are delayed for medical reasons, the doctor must submit documentation on letterhead stating the medical reasons for the delay. The letter must be signed by the doctor and include his/her license, Medicaid and NPI numbers. There are no longer any religious exemptions as per New York State law (June 2019). All exemptions must be approved by VCLC’s Administrative Team.

The school nurse will notify you in writing two months prior to the time your child needs a new medical. Please submit an updated medical no later than one month after the current one expires.

A newly enrolled child cannot come to school until his/her medical has been received. It must be at school prior to the child’s first day.

**Emergency Contact List**

There must be an Emergency Contact List on file for your child. OCFS regulations require that these lists be updated three times per year, September, January and June, or sooner if the information changes. It is imperative that you provide a minimum of three (3) valid telephone numbers where you or a designated emergency contact person who is available to pick up your child can be reached.

If your child becomes sick in school and a parent cannot be reached, the school nurse or designated school staff will use the emergency numbers to notify an authorized person. When choosing emergency contacts, please select individuals who your child knows, are available to pick up your child, have transportation to get back and forth and live within a reasonable distance. Your authorized person will be required to sign in and out at the front desk and show a valid picture ID.

**Sick Children**

VCLC is always concerned about the health and safety of children and staff. Please note that COVID protocols are in place until further notice. Any child who exhibits any of the COVID symptoms will be taken to the Symptom Room, examined by the school nurse and sent home.

- **Children who are ill must not come to school.** If a child comes to school sick, the nurse will call you to pick up your child.
- **Please call the attendance line (516-921-7171, Ext. 2193) to report your child’s absence.**
- **If your child becomes ill during the school day, the nurse will determine whether the child is too sick to benefit from school or is contagious to other children and staff. Based upon her assessment, the nurse may call you to pick up your child.**
- **Children must be picked up in a timely way – within an hour of receiving a call. If you are unable to do so, VCLC will call your emergency contacts. If no one is available to pick up your child, VCLC will call 911.**
• If a parent cannot be reached, VCLC will call your emergency contact person(s) to pick up your child. It is essential that there are three emergency contact people and that this list is updated at a minimum of three times per year.
• **Under no circumstances will a child with a fever of over 100.4 degrees be transported on a school bus.**

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

• COVID Symptom: A child with COVID symptoms cannot come back to school without written documentation of a negative COVID test or a statement from your health care provider clearing your child to return to school.
• A diagnosis of an infectious disease
• Fever
• Vomiting and/or diarrhea, as assessed by the school nurse: may return to school after 24 hours after last episode of vomiting or diarrhea
• Symptoms that prevent the child from fully participating in school activities including, but not limited to: excessive tiredness or lack of appetite, productive coughing or sneezing, headache, body aches, earache, sore throat or eye infections.
• **Specific Conditions Requiring Absence From School**
  o Head Lice: may return to school after treatment with anti-lice shampoo and manual nit removal. A note from the parent is required stating the date the treatment was completed and that no new nits were found.
  o Pinworms: may return to school the day after Pyrantel, Mebendadole or Albendazole treatment. A doctor’s note is required.
  o Ringworm: may return to school 24 hours after treatment has begun. A doctor’s note indicating the diagnosis and recommendation is required.

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, the school nurse will notify families of all children in the class and on the bus.

**Children Can Return To School When**

• **Fever free for 24 hours after an illness without the aid of fever reducing medications such as Tylenol or Motrin**
• If your child had COVID symptoms, your child must have either written documentation of a negative COVID test or a statement from your health care provider clearing your child to return to school.
• For Bacterial infections
  o Impetigo: 24 hours after treatment begins
  o Conjunctivitis (not allergy related): no discharge from eyes and at least 24 hours after treatment begins
  o Strep Throat: after 24 hours on antibiotics and fever free as described above
• For Viral infections
  o Influenza (Flu): must stay home from school until child is symptom free. The flu is serious, and you should call your doctor at the first sign of symptoms which typically come on suddenly:
    ▪ High fever
    ▪ Chills
    ▪ Headache, body aches, earaches
    ▪ Nausea and vomiting
    ▪ Dry cough
  o Fifth Disease: fever free for 24 hours
- Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease: fever free for 24 hours and no open sores
- Diarrhea: no diarrhea for 24 hours if this is different from your child’s typical bowel movement
- Colds: must be kept home if child has a very runny nose or bad cough (not allergy related), especially if the child has been awake at night. Colds can be contagious for at least 48 hours. Returning to school too soon may slow the recovery process and expose others unnecessarily to illness.

**Doctors’ Notes are Required to Return to School When**

- A child was diagnosed with a communicable disease including COVID.
- A child has undergone anesthesia or any surgical procedures.
- A child has stitches, a cast or any injury that might be made worse by normal school activities
- A child was hospitalized.

The doctor’s note must include a statement about clearance for all school activities. If your child receives OT or PT services, this note must specifically state that the child is cleared to resume these services as well. If this is not so, the note must clearly state the limitations to the child’s activities, including gym, OT, PT, playground and going outside.

The school nurse must review the doctor’s note before your child returns to school. Please email, fax or bring the note to school before your child comes back to school.

**Children Who Are Ill Who Receive Home or Off-Site Services**

A child cannot receive home services, SEIT or related services when he/she is ill. All the criteria listed in the beginning of this section pertain to children receiving home and off-site services. Please review the material.

If your child is ill, please notify the home care provider, SEIT teacher and/or therapist to cancel services. A child who is ill and cannot attend school, cannot receive home or off-site services.

**Medications in School**

There are situations when children will need medications to be given at school. The school nurse is the only legally authorized person allowed to administer medications in school.

In order for medications to be dispensed at school, the following medication related forms must be kept on file and updated according to SED and OCFS regulations:

- **Medication/Supplements:** This form asks parents to list any medications their child takes. If your child takes no medication, please check the box that says, “My child is on no medications/supplements.” This form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian and dated. You will be asked to complete this form yearly or if there is any change to the medications/supplements your child takes.

- **Parent and Healthcare Provider’s Authorization for Administration of Medication in School and School Activities:** This form must be completed even if your child will not receive medication at school. Please check the box that states, “My child will not receive medication in school.” If your child is going to get medication at school, please complete Section A and have your child’s doctor complete Section B. **This form must be updated every six months or when there is a change in medication.**
  - The form must be signed by both the parent and the child’s physician.
The physician must complete all of 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 and provide his/her license number and stamp the form.

All medications (including over the counter medications such as Tylenol, creams, etc.) to be given at school MUST have a doctor’s order which must include the child’s name, the medication to be given, the amount of medication to be given and the time the medication is to be given. Please check all expiration dates before sending any medication to school.

Medication consent must be updated every 6 months. Without an updated consent, the nurse will not be able to administer the medication. Families will receive a reminder that new consents are needed. If the medication authorization expires and VCLC has not received either a new authorization or written notice that the medication has been discontinued, the child will not be able to attend school. When documentation is received, the child will be able to return to school.

If the child’s medication is discontinued, a note from the parent and/or doctor is required.

Handling Medications
Parents must bring all medications directly to the nurse’s office. Children cannot bring in medications in their backpacks. All medications must be in the original pharmacy container, with the original pharmacy label in place.

The nurse will not accept medication that does not meet the above criteria. No verbal instructions for medication administration will be accepted.

Upon receipt of any controlled medication, the nurse will count the number of pills. The nurse does a daily count of the medication before administering a dose. When these medications are returned to the family, the pills will be counted as well.

All medication is logged in to the medication log and must be labelled with the child’s name. Medications are kept in a locked cabinet in the nurse’s office. If medications require refrigeration, they are locked in a medication only refrigerator in the nurse’s office. Access to the locked medications is limited to the nurse and the substitute nurse.

When medications are administered, the nurse logs the information including the time administered onto the medication log. If any reactions to the medications are observed, they will be noted on the log and appropriate action including call 911 will be taken.

Special Health Needs
The school nurse reviews each child’s medical packet to determine if the child has any special health needs including allergies, seizures, diabetes and more. An individual health care plan will be developed in consultation with the parent and the child’s doctor. Once this plan is developed, the school nurse will meet with the classroom team, therapists and specialists to train them on the plan. All participants will sign off on the plan that they received training. If the child has an allergy to specific food items, a note will be posted outside the child’s classroom.

Parents should contact the school nurse as soon as possible to discuss their child’s special health needs.

Incident Reporting
VCLC will notify parents when there are accidents, serious incidents and injuries by phone and written communication. The nurse and/or designated staff (social worker, principal or teacher) will call parents
immediately to let them know about the event. VCLC will notify emergency contacts if the parents cannot be reached and will call 911 if the situation warrants.

As per OCFS guidelines, the nurse will describe the injury and his/her/their perception of the child’s pain to the family. He/she/they will ask the family their expected time of arrival at the school and if the family would prefer VCLC to call an ambulance. If so, the parent would then meet the child at the hospital.

Written documentation will be completed by the nurse and witnesses to the event. The Incident/Accident Form will be reviewed by the parent if the parent picks up the child or sent home to the family for signature. OCFS requires that the school nurse, witnesses and the parent(s) sign off on the report. A copy of the completed report will be filed in the child’s medical folder. A copy will be sent home to the parents as well as to OCFS.

**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](https://www.csny.state.ny.us/abuse_maltreatment.htm).

**BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY**

VCLC is dedicated to supporting our learners, families and staff to create and sustain a school environment that is safe, positive and consistent where all children and families are welcomed, respected and supported. In 2017, VCLC adopted a positive behavior support system, the Pyramid Model. It is an evidence-based, multi-tiered systems approach for establishing the social culture and individual behavior supports needed for our children. VCLC staff are guided by the following ideas and principles:

- Create a therapeutic environment where all children are successful
- Promote the social/emotional development of all children
- Build positive, supportive relationships between: staff and each child, children and children, staff and families, and families and children
- Promote family involvement in their child’s education

Each classroom teacher begins by implementing a classroom wide management system to teach and reinforce classroom rules and expectations. The classroom team develops with the children simple, positively stated classroom rules that support our Pyramid Model Expectations:

- Be Safe
- Be Respectful
- Be Responsible

Classroom rules should always teach the child what to do, not what not to do. For example, to teach the children to Be Safe, a classroom rule might be “Use Walking Feet” instead of “No Running.”
Staff are committed to utilizing the following positive behavior supports:

- **Praise positive behavior:** Use concrete phrases such as “Good job sharing your toys with your friends.” Try not to use statements such as “Good boy.” Praise should be meaningful and specific so that it reinforces the desirable behavior.

- **Redirect the child:** Give the child an alternate behavior, toy or activity when a conflict arises.

- **Offer choices:** Give the child two acceptable choices and respect the child’s choice. For example, you can sit on the red square or the blue square.

- **Praise the child for using his/her words to communicate:** If a child is having difficulty using his/her words, the classroom staff can model appropriate words or help a child communicate using symbols.

- **Dialogue with the other adults in the room:** Staff talk to each other stating the expectation for the children. For example, “The class will go outside when all the children line up.”

- **Use “if, then” statements:** “If Mary puts on her jacket, then she will go outside.”

- **Listen to the child:** Respect what the child is communicating and proactively, respond to his/her needs.

Additional behavior management practices may need to be put in place when a child’s behavior escalates, and the classroom wide strategies are no longer working. At this point, the classroom team will:

- **Define the behavior**
- **Collect data including:**
  - The frequency (how often the behavior is occurring)
  - What happens just before the behavior occurs
  - What happens right after the behavior occurs
  - When it occurs

The classroom staff will meet with their education coordinator and their interdisciplinary team to develop individual behavior management strategies and decide whether to contact your child’s school district to discuss the need to complete an FBA (Functional Behavior Assessment). If an FBA is done, the district’s CPSE or CSE will determine if VCLC should develop a BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan). Your social worker and/or your child’s teacher will keep you informed.

In the event that a child’s behavior results in the child being a danger to himself/herself/themselves or others, staff will immediately intervene and call the NCI (Non-Violent Crisis Intervention) Team to help deescalate the situation and keep the child, his/her/their classmates and staff safe. In the event that staff needs to use disengagement techniques or safety interventions, you will be contacted. The school nurse always examines the child after such an event.

If you have any questions about VCLC’s Behavior Management Policy, please call your social worker or the principal.

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1 NCI (Non-Violent Crisis Intervention) is a behavior intervention model that is compatible with the Pyramid Model. It is a proactive approach to behavior management that is designed to promote: Care, Welfare, Safety and Security for both the children and the staff. Staff are trained to be respectful, avoid crises, keep children safe and intervene early to prevent a behavior from escalating. All direct care staff are required to participate in the NCI training workshops yearly.
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS

Variety Child Learning Center (VCLC) is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for the students where they may receive quality educational services. Each classroom teacher sets up class rules and reviews them with the children. They are posted in the classroom or on the Smart Board in a manner that is compatible with the students’ current levels of functioning.

The curriculum includes activities that focus on respect, appropriate social interactions, providing models for appropriate behavior and responsibility. Discipline is focused on corrective action teaching the students an appropriate behavior to substitute for a maladaptive behavior.

Student Rights

All students have the right to attend school and the right to be treated fairly.

Essential Partners

All parents, guardians, teachers, therapists, school staff and administrators are responsible for following the Code of Conduct to help maintain a safe learning environment.

Student Behavior

Students are expected to act appropriately in the school setting and follow classroom rules. If a student engages in activities that are harmful to him/herself or others or school property, the classroom team will:

- Take action to assure the safety of the child and/or other students and staff. See Discipline and Behavioral Intervention Policy.
- If the behavior becomes a pattern, the classroom team or school psychologist will take data about the antecedent and consequence of the behavior as well as the frequency. The data will be discussed, and an intervention plan will be developed.
- The classroom team may contact the family to see if the behavior(s) are occurring at home.
- The focus will be on teaching students socially appropriate behaviors and/or responses rather than on punishment.
- Emergency interventions using CPI techniques may be used if the behavior escalates and the student and/or others are at risk of being hurt or in danger.

Bullying

Bullying will not be tolerated. Staff have been trained in DASA (Dignity for All Students Act).

Disciplinary Actions and Procedures

VCLC staff will discuss students’ behavioral issues with the child’s family if the behavior becomes a pattern and affects the learning environment of the students. Disciplinary actions will be dealt with on an individual basis and be appropriate to the child’s level of functioning. The focus will be to teach socially acceptable behaviors to replace maladaptive behaviors.
HOME/SCHOOL COLLABORATION

VCLC was founded on the principles of early identification, early intervention and home/school partnerships and collaboration. New York State Education Department designated VCLC’s Home/School Collaborative Model (HSCM) a “Sharing Success Validated Model” worthy of replication and adaptation.

“If children are to succeed in school, home and school must work together...”

This model facilitates family involvement in a child’s educational program from the initial contact with VCLC through transition to another school setting. The model is based on three constructs:
- Parental inclusion in screening, evaluation, assessment, goal setting and remediation
- Family support and parent education
- Family friendly school environment which promotes parental and family involvement

Upon entrance to our program, each family is assigned a social worker. Social workers are members of your child’s team. All social workers have extensive knowledge in early childhood development and the impact of the child’s special needs on the family system. Experience has taught us that when there is a concern about one family member it has an effect on the entire family. Families will have regular communication with their child’s teacher. Your social worker will serve as the liaison with the classroom team.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

There are two scheduled parent/teacher conferences each year: Fall and Spring. At the Fall Conference, you will meet with your social worker and child’s teacher. Each therapist will prepare a short write-up that may include goals being worked on and suggested activities that you can do with your child at home. Your teacher and social worker will review this information with you and give you the write-up(s) to take home. The conference is a half-hour long and will be via a teleconference or Zoom.

The Spring Parent/Teacher Conference focuses on your child’s current level of functioning and preparation for your child’s annual review with your district. This meeting will be 45 minutes long and will take place anywhere from the end of January through April. You will meet with your child’s teacher and your social worker. Related service therapists will be invited to join.

At this meeting, the teacher will review your child’s progress toward acquisition of his/her IEP goals, discuss his/her strengths and needs and classroom strategies that have been successful. The teacher and/or social worker will present the therapists reports if they are not able to attend.

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2 As of the publication of this manual, parent/teacher conferences will be virtual or by telephone. If the COVID situation changes, VCLC will add an in-person option.
All decisions made about your child’s future educational placement are the responsibility of your district’s CPSE or CSE. Please do not ask VCLC staff to make any recommendations about future placements. This will be discussed at your child’s CPSE or CSE meeting.

While there are only two scheduled conferences, you can contact your child’s teacher or therapist(s) or your social worker throughout the school year to discuss any issues or concerns that you may have.

**FAMILY SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

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

The Family Service Department has many options available for parents:

- **Parent education and training:** Programs are offered throughout the school year to educate parents with the skills and knowledge needed to raise a child with special needs. Topics will 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 your child’s backpack about 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. The Family Association is a membership organization with an annual membership of $10 per family.

This year, Syosset and Levittown will each have their own Family Association in order to better serve the needs of each campus. The staff advisors will communicate regularly with respect to ongoing fundraising and events. Meetings are scheduled monthly. Families will receive notices in your child’s backpack about the time and location of the meeting.

Watch your child’s backpack for more details about the Family Association and the planned fundraisers.
THE CLASSROOM

Each teacher sets up his/her classroom to optimize the children’s learning and engagement. A typical day in any of the classrooms includes: structured play time, individual instructional time, small and large group lessons, circle time, snack and/or lunchtime, playground (weather permitting) or gym. Each week the children go to music therapy, computers, physical education or movement. Visuals including photos and icons are used throughout the day 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, there is a focus on building the early foundations of learning utilizing a variety of rich experiences where the children can learn in the context of play and interactions to address the development of communication, cognitive, social-emotional and motor skills. In the school-age program, materials prepare the children to learn specific reading, writing and math skills that will help them succeed as they move forward.

VCLC has adopted the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based model that focuses on supportive environments and relationships, social-emotional development and a pro-active approach to behaviors. Your child’s teacher will share more information with you about the Pyramid Model, classroom curriculum, schedules and routines at Back-to-School Night.

RELATED THERAPIES

VCLC offers related therapies in accordance with the child’s IFSP or IEP that 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 team and is a resource to the teacher and team members. The therapists share with the team strategies they are using in therapy to promote generalization across all settings.

Parents will receive pictures of their therapists as well as their contact information. Communication between therapists and families is encouraged.

VCLC recognizes the importance of providing each student with the means of communicating with others. The speech pathologists have received training in the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). AAC is a continuum of alternative methods and devices to help students have a voice so that he/she/they can communicate their needs. There are a range of AAC methods and devices that may be appropriate for your student. Your speech pathologist and your social worker can answer your questions about AAC and whether it is appropriate for your child.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) describes multiple ways to communicate that can supplement or compensate for the impairment and disability patterns of individuals with severe expressive communication disorders. AAC is augmentative when used to supplement existing speech, and alternative when used in place of speech that is absent or not functional. AAC devices may include PECS (Picture Exchange Communication Systems), IPads with specialized software or electronic devices.

Your student’s speech pathologist and/or social worker will contact if and when the time comes to consider AAC for your child.

FAMILY CENTER SUNDAY AND VACATION RESPITE PROGRAM

Sunday Respite Program
VCLC’s Family Center Sunday Respite Program is funded by the New York State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and Medicaid. Children who are able to attend the program meet OPWDD eligibility criteria. Under VCLC’s policy, only children funded through Family Support Services or Medicaid HCSB Waiver services can enroll in the program. VCLC is not enrolling children who have Self-Direction.

The Sunday Respite Program is for children with disabilities who are three to ten years old and residents of Nassau or Suffolk Counties. It meets 18 Sundays from September to June. Families can bring their child with a disability and his/her siblings for a day of recreation and socialization. There are fees for the sibling group payable in advance in September and February.

For more information about the Respite Program, contact Rebecca Esquilin at 516-921-7171, Ext. 2014.

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3 The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is an executive agency in the state of New York, whose mission is to provide services and conduct research for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. OPWDD offers individualized, person-center supports to children aged birth to 21 who are OPWDD eligible with a qualifying diagnosis. OPWDD services can be provided in addition to supports received through Early Intervention (EI), the education system, and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), which are the primary systems serving children with disabilities in New York State. In addition, OPWDD offers services to family members to help them provide supports to their loved ones. For more information about OPWDD, please contact the Long Island DDRO at 631-416-3917 or visit the OPWDD website at www.opwdd.ny.gov.

4 The 2021-2022 calendar may be appended to only 16 sessions.
**Vacation Respite Program**

The Vacation Respite Program is funded by a grant from OPWDD's Family Support Services. This program meets five times during the calendar year for four-hour sessions during school holidays. Children who are OPWDD eligible and have behavior challenges may enroll. Children with Self Direction are not eligible to attend. Enrollment is limited to 30 children per session.

For more information about the Vacation Respite Program, contact Rebecca Esquilin at 516-921-7171, Ext. 2104.

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**FEE FOR SERVICE PROGRAMS**

**Child Care**

VCLC operates an OCFS licensed childcare center at the Levittown site for young children 6 weeks to 5 years. Childcare is in session from 6:45 AM to 6:45 PM. There are infant, toddler and preschool classes as well as before care and after care. Enrollment in the infant, toddler and preschool classes is for five days per week; no partial weeks are available. Childcare follows the childcare calendar that is different from VCLC’s school calendar.

For information about childcare availability and rates, please contact Morgan Dubas at 516-490-3301, Ext. 3149 or by email at mdubas@vclc.org.

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**Saturday Enrichment Programs**

Traditionally, VCLC offered enrichment groups (for a fee) on Saturdays. These have been suspended during the COVID crisis. When the COVID situation improves, VCLC will consider bringing back these programs including social skills groups. Information about these activities will be posted on our website and distributed with flyers in backpacks.
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.

Acronym Glossary

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

Syosset Campus  516-921-7171

Levittown Campus  516-490-3301

Extension

To report a child’s absence  Attendance Office (516-921-7171)  2193

Janice Friedman, CEO  2126
Andrea Rieger, CFO  2131
Principal, Syosset  Jolie Shah  2320
Principal, Levittown  Corey Lein  (Levittown Campus)  3121
Director of Family Services  Maria Freeman  (Levittown Campus)  3177
Supervisor of Family Services  Stacey Trotti  2184
Director of Evaluations, Placement and Services  
(Early Intervention, Related Services, SEIS)  Barbara Pirnat  2105
Compliance Officer/Quality Assurance (Interim)  Janet Henderson  2132
ABA Home Program  Melissa Vitarelli  2255
Bilingual Curriculum Coordinator  Sonia Puertas-Galletta  3235
Bilingual (Spanish) Coordinator  Maria Ariss  2212
Child Care Director  Morgan Dubas  (Levittown Campus)  3149
Development Office  Mindy Knaffo  2144
Evaluation Department  Georgia Kaitery  2113
Family Center  Rebecca Esquilin  2104
Health Office / Nurse  Laurie Librizzi  2110
Health Office / Nurse  Mia Millard  (Levittown Campus)  3122
Occupational Therapy Department  Terrie Ludwig Hoppe  2192
Physical Therapy Department  Lori Christianson  2200
Psychology Department  Virginia Blum  2225
Speech/Language Department  Lenore Kahne  2221
Transportation Office  Alyssa Kahn  2189
Transportation Office  Marlita Craven  (Levittown Campus)  3155

Visit us at our website:  
www.vclc.org

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

Join us on Facebook:  
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Variety-Child-Learning-Center/112643688773

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