




**CHICKADEES FAMILY
HANDBOOK
SUMMER 2026**

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The "Ice House"

Dear Families,

Lucia Stancioff
Executive Director

Welcome to Ketcha Outdoors' Farm and Forest Preschool!

Our Farm and Forest Preschool provides a welcoming and nurturing environment where every child feels valued, safe, and seen. Dedicated educators focus on creating a space for safe risk-taking and developmentally appropriate exploration for children ages 3-5. By prioritizing inclusion, we ensure all children can play, learn, and connect in a supportive, natural setting.

The Farm and Forest Preschool offers a unique, experiential learning model. Children are immersed in nature, developing curiosity and a strong connection to the world around them. This approach builds a foundation for a lifelong love of education. Our curriculum is designed to spark wonder, encourage problem-solving, and allow each child's potential to blossom.

Learning in the outdoors promotes a deep connection to and respect for the natural world. Children learn firsthand about ecosystems and their role in protecting them. This early commitment to environmental stewardship instills responsible habits and a lasting appreciation for nature.

We celebrate the unique perspectives and backgrounds each child and family brings. We believe that learning from the outdoors, thoughtful teachers, and each other offers the richest form of growth. Fostering an appreciation for diversity enriches the preschool experience and our community.

A successful preschool experience is built on strong partnerships. Your involvement as parents and guardians is integral to our community's success. We encourage open communication and collaboration, and look forward to building strong connections with each family. Together, we can make this a community where every child thrives.

We are excited to embark on this journey of discovery, learning, and growth with you at Ketcha Outdoors!

Sincerely,



Lucia Stancioff

Executive Director, Ketcha Outdoors

KETCHA OUTDOORS

MISSION

To provide equitable access to outdoor experiences and gear, promoting well-being, sustainability, and resilient communities.



VISION

We envision a Maine community where anyone can enjoy being active outdoors. We believe that access to the outdoors, educational programming, and reliable gear has positive benefits for individuals and communities. We believe that being engaged in nature promotes physical and mental health, builds confidence and resilience, fosters environmental stewardship, and brings diverse communities together.

VALUES

At Ketcha Outdoors we offer quality programs and events to serve our community. We strive to adhere to our values with each interaction we have with our community, or with an individual.

- We offer a caring and safe place for people to explore the world around them.
- Our organizational culture is one of acceptance and tolerance. Diversity is welcome and encouraged here.
- We challenge kids of all ages through experiential and hands-on programs, feeding their curiosity and discovery of the world.
- We understand the importance of nature and the environment and strive to encourage families to explore the world around them.
- Protection and conservation of our property is of utmost importance, as well as any other environment our programs operate in.

Organizational Structure

Ketcha Outdoors, formerly known as Camp Ketcha, has been in operation since 1964. We are a charitable non-profit organization governed by a volunteer board of directors.

Our website is <https://ketchaoutdoors.org> and our current board members can be viewed here: [Our Board - Ketcha Outdoors](#).

The name Camp Ketcha now refers to our summer day camp program, while our new name Ketcha Outdoors encompasses the full array of our programs which include After-School Care, School Vacation Camps, Farm and Forest Preschool, Adventure Challenge ropes course programs, and the Portland Gear Hub and Bike School. <https://portlandgearhub.org/>

Charitable support in the form of fundraising, grants, and volunteer efforts is essential in helping keep our program fees affordable. We raise additional revenue by renting out our facilities to the public for private events such as weddings.



Land Acknowledgement

We are honored and fortunate to have the use of 107 acres of land between Scarborough, Maine's seacoast and salt marshes. Our occupancy marks a small moment in time amid the history and future of this treasured place.

While ownership and stewardship of these acres are ascribed to the Ketcha Outdoors organization we acknowledge that this is Wabanaki land. The Wabanaki Confederation of tribes -Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot- have lived here for at least 13,000 years. We are committed to continuous education as an organization as well as individuals so that we can be respectful and conscious stewards of the land we reside on.

A pdf map of the property: [Libby River Farm Trails](#)

Educational Resources: [Maine Wabanaki Reach](#) and [Native Land Map](#)

Property Information

A trail map is available here: [Libby River Farm Trails](#).

The map is published by the Scarborough Land Trust. Ketcha's property abuts the Land Trust's Libby River Farm preserve which has a public access hiking trail. There is a right of way to the public trail which crosses Ketcha's property. The trailhead is located in the lower parking area of our Ice House on Black Point Rd. just north of our main building.

The Ketcha property is an open campus. In addition to the trail to access the Libby River land preserve the public is permitted to walk, ski or bike on the property at times and in areas where there are no active programs (after 6 on weekdays, anytime on weekends). Dogs must be on leash at all times in all areas including in the preserve and no motorized vehicles are allowed.

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FARM AND FOREST PRESCHOOL CHICKADEES SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM

Philosophy

We practice place-based teaching, throughout our 107 acres of forest, fields, farm, and waterways. Our campers are active in the outdoors all summer in all types of weather. We know that development happens best through play, so we schedule many opportunities for both structured and unstructured play throughout the day, allowing our students to immerse themselves in the diverse natural settings on our property. We provide the freedom and support needed for child-led exploration, discovery, imaginative and creative play, risk-taking, problem-solving, socializing, and mindful moments. We believe that all children can learn and contribute to their community, so we cultivate an inclusive environment that honors the diversity of life in both our human cultures and the natural world.

Program Information

The Chickadees summer camp program is for campers ages 3-5 years old who are rising preschool students. "Rising preschool students" are children who will be starting or continuing their preschool years (including pre-k) in the Fall after their summer at camp. Children who are 5 years old but are heading to Kindergarten in the Fall are not eligible to participate in the Chickadees summer camp program. Campers must be 3 years old by their first day of camp. We strive to maintain a 1:7 teacher-to-student ratio. The legal ratio for this age group in Maine is 1:8. In some cases, we may operate with a 1:8 teacher to student ratio. Our maximum program size is 30 students.

Contact Information

The following table provides you names and contact information for the Farm & Forest Preschool program:

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Kailina Mills | she/her | Director of Farm and Forest Preschool | kmills@ketchaoutdoors.org |
| Brittney Austin | she/her | Lead Teacher | baustin@ketchaoutdoors.org |
| Thursday Sharon | she/her | Lead Teacher | tsharon@ketchaoutdoors.org |
| Zoe Johnson | she/they | Assistant Teacher | zjohnson@ketchaoutdoors.org |
| Chloe Pascale | she/her | Assistant Teacher | cpasacle@ketchaoutdoors.org |
| Liz Tully | she/her | Director of Operations | ltully@ketchaoutdoors.org |
| Lucia Stancioff | she/her | Executive Director | lstancioff@ketchaoutdoors.org |

Student & Family Participation Policies

Attendance & Dismissal Policies and Procedures

- **Permission for Picking Up:** For a child to be released to a non-parent or non-guardian we must have documented permission. Parents identify individuals in their registration process and additions can be made by email for adding to the list of approved persons. Ketcha staff will ask for identification until they can easily identify the person picking up and can match them to the correct child. It is important that all adults picking up children from any program have their ID at the ready. If a non-custodial parent has been denied access to a child by a court order, you must submit documentation to that effect, and we will comply with it accordingly.
- **Absences:** Attendance is taken every day at Ketcha Outdoors. If your child will be absent, please call (207) 883-8977 to let us know. For preschool, you can send teachers a message via Seesaw to confirm an absence. A voice mailbox system is in place for messages when school is closed. Your child may not make up absent days during unregistered days. If your child is unexpectedly absent we will reach out to you to verify their absence. Farm and Forest Preschool uses an app called Seesaw to take attendance, communicate daily with families, and share photographs. If we haven't heard from you by 9:00 am, we will call home to confirm the absence. Before the start of school, you will receive an invitation to join the app and create an account for your child.
- **Late Pick-Up:** Preschool closes promptly at 12:00 pm or 3:30 pm, depending on your child's enrollment. Any participant picked up after their scheduled pickup time will be charged a \$10 fee plus \$1 per every minute they are late. Payment is due upon pick-up. At 30 minutes past pickup time, we follow Failure to Pick-Up Child procedures. In case of an emergency, please notify us immediately.
- **Failure to Pick-Up Child Procedure:** If the parent/guardian or authorized person(s) fails to pick up the child at the time of the program's closing, Ketcha will ensure that:
 - The child is supervised at all times.
 - Staff members attempt to contact the parent/guardian or authorized person(s); and
 - A ½ hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to the parent or authorized person(s) have failed, and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child, the staff member will call the Department of Health & Human Services 24-hour Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline at 1-800-452-1999 to seek assistance in caring for the child until an authorized person is able to pick up the child.
- **Visitor Policy:** At Ketcha Outdoors we ensure policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety of the children, as well as all employees when we have visitors on site. Ketcha Outdoors welcomes visitors and operates an open-door policy. Limitations may be placed on visitors to protect the safety of children and staff and to avoid any unnecessary disruption. All visitors must check in with a staff member to sign in to the Visitor Log. During their visit, visitors will be asked to:
 - Wear a name badge.
 - Leave personal belongings including cell phones in your vehicle or in a locked cabinet.
 - Be accompanied by an employee or remain clearly visible to an employee at all times.
 - Check in with an employee before using the bathroom so that staff members can check that there are no children in the bathroom area.
 - Ketcha employees have the right to ask any visitor to leave if they feel they are concerned about the safety of staff or children.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Ketcha Outdoors is run by a small, dedicated staff and many volunteers. If you have an interest in volunteering in some capacity at Ketcha please visit our website for more information.
<https://ketchaoutdoors.org/volunteer/>

Health and Safety Policies and Procedures

- **Overview:** Managing 107 acres of woods, waterfronts, and a farm entails many variables and frequently changing conditions throughout the seasons. Daily attention is paid to identifying problems that may arise. Planned program activities may be adjusted as needed at any time in order to ensure safety. Two-way radios are carried at all times by our staff to ensure quick communication whenever assistance becomes necessary. All staff are trained in CPR/First Aid and are Red Cross Water Safety certified.
- **Health Records:** In order to attend, every child must have a Health History form completed on Ketcha's registration platform, signed by a parent, and submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to the first session your child is registered for. The information documented on the Health History form must be current. Required health information about your student includes but is not limited to allergy history, medications routinely taken, dietary restrictions, general health history, physical/emotional/mental health history, physician contact information, and immunization records (you may need to obtain this from your child's pediatrician). It is important that you and your physician provide complete information regarding any physical condition or recent illness that may require our attention while your student is at Preschool. Please note that we ask for emotional/mental/behavioral health history so that we can provide the best care possible for your child and to help them be a successful member of our Ketcha community.
- **Immunizations:** Ketcha Outdoors is a licensed childcare facility, so we do require that all children are vaccinated following the Maine DHHS vaccination requirements for childcare facilities. Up-to-date records of these immunizations are required before starting care at Ketcha Outdoors. Required immunizations can be found here: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/ME%20Immunization%20Requirements%20for%20Schools%209-25-2021.pdf>
- **Medical Exemptions:** The following are medical contraindications for which medical exemptions may be certified by a physician for immunizations.
- **Pertussis vaccine:** 1) fever greater than or equal to 40.5 C (105 F); collapse or shock-like state (hypotonic-hyporesponsive episode), or persistent, inconsolable crying lasting three or more hours within 48 hours of receiving a prior dose of pertussis vaccine; 2) seizures occurring within 3 days of receiving a prior dose of pertussis vaccine; 3) encephalopathy within 7 days of administration of a previous dose of pertussis vaccine; 4) anaphylactic reaction to pertussis vaccine or a vaccine constituent; or 5) the student has reached the seventh birthday.
- **Diphtheria or tetanus toxoids:** 1) anaphylactic reaction to diphtheria or tetanus toxoids or a toxoid constituent.
- **Measles or mumps vaccine:** 1) pregnancy; 2) known altered immunodeficiency (hematologic and solid tumors; congenital immunodeficiency; and long-term immunosuppressive therapy); 3) anaphylactic reactions to egg ingestion or to neomycin; 4) anaphylactic reaction to measles or mumps vaccine or a vaccine constituent.
- **Rubella vaccine:** 1) pregnancy; 2) known altered immunodeficiency (hematologic and solid tumors; congenital immunodeficiency; and long-term immunosuppressive therapy); 3) anaphylactic reactions to neomycin; 4) anaphylactic reaction to rubella vaccine or a vaccine constituent.
- **Inactivated polio vaccine:** 1) anaphylactic reactions to neomycin or streptomycin; 2) anaphylactic reaction to polio vaccine or a vaccine constituent.
- **Varicella:** 1) pregnancy; 2) immunosuppression; 3) anaphylactic reaction to a vaccine component; 4) recent recipient of antibody-containing blood product."



- **Illness and Injury:** If your child is ill, please do not send them to our programs. Illness may look like a fever greater than 100.4 and/or vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours. If your child is experiencing cold or flu-like symptoms not relieved by rest or over-the-counter medication, please consider having your child tested for the flu, COVID, strep, or other illnesses prior to returning to Ketcha Outdoors. If your child becomes ill while at Ketcha Outdoors, they will be separated from the group with a staff attending to their comfort, and you will be notified to arrange for a pickup. We seek the counsel of parents/guardians whenever a camper is ill, abnormally homesick, or whenever something extraordinary occurs; please do not be alarmed if you receive a call from us. Depending on the illness, other parents/guardians may need to be notified. Certain illnesses have to be reported to the Center for Disease Control and a physician's note may be needed to verify when the child is cleared to return to school.

Common illnesses require the following precautions:

- **Fever**- The child may return after being fever-free without the use of medication for 24 hours
- **Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea** - The child may return after they are free of symptoms without the use of medication for 24 hours.
- **Chickenpox** - The child may return to care after all the chicken pox has scabbed over.
- **Conjunctivitis** - Can return after treatment has begun and there is no evidence of discharge.
- **Lice** - A child may return after treatment has been administered and is free from all signs of nits and lice. The child will be inspected for lice by Ketcha Outdoors staff before they can return.
- **Strep Throat** - A child may return after being on antibiotics for at least 24 hours.
- **Impetigo** - A child may return after being on antibiotics for at least 24 hours.
- **Rashes** – Please check with your pediatrician before sending them to school.
- In case of injury, the Ketcha Outdoors staff and/or Health Officer will take necessary measures to ensure proper emergency care, which may include: treatment by staff for minor injuries, phoning the parent/guardian for instructions, or calling local emergency care providers.
- You will be notified as soon as possible regarding any communicable diseases affecting children in the program. We report outbreaks of disease to local health authorities. Children absent due to contagious diseases can return to Ketcha Outdoors when accompanied by a signed physician's statement indicating they are no longer contagious.
- It is important that you provide us with complete emergency contact information (other than yourself). In the case of any injury that requires medical attention, we make every attempt to contact you before treatment. In the event you cannot be reached, we will have your written authorization on file to treat an injury (on the Registration Form).

- **Medications:** Both nonprescription and prescription medications, ointments, and creams can be given to your child as needed. New medications should be administered at home 24 hours before returning to school in case of a reaction. Parents/guardians are required to fill out a medication form and to supply all medications in their original containers. These must be labeled with the child's name and physician. Expired medications will not be dispensed, and medication forms must be updated every six months.
- **Emergency Procedures:** We conduct fire drills once a month and evacuation drills twice a year. In the event of a true emergency, you will be contacted immediately after the safety of the children has been secured. EMS will be called first for perceived life-threatening injuries, and parents/guardians will be contacted immediately afterward. All staff are trained in American Red Cross First Aid, and Infant, Child, and Adult CPR.
- **Evacuations:** In the event that we need to evacuate the premises due to an emergency or safety concern, we have identified two evacuation locations. Our in-neighborhood location is the Black Point Fire Department at 341 Black Point Rd, Scarborough. Our out-of-neighborhood location is Highland Farm at 109 Highland Ave, Scarborough. It is only in an emergency situation that we would transport children. Ketcha Outdoors staff are not responsible for transporting children in any other situation.
- **Emergency School Closing:** In the event of an emergency school closing, we will notify local media outlets, place a sign out front, post it on the website, and send out a mass email if possible. If we currently do not have an email address for you, please call us at (207) 883-8977 to add your email to the list. If an emergency were to occur while our programs are in session, but we do not need to evacuate the premises, then we may announce an alternative pick-up location: either our Ice House Building off Black Point Road or our Farm off Spurwink Road.
- **Serious Injury and Death Reporting:** As required by licensing rules, any injury to a child while in the care of Ketcha Outdoors will be reported to their parent/guardian. A written copy of a completed Accident/Illness/Injury Report will be kept in the child's file. Where necessary under law the report will be forwarded to the appropriate governing agency. Parents/guardians and state licensing staff know children are active and no amount of child proofing and supervision can prevent all injuries. However, reporting injuries can help prevent them in the future by identifying injury patterns specific to the childcare's environment and/or with a child who may need help with difficulties associated with balance, vision, or foot positioning. Medical attention is a parent/guardian decision. When a parent/guardian cannot be reached, then Ketcha Outdoors will act in their stead when a decision on immediate medical attention is needed. Serious injuries will be reported to the Child Care Licensing Unit at 207-287-9300 within 24 hours.
- **Weapons Policy:** No guns or weapons of any sort are permitted on the premises by staff or visitors unless carried by those engaged in official duties of law enforcement, security, or the military. Possession of a valid concealed weapons permit authorized by the state of Maine is not an exemption under this policy.



- **Toileting and Bathroom Use:** We understand that some young children are still working on potty training and independent use of the bathroom. At Ketcha, we require that all children in our programs are fully potty trained. Full potty training means that children can take on/off their pants and underwear, get on and off the toilet, pee and poop in the toilet, wipe themselves, flush the toilet, and thoroughly wash their hands (including turning on/off the faucet) without adult support. If they are not fully potty trained, the family is welcome to hire and provide a 1:1 aide to attend school with their child to help them in the bathroom. We require that all students are fully potty trained before starting our program because the outdoor nature of our program means that we cannot provide 1:1 supervision when students go to the bathroom without compromising the safety of our other students.
- **Student Behaviors:** We recognize and appreciate that young children are still learning to control their bodies and regulate their emotions. As such, we do not punish children when unsafe or unkind behaviors occur. We first work to ensure the safety of the child and others, then we help the child regulate their nervous system, and finally, we will communicate with the child to help them develop the physical, social, and emotional skills needed to respond better next time. With this process, we aim to meet the child where they are developmentally and teach them the skills needed to grow. To ensure the safety of all staff and students and to help identify patterns of behavior, all unsafe, unkind, and/or problematic student behaviors are documented by staff when they occur.
- **Accessibility:** Ketcha Outdoors complies with all standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Children with special needs will not be excluded from participation in any activities or programs as long as it does not fundamentally alter the program for the other children. When this becomes a concern, then every effort will be made to accommodate the child with special needs by utilizing additional support staff available through Child Development Services, special education services, or paid for privately by the family.

Gear and Weather Policies

- **Personal Items:** Articles brought to preschool are the responsibility of the student. KETCHA OUTDOORS IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOST OR STOLEN ARTICLES. Please leave valuables at home. Please note that Ketcha Outdoors does not allow drugs or alcohol of any sort in the facility during children's programming.
- Please label as many of their items as you can. A Sharpie works wonders, even just initials help a lot. With all the changes we do, their gear gets separated very easily. There are stamps available on-line you can have custom-made for easy labeling. Here is a site recommended to us: [Mabel's Labels: Kids Labels, Name Stickers & Clothing Labels](#)
- Please provide us with a full set of clothes to keep on hand. We will keep track of what has been used and let you know when replacements are needed. The set should include a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. In the winter, it should also include an extra set of mittens and a hat.
- **Clothing and Gear:** It is essential to have all the necessary gear and clothing suitable for each day's weather. Please keep an eye on the daily weather reports, and teachers will update you to the greatest extent possible.
 - They will need a water bottle that is light enough for your child to carry independently and that your child can independently open and close. We always refill during the day. If your child does not come with a water bottle, a Ketcha one will be provided to them, and you will be billed \$3.00 on your account.
 - Students will need a small, light, preferably Waterproof Backpack to carry their water bottle, snack, layers appropriate to the weather, and other needed items. Other recommended options: LL bean, Osprey, and Firefly. To minimize what you have to bring back and forth you can leave gear such as rain suits, fleeces, and wind layers in your child's cubby throughout the year.
 - For those staying in the afternoon, you will need to pack an additional bag to transport rest time items back and forth. Their bag should include a crib sheet (to cover their rest mat), a blanket, and a pillow. A small stuffed animal is optional. The bag will be sent home at the end of each week so that you can wash the bedding over the weekend.
 - If you have any difficulty with finding proper gear, please reach out to the director. We have a gear library with many items that you are welcome to borrow for as long as you need. We also accept donations to add to our gear library if you have gear that your child has outgrown.
 - **Please do not have the kids bring any toys from home** unless they're staying for the full day in which case one small stuffed toy is fine for rest time.



- **Rain Gear:**

- A waterproof rain suit (or jacket/pants combo) is required when it is raining, misting, or wet outside.
- Rain boots need to be fully waterproof. Please make sure they fit comfortably with a pair of thick, warm socks underneath them.

- **Mild Weather Clothing:** Lightweight cotton shirts, pants, and shorts are fine for mild weather. Quick dry synthetic materials are preferred over denim or other thick cotton. Even on sunny, dry days, students are likely to get wet with water play or puddles, and synthetic materials will dry out quickly.

- In the warm to cool weather months, the following are needed:
 - Sun hat - full brim with a string or chin fastener preferred
 - Sneakers or sturdy close-toed shoes *no laces please!*
 - Wind jacket/ Warm jacket as needed

- **Sunscreen and Bug Spray:** Apply sunscreen and bug spray each morning before drop-off. This includes cloudy days. If you would like to leave sunscreen or bug spray at school so that your child can reapply during the day, please make sure it is labeled with your child's FIRST AND LAST name. You can give it to a staff member who will help your child reapply. Bug spray and sunscreen are regulated as a medication by the FDA, so it cannot stay in your child's backpack or cubby. We will store it for them in a place out of their reach and help administer re-applications as needed throughout the day as long as a parent/guardian has signed the appropriate permission forms.



Food, Nutrition, and Physical Activity Policies

- **Food & Nutrition:** Ketcha recognizes the importance of a healthy diet for a child's ability to participate, grow, and learn effectively. Children in our school program should have a nutritious snack and lunch provided by their parents/guardians each day. Given how active children are in our outdoor programming, children are often hungrier here than in other settings. We recommend providing a generous amount of food for snacks and lunch to ensure your child has enough.
- **Food Storage:** Lunches and snacks will typically be stored in your child's cubby but may also be carried in their backpacks on hikes to eat on the trail. We do not provide either refrigeration or warming (e.g., microwave) for children's food, so please make sure all food provided in your child's snacks and lunches is sent to school ready to eat.



- **Food Containers:** Since students in our program will often carry their snacks and/or lunch in their backpacks on our hikes, we recommend using lightweight containers so that children can independently carry their packs without them feeling too heavy. Recommended lightweight containers include reusable silicone or plastic snack bags with a zipper, beeswax wraps, and cloth snack packs. Glass containers for food are not permitted per State licensing rules unless they have a silicone (or similar) case around them to prevent shattering. Due to the weight of bento boxes (or similar lunch containers), we also recommend avoiding these products and opting for a fabric lunchbox.
- **Food Restrictions:** Children are not allowed to bring juice, soda, caffeinated beverages, or sports drinks to our programs. Water is the healthiest option for your child while in our programming due to our high activity levels. You may choose to add electrolytes to your child's water if you prefer.
- **Nut Policy:** We allow children in our programs to eat nuts. You are welcome to send nuts to school in your child's snack or lunch. However, we are an allergy aware program. Therefore, if you send nuts to school in your child's snack or lunch, you **MUST** label the container clearly so that staff know before the child opens the package that it has nuts. This is particularly important for nut butter (e.g., Nutella, almond butter, peanut butter) because it is challenging to tell if a sandwich contains nut butter or some other kind of spread (e.g., sun butter). We seat children whose snacks or lunches contain nuts away from any children with nut allergies to prevent allergic reactions. If staff are unsure whether a child's food contains nuts, we will not allow them to eat it. Children always wash their hands and staff sanitize tables before and after eating to reduce the spread of allergens in the classroom. Using this system, we have fortunately never had any incidents with allergic reactions in our classroom. If your child has an EpiPen for their allergy, a staff member has it with them at all times. If your child has a severe allergy and you are concerned about our nut policy, please contact the School Director to talk through your concerns.

- **Birthdays and Celebrations:** Children are welcome to bring a small treat on their birthday to share with their classmates. You can bring non-edible treats such as stickers, keychains, or bubbles. If you choose to bring food as the treat, it must be allergen-free for all students in your child's class. Please contact the School Director prior to your child's birthday to learn what allergies are present in the class. Common allergens include nuts, eggs, gluten, and dairy. You must provide enough treats for all students and staff in the classroom.



- **Missing Food:** If you forget to send a snack and lunch to school with your child or if your child is still hungry after eating all of the food you provided, Ketcha will provide additional snacks that we have on hand. This may include (but is not limited to) applesauce, pretzels, pirate's booty, clementines, and apples. Each time your child is provided extra food, you will be charged a \$5 fee.



- **Physical Activity:** Ketcha recognizes the importance of regular movement and physical activity for a child's learning and development. We are highly active in our Chickadees camp program, and campers are given many opportunities to move their bodies during both structured and unstructured activities in our school will have a minimum of one hour of physical activity every day in our program, though they typically receive much more since we are outside for the vast majority of our day.



- During free play, staff will actively supervise children, but we cannot provide constant 1:1 support. If you believe your child might need 1:1 supervision and support, please read the Behavior Support Practices and Procedures section on page 16 of this handbook.

- If your child has a disability or other condition that would make physical activity in our outdoor environment (including forest, farm, and waterways) challenging, we will work to accommodate their needs according to our Accessibility policy, which can be found on page 10 of this handbook.



Ketcha Outdoors Behavior Support Practices and Procedures

Overview

- Staff will actively supervise every child on an individualized level of care within reasonable accommodation. We cannot provide constant 1:1 support.
- We do not have physical barriers or fences; therefore, elopement is a bigger challenge than in most other settings. Children MUST be able to stay with their group, follow teacher direction, and stay within stated boundaries.
- Documentation of all incidents and accidents during program hours will be signed by a parent.
- If a child's behavior becomes routinely disruptive to the experience of the other children (more than three acts of aggression in a day), the parents may be called to pick up the child for the remainder of the day. A parent or guardian meeting will be requested to create an individualized behavior plan for the child. Acts of physical aggression include biting, kicking, pushing, hitting, punching, or spitting on other children or staff.

Behavior Support Process

- If Ketcha staff have concerns about how a camper's behavior is affecting their ability to succeed in our program and/or the ability of others to succeed, then they will communicate promptly with the parents/guardians about their concerns. We will collaborate with families to determine if accommodations can be reasonably made to allow the child to continue participating in Ketcha programming. Whenever possible, Ketcha staff will work with the family to create and implement a behavior support plan for Chickadees campers who need it to succeed in our programming.
- **Suspension/Expulsion policy:** If it is decided through the behavior support process that Ketcha Outdoors cannot reasonably accommodate the child's support needs, the family may be asked to withdraw the child from the program without a refund.



- **Risky Play:** Our teachers are trained in monitoring risky play, teaching children to be aware of their body, and what is happening around them. We will guide them as they engage in forms of risky play, including (but not limited to) rough & tumble play, using a variety of tools, moving at rapid speeds, interacting with risky elements (e.g., campfires and the pond), and playing at great heights (e.g., monkey bars, tree climbing, boulders). You can learn more about risky play, including its many developmental benefits, using these links:
 - [Ellen Sandseter's 6 Categories Of Risky Play](#)
 - [Supporting Young Children's Risky Play](#)
 - [Eliminate Barriers to Risk Taking in Outdoor Play](#)
 - [Risky Play—Essential for Healthy Child Development](#)
 - [Children & Nature Network Resource Hub](#)
 - [Benefits and risks of tree climbing on child development and resiliency](#)
- We also recommend these books for a deeper dive into the importance of risky play in childhood:
 - "Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted, Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children" by Angela Hanscom
 - "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder" by Richard Louv
 - Bi-Weekly we share our observations through a "Deep Dive Moment" on our [YouTube](#) page, hosted by Kailina Mills, Farm and Forest Director.



Benefits of Rough & Tumble Play:

Supports Cognitive Development

- Encourages problem-solving as children strategize and plan their movements during play. They learn to anticipate and react to their playmates' actions, fostering quick thinking and adaptability.
- Furthermore, rough-and-tumble play often involves imaginative scenarios, allowing children to exercise their creativity and engage in pretend play, which enhances their cognitive abilities and fosters abstract thinking.

Source: [@kathabed](#)

Small Moment **DEEP DIVE**  

State of Maine Childcare Licensing

- Our Chickadees Camp Program operates as a licensed childcare program through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. We are licensed for up to 197 children. All rules and regulations applicable to our child care license can be found at https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/10-148%20Ch.%2032%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20Licensing%20Rule%20Effective%209-27-21_jpf%20edits.pdf

Rights of Children

Children receiving care from Child Care Facilities have the following rights:

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
 2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
 3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule.
 4. Each Child must be provided Child care services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex, or family composition.
 5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration, and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.
 6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
 7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
 8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies and practices.
- To report concerns about a child care provider, including licensing violations or concerns regarding suspected abuse or neglect in a child care setting call 1-800-452-1999 (deaf and hard of hearing individuals should dial 711 for the Maine Relay). Intake caseworkers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays. Reports of concerns with childcare providers can be made confidentially or anonymously.

Mandated Reporting

- Our staff are all required to complete a certification in child protection awareness, instructing them on the recognition of suspected abuse and neglect. In accordance with the State of Maine's Child Care Licensing Rules: Any Child Care Staff Member suspecting abuse and/or neglect must immediately report this information to Child Protective Intake, 1-800-452-1999, TTY 1-800-963-9490 which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Child Development Services

- The Child Development Services system is available for consultations and evaluations whenever there are questions or concerns about development. CDS operates under the supervision of the Maine Department of Education.
- Screenings and evaluations are provided in order to identify children who are eligible for services. Regional CDS sites arrange for local services that include early intervention special education and related services for eligible children from birth to age five and their families.

Referrals can be submitted by:

- Online: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/cds/referrals>
- By phone 877-770-8883
- By fax to 207-624-6661. You must include the Child Find Intake Form, a PDF available online.

Farm & Forest Preschool Daily Routine

Ice House

Chickadees camp operates out of Ketcha's Ice House building, which has a separate entrance from Ketcha's Main Building. The Ice House entrance is located at approximately 320 Black Point Road, Scarborough, ME 04074. It is just down the hill from Ketcha's main entrance. It shares a parking lot with the Scarborough Land Trust's Libby River Trail. Families will drop off and pick up children at the Ice House entrance each day.

Daily Program Area

Chickadees Camp, while operating as a separate program and under a separate license from Camp Ketcha, does utilize some of the same program spaces and activities as Camp Ketcha. Campers participate in one program area each day. Campers might participate in Swimming (at the pond or pool), Farm & Garden activities, Arts & Crafts, and/or Low Ropes Course activities.

Daily Schedule

We offer a customizable schedule for our chickadees campers. All students enrolled in the Chickadee Camp must attend Monday-Thursday mornings. You can also add-on afternoon sessions from Monday-Thursday and/or a Friday full-day session. In order to register for an afternoon or Friday session, you must be signed up for Monday-Thursday mornings. Morning sessions run from 8:00-12:00, and the afternoon sessions add on 12:00-3:30. **Friday sessions begin at 9:00am** to give us time for a weekly staff meeting.

| Morning Session | Activity |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 8:00-8:45 | Drop Off Window & Free Play |
| 8:45-9:15 | Morning Circle |
| 9:15-9:45 | Snack |
| 9:45-11:45 | Hike, Program Area, and Free Play |
| 11:45-12:00 | Pick Up Window for Half Day Campers |
| Afernoon Session | Activity |
| 12:00-1:30 | Lunch & Free Play |
| 1:30-2:30 | Rest Time |
| 2:30-3:30 | Free Play |
| 3:15-3:30 | Pick Up Window for Full Day Campers |

Social Emotional Learning

We have three rules for preschool: Care for Yourself. Care for Each Other. Care for the Earth. These rules are a positive support approach to help students with skill-building for self-control and self-advocacy.

We strive to create a supportive, nurturing, and joyful environment where everyone shares a sense of belonging and acceptance. Our goals are to support confidence, strengthen self-awareness, and build social skills. We support young learners as they learn social skills such as sharing, taking turns, self-advocating, conflict resolution, and showing respect for one another. We help students develop emotional regulation skills such as naming emotions, problem-solving, perseverance, and using tools to self-regulate.

We support the development of these skills with activities like mindful moments, sensory play, show-and-tell, and read-aloud, through direct instruction during group activities and lessons, and through individualized coaching during one-on-one or small group interactions.

Developmental Support

Ketcha Outdoors's philosophy is to help each child develop respect for oneself, others, and the environment, and our goal is to help all children who attend Ketcha Outdoors to be successful in our program. We strive to teach children how to get along with adults and other children, behave in a respectful way towards others and the environment, and, in turn, gain social emotional skills such as self-control and self-regulation.

Redirection and positive language are at the forefront of our developmental support strategy. If teachers or staff members witness unsafe/unkind behavior, they will redirect that child to make a different choice. This involves teachers getting down on their level and speaking directly to the child in a gentle way offering suggestions for an alternate choice.

If the situation has involved another child, staff will help guide a conversation directly between the two children using a method called W.O.W. This starts with asking the children to both have a turn in sharing "What happened?", then Own their part in it (i.e., "I hit my friend with a stick"), and end the conversation with "What do we do next time?" so they have a plan for what to do the next time a situation like that arises. We also ask that kids check on each other if one was hurt in the incident, but do not require them to say sorry. If children are forced to say sorry when they don't feel it, they may learn that saying sorry will resolve all conflicts instead of developing critical conflict management skills. The goal is to set kids up with the skills they need so they can resolve conflicts on their own in time.

If a child is struggling with regaining self-control and self-regulation, staff will work with that child to problem solve and find out what the child needs at that moment which could include taking a break. Each child is different, some may need to get some space from friends to talk about the situation, others may need a quiet space to look at books, or a space of their own to get some energy out climbing, running, or other physical excursion. Staff and children will always work together to do our best to meet that child's needs before continuing with regular programming.

Ketcha Outdoors provides a safe place for children to express and explore their own emotions as well as those of the children around them. We strive to help children develop their social-emotional skills and become emotionally resilient. Staff do this by modeling appropriate ways to express and work through feelings, guiding them through these processes, and supporting them in labeling and identifying their emotions.

Individualized Support Planning

Ketcha Outdoors views discipline as the positive use of guidance and language that will teach children the appropriate responses to sometimes challenging situations. We believe that discipline is not punishment, but using experiences to teach, guide, and redirect children for the purpose of raising responsible, resilient, and confident children who will grow up to care for themselves and others. We strive to create an open, trusting relationship with parents that welcomes communication between parents and staff regarding their child's experiences at Ketcha Outdoors. If a child's behavior is interfering negatively with the functioning of the program or the safety of others, we will notify the parent or guardian to set up a meeting with the director and other relevant parties (e.g., lead teacher, executive director). Staff will work cooperatively with families to develop and implement strategies that provide reasonable accommodations and supports for the child to succeed in Ketcha's programming.

Pricing & Tuition Policies

Payments: Payment will be due in installments chosen by you at the time of registration (up to 5). Installments will be charged on the 1st of the month by autopayment either with credit/debit card or ACH. You may also choose to pay in full or login anytime to make an unscheduled payment to your account. If we do not receive full payment for Chickadees camp blocks on time, your child's spot may be given away, and they will not be allowed to attend Chickadees Camp or any other Ketcha programming until a payment is received. Full payment for each block of camp is due before May 15th.

Late Fees: If your automatic payment is declined and corrective action is not made by a reasonable date a late fee of \$25 will be assessed. A camper may be asked to leave the program if payment is not up to date. We accept cash, check, Mastercard, or Visa.

Vacation Policy: If families take vacations when their child is enrolled for Chickadees Camp, you are still responsible for full tuition.

Refund/Cancellation/Schedule Change Policy:

Cancellation by April 15: Any requests for refunds between the launch of registration through April 15th will be provided in full, minus the \$25 registration fee and a \$50.00 cancellation fee per camper/per week, which is equivalent to a \$150 cancellation per block.

Cancellation between April 16 and May 15: For requests to cancel between April 16th and May 15th, a partial refund will be provided minus the \$25 registration fee, your deposit of \$50 per week, and an additional \$50 cancellation fee per camper/per week, which is equivalent to a \$300 cancellation fee per block.

Cancellation on or after May 16: There will be no refunds or credits given for cancellations made on or after May 16th, for "No-Shows" who do not communicate canceling prior to the start of their camp week, and for campers who are asked to leave camp for behavioral reasons.

** Additional cancellation fees may be assessed for Chickadees campers if you want to reduce your child's schedule but remain enrolled in the M-Th morning core program.

All cancellation notices must be in writing or they are otherwise void.

Ketcha Outdoors does not refund tuition for cancellations resulting from missed buses, forgotten registrations, incorrect scheduling by the parent, family vacations, minor illnesses, or behavior problems. "No shows" are not eligible for refunds. Medical Emergency Cancellations for severe medical issues/illnesses will need a note provided by a doctor and are assessed on a case-by-case basis by our leadership team.

Chickadee Block Schedule Pricing:

Monday-Thursday Mornings 8:00-12:00 - \$595

Monday-Thursday Afternoons 12:00-3:30 - \$132 (per afternoon day)

Friday Full-Day sessions 9:00-3:30 - \$290

Pre-Kinder Camp Week Pricing:

Monday-Thursday Mornings 8:00-12:00 - \$198

Monday-Thursday Afternoon: 12:00-3:30 - \$44 (per afternoon day)

Friday Full-Day session 9:00-3:30 - \$290



Termination of Service

We reserve the right to terminate service for the following reasons:

- Failure to pay tuition or complete the required forms and documentation on time;
- Lack of parental cooperation in regard to behavior and safety concerns;
- Failure of the child to adjust to the school after a reasonable amount of time;
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property;
- Physical abuse or verbal threats or harassment by a parent/guardian towards Ketcha staff;
- Failure to comply with the policies set forth in the Farm & Forest Preschool Family Handbook;
- If a child's behavior threatens the well-being of anyone at the center;
- Possession or use of weapons on the premises;
- If a situation arises where parental expectations and the child's needs cannot reasonably be met by Ketcha Outdoors staff after a period of negotiation; or
- Any other reason as deemed necessary by the Ketcha Outdoors leadership staff.

TERMINATION NOTIFICATION: Leadership will advise families in writing that their child's enrollment will be terminated following all attempts to rectify any non-compliance.

HIKING TRAILS



Our property encompasses a total of 107 acres of beautiful fields and forest that we hike through regularly. We connect to the Scarborough Land Trust trails that lead out to an observation deck over the marsh. You're welcome to hike them any time, it's a beautiful loop trail with wooden bridges through the woods! Parking is at the trailhead by the ice house.



WOODCHUCK PALACE



Located past the ropes course and along our hiking trails is the woodchuck palace. Our summer campers known as "woodchucks" helped build this years ago and it's a favorite area of the forest for many. Kids love to climb the fallen trees, play pretend the many things that the fort can become, and play in the surrounding woods.



STREAM



You'll find our stream in the woods and under the bridge along our hiking trail. In the fall and spring we spend time exploring the bank for the critters and plants that live there. We teach kids the value of these plants and creatures and how to treat them with care and appreciate the roles they play in the ecosystem.



FOREST PLAYGROUND



Naturally enclosed by the woods, the Forest playground has lots of space to run and play. Different features include a fire truck, house, boulders, climbing structures, and slides connected to a pirate ship deck to support dynamic play. We have frequent visits from chipmunks, birds, and sometimes deer!



THE GARDEN



Our garden is designed to be accessible for the preschoolers with spaced out garden beds to run around and easy to harvest veggies and fruits such as ground cherries, beans, tomatoes, raspberries and herbs.

Children learn the basics of growing food, harvest season, cleaning out garden beds, and the joy of picking their own food! Lots of digging, mud and water play, along with a flower fort!



BARN



Visiting the barn animals is a way we encourage stewardship with the land and animals. We teach the kids how to use walking feet, gentle hands, and quiet voices around our animals.

Farm & Forest Preschool Handbook Acknowledgement

I have read and agree to the terms and conditions in the Ketcha Outdoors Chickadees Summer Camp 2026 Family Handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



LUCIA STANCIOFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



LIZ TULLY

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Ltully@ketchaoutdoors.org



KAILINA MILLS, EDD

DIRECTOR OF FARM AND FOREST SCHOOL
Kmills@ketchaoutdoors.org



BRITTNEY AUSTIN, MED

LEAD TEACHER
Baustin@ketchaoutdoors.org



THURSDAY SHARON

LEAD TEACHER
Tsharon@ketchaoutdoors.org



ZOE JOHNSON & CHLOE PASCALE

ASSISTANT TEACHERS
cpascale@ketchaoutdoors.org
zjohnson@ketchaoutdoors.org



318 Black Point Rd
Scarborough, ME 04074
(207) 883-8977