

TRIUMPHANT LOVE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**  
Parent Handbook Operational Policies  
Updated July 2011



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## A Note to Parents

The Child Development Center is an early childhood program for your child that is accredited by Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) and Austin Rising Star.

**ELEA accreditation** is the highest honor a childhood center can receive by the national board as an outstanding Early Childhood program meeting a rigorous approval process.

**Austin Rising Star** assures that the school is a quality program with high standards in such areas as staff qualifications, classroom group size, teacher-child interaction, and health and safety.

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## **I. Mission Statement**

To provide a quality early childhood program for children and families in the community that reflects and spreads the love and compassion of Jesus Christ to one another.

### **A. Our Anti-bias Policy:**

At the Child Development Center (CDC), we understand that preschool children will begin to figure out how they are alike and different from other people, and gradually they will develop an attitude about how they feel about differences. The values children learn in the preschool years will greatly influence how they will interact and feel about diverse people. One of our major goals at the CDC is to help children learn to like themselves and to value diversity. Therefore, the staff at the CDC take steps to help children learn to value all people thereby helping them to resist bias and prejudice and become more adaptable adults.

### **B. Spiritual Foundation:**

Along with providing a Christian environment in which the children can learn and grow, the two older classes attend chapel two times each week during preschool hours. Prayers are said in all classes before lunch and after injuries. Our spiritual goal for the children is that they will feel the love of God through their positive experiences at the CDC. We believe that spiritual foundations are being built the minute a child enters the CDC.

### **C. Our Philosophy**

The CDC is a community outreach ministry of Triumphant Love Lutheran Church. The CDC provides a learning experience in a Christian atmosphere where the whole child can grow and develop. We recognize that each child is unique with special needs and interests. All children regardless of sex, race, or religion should have the opportunity to play with a variety of materials, express their feelings and emotions, and know that they are capable of success. We strive to provide a quality early childhood program for children and families in this community that reflects and spreads the love and compassion of Jesus Christ to one another.

The field of Early Childhood is a profession of which to be proud. We are helping to shape, guide, and teach the people of the next generation. A professional early childhood educator is someone who:

- Is a positive influence and role model.
- Works effectively with parents and other staff members.
- Is a problem solver.
- Is open to new ideas and ways of thinking.
- Is committed to performing at the same high standards.
- Is consistent without allowing personal matters to affect his/her work.
- Is involved in training and school activities that will enhance professional growth.

“An untrained teacher is likely to focus attention on what is happening. Trained teachers focus on what is being learned.” (Katz, 1984)

## II. Parent Involvement

A partnership between a child's home and school is essential to create a positive learning experience. There are many opportunities, and it is important that each family participate equally to help support the needs of their child's classroom.

Please let us know what is happening at home or if any major changes have taken place within your family so we can better plan for the needs of your child. We value your input and encourage you to share any ideas or concerns that arise.

We invite all parents to visit, observe their child, and participate anytime during our operational hours, Monday through Friday 9:30am - 1:30pm.

### A. Parent volunteerism:

As the CDC is a nonprofit organization we require volunteerism from parents every year. The school requires that each family volunteer four hours for each child enrolled each school year. There are many opportunities and ways to volunteer to support your child's school, such as workdays, fund-raiser events, seasonal events, Parent Partner, CDC Board member, or as the needs arise. Please be sure to complete the Criminal History Form. The safety of your children is of primary importance to us. We know most of you well and know that this is probably a step beyond what is necessary, but we must take every precaution to ensure that each child in our care is protected from possible dangers.

Please note that your four volunteer hours need to be completed prior to Spring Break. There is a volunteer sign-in book located on the credenza across from the director's office. Be sure to sign in after each volunteer opportunity to account for your volunteer hours.

Should you elect to not volunteer or do not volunteer prior to Spring Break, there is a \$75.00 per child, per year fee. This fee will be used to offset the expense of hiring substitutes as well as to pay for services that we typically use volunteers for.

***It is very important that each CDC staff and volunteer respect each child and family's right to privacy and confidentiality. Please do not discuss a child or parent with another child or parent.*** You may need to refer a child or parent to any CDC staff member.

Volunteer's Role in Guidance:

- Understand what behavior can be expected at each child's level of development.
- Accept each child at his/her present level of development.
- Remember that all behavior has a cause. Try to find out what the child is really telling you through his/her behavior.
- Avoid labeling a child as a behavior problem.
- Try to see the problem from the child's point of view and really listen to what he/she is saying both verbally and non-verbally.
- Help children solve their problems in constructive ways that give them a guide to meet similar problems in the future.
- Allow children to solve their own problems in their own ways whenever possible.
- Recognize that sometimes you need to give the words which describe the feelings of a child to him/her and to the group.
- Let the children know that you understand and accept the way they feel but that

you cannot allow unacceptable behavior.

- Help children express their feelings in acceptable ways.
- Praise the kinds of behaviors you want to continue.
- Establish reasonable limits and make sure the children understand them. Be consistent.
- Speak to each child individually rather than to the group. Go to the child. Establish eye contact and speak directly to him/her rather than calling from across the room. Be brief in your explanation.
- Reassure children that you will not let them hurt others and that you will not let others hurt them.
- Rely more on re-direction and suggestion rather than the use of “don’t” or “no.”
- Give children a choice of two courses of action whenever possible. Be sure either choice is acceptable.
- Warn children before an activity is to end and give them time to finish what they are doing.
- Provide an environment the children can manage.
- Be a positive role model for the children. (If you don’t want them to sit on tables, then you shouldn’t sit on tables.)

### **B. Parent Partners**

Parent partners are essential to the success of school events. Parent partners assist teachers by ensuring that all parents have the information needed pertaining to upcoming events and they assist the lead parent partner in getting parental involvement. The lead parent partner will communicate all necessary information to the parent partners who are then in turn responsible for communicating (preferably by e-mail) to their respective classes.

Any time spent on parent partner activities goes towards your volunteer hours.

Two parents from each classroom are recruited yearly to serve as parent partners. Their responsibility is to be available to assist the classroom with any special activities planned by the teachers including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Assist the teachers in coordinating classroom events.
2. Assist the teachers in communicating information to all the parents.
3. Assist in planning the Thanksgiving luncheon by communicating with fellow parents, putting out sign-up sheets, and helping secure volunteers.
4. Assist in the twice yearly teacher appreciation collection by communicating the information to the parents.
5. Assist in the end of year picnic and fund-raiser by communicating the information, coordinating events, and securing volunteers.
6. Help celebrate teacher birthdays.
7. Attend parent partner meetings.

The parent partners group will meet with the director regularly throughout the year.

### **III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

#### **A. Registration Policies and Procedures**

In-house registration for fall is held typically in January for currently enrolled children. Currently enrolled children are automatically enrolled for their same days' schedule or families can make changes to their present schedule for the following year. All paperwork is required on this day to ensure you keep your child's schedule. Siblings of currently enrolled families can also be enrolled on this day. All current school year tuition/fees are expected to be paid in full prior to registration. A community registration day will follow in order for new families to fill vacancies or be placed on the waiting list.

Enrollment priority is given to

1. TLLC staff
2. Currently enrolled children with no changes
3. Currently enrolled families (TLLC members, siblings, then non-church members)
4. New siblings of currently enrolled children
5. New enrolling families (TLLC member then non-church member)

Enrolling families will receive a confirmation letter within seven working days, verifying their child's schedule. Registration is held on one day only, so plan to attend. Not attending can result in the loss of your child's current enrollment schedule.

#### **Enrollment Fees**

At registration we will collect the enrollment fees with the completed Registration Form. These fees are not refundable. Then in May of that same year, prior to the fall school year, a full month's tuition/deposit will be required in order to confirm your child's enrollment. The tuition deposit will be credited to your child's last month in the school year. This fee is not refundable but can be used for the last month's tuition payment with one-month's written notice. The school year budget is planned based on these pre-paid fees.

#### **B. Waiting List**

In order to better meet the needs of all children, the number of children in each class is limited. Once a class is filled, names are put (annually) on a waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis. A non-refundable \$30 fee is charged to be on the waiting list per year. Preference on the wait list is given to staff/Board members of TLLC, currently enrolled children, siblings of currently enrolled children, church members, and then the community.

#### **C. Tuition/Fees**

Tuition is due on the first school day of each month and no later than the 10<sup>th</sup>. Should there be a problem with payment, please notify the director. A \$10 late fee will be charged if paid after the 10<sup>th</sup>, \$15 after the 15<sup>th</sup>, \$20 after the 20<sup>th</sup>, and \$25 after the 25<sup>th</sup>. The school reserves the right to drop a child from the school for delinquent or insufficient payment of tuition.

Only checks or Electronic Transfer payments will be accepted. All checks should be made out to "TLLC-CDC". A fee based on the amount charged by the bank will be charged to you for any returned checks. Electronic Transfer forms are available in the

CDC director's office for your use. You can designate the number of withdrawals as well as the frequency (one or two times a month).

Monthly tuition and deposit, enrollment fees, and wait-list fees are based on the school calendar year (nine months). There are no refunds for holidays, vacations, illness, dismissal, withdrawals, or other circumstances.

The director requires a one-month written notice upon withdrawal. The tuition/deposit can be credited to the last month the child attends the CDC with written notice but it will not be refunded.

**Late Pick up Fees:** School ends promptly at 1:30pm. Because the teachers have other commitments, a late fee of \$1.00 per minute for each child will be charged beginning at 1:35pm. Any late fee will be expected to be paid to the staff personnel at the time of pick up. If an emergency should arise and you believe you will be late, please call (512) 346-1323 or the church office at (512) 346-5683.

**Drop-Ins:** When a child from your class (who attends another day) is out due to illness or vacation, etc., there is an "opening" for the day. You can fill that child's spot by checking with the teacher and paying the \$25 per-child, per-day fee to the office. The teacher is the first line of communication; she has the right to not take any drop-ins if she feels the mix is not a good one or that it wouldn't be a benefit to the group as a whole (i.e. sensitive, new children, etc.). In addition, administratively, we also ask the teacher to not take drop-ins if one of the two teachers is out or if the school has staffing shortages.

#### **D. CDC Board**

The CDC is a ministry of TLLC, and as such is governed by the Constitution, Bylaws, Personnel Policies and Operating Procedures of the church. The TLLC executive director and the CDC director are permanent members of the CDC Board. The TLLC Nominating Committee nominates an additional 6 CDC Board members, who are elected by the TLLC Congregation at annual Congregation meetings

#### **E. Entrance Requirements**

All forms must be completed and returned to the CDC director by the first day of attendance. This includes: Enrollment Form with medical/health requirements and the Child Information Form. Parents who are volunteers in the classroom must also complete a Criminal History Form and attend a parent information meeting held at the beginning of the year.

**Immunizations:** Each child enrolled must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health Immunization Requirements. All immunizations required for the child's age must be completed by the date of admission. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide their child's records. Children without proper records may be suspended from class until the records are provided. Children can unfortunately be dismissed from the CDC if their records remain incomplete. Please see the Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Texas Children included at the back of the Parent Handbook.

#### **F. Vision & Hearing, and Speech & Language Screening:**

Vision and hearing screening is required for admission for children four years old, as of September 1, for the current school year. The screening results need to be included in your admission packet with authorized signatures. Vision and hearing screening will not be offered at the CDC. Please consult your doctor to schedule your child's screening.

#### **G. Dismissal Policies**

The CDC reserves the right to drop any family from the school for lack of sufficient cooperation, delinquent or insufficient payment of tuition, incomplete records/immunizations, or the inability of the child or parent(s) to adjust to the program.

#### **H. Grievance Procedures**

CDC staff wants to ensure the best experience for the children enrolled in the program and encourages an open dialogue between parents/guardians and teachers/directors. In the case a parent/guardian has a question or concern about something at the CDC, they are to utilize the following process to obtain resolution:

1. Raise the concern with the CDC staff member directly involved.
2. If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the outcome with the CDC staff member, the concern should be taken directly to the CDC director.
3. If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the CDC director's response, they may take the concern to the CDC Board and TLLC executive director:
  - a. Submit a letter/email to the CDC Board chairperson (contact information in the CDC Directory) detailing the specific issue(s), and reason(s) you are bringing the complaint(s) to the Board.
  - b. The chairperson will acknowledge the written grievance and take it to the Board for review.
  - c. The Board will review at the next scheduled meeting, of which the parent/guardian will be informed of the date, time, and location in the acknowledgement communication. The parent/guardian is invited to attend the meeting to discuss the grievance(s) submitted.
    - i. If the parent/guardian cannot attend, their written grievance(s) will be brought before the Board to discuss and determine appropriate action.
    - ii. If the parent/guardian can attend the meeting, the grievance will be the last item on the agenda and the process will continue as follows:
      1. The parent/guardian will state their grievance(s) and the CDC director will respond; then there will be a time for the Board to ask questions. After all questions have been sufficiently answered, all non-voting Board members, the CDC director, and the parent/guardian will be dismissed for the CDC Board to discuss and determine the appropriate action.
      2. In the case of a tie vote or a Board decision that is a detriment to the goals and objectives of TLLC and/or TLLC CDC, the TLLC executive director will be the tie-breaking vote and hold the power to override any previous decision.

Once the grievance has gone to the CDC Board, which includes the TLLC executive

director, who oversees the CDC director, the decision will be final and appropriate action(s) taken accordingly.

### **I. Drop-Off/Pick-up Procedures**

Our classes begin at 9:30am and end at 1:30pm. Children should be brought directly to their classrooms where they will wash their hands upon arrival, before playing. Teachers will have clipboards outside their room and parents must sign their child in and out every day he/she attends. No children will be accepted before 9:30am as this is time for teacher preparation. We have found that children get more out of the program if they arrive to school on time. If your child will be absent from school, please call (512) 346-1323 and let us know. Once you sign your child in, we assume responsibility for your child. Upon signing your child out for the day, we release them to your care.

**Authorized Pick-up:** If parents have arranged for someone other than themselves to pick up their child(ren), the director must be notified in writing. If an emergency arises, you must call (512) 346-1323 to notify us of the name of the person who will be picking up your child. The “authorized pick-up person” must show the teacher his/her driver’s license and sign out before taking your child.

### **J. Emergency Procedures**

Fire drills are conducted monthly and disaster drills are conducted every six months. A fire evacuation plan is posted in each classroom. In the event that we would need to evacuate the building, the evacuation location is Grace Covenant Church, 9431 Jollyville Road, (512) 345-7976.

The procedure for handling a medical emergency includes calling 911 to receive professional medical attention immediately. The parents and/or guardian will be called next in order to be available for their child and to help make necessary decisions with the medical emergency and CDC personnel. An Incident/Illness Form will be filled out with the CDC staff and parents for every injury, accident, and illness. Notification will be made with Licensing immediately on any injury that requires treatment by a health-care professional.

The CDC has a Crisis Management Plan for a range of events and hazards. The plan is available in the CDC office should you desire to review it.

### **K. Health Policies**

#### **FOR THE PROTECTION OF YOUR CHILD AND OF OTHERS:**

Children who are sick should remain home under the watchful eye of the parent. Children may return to school if they are free of fever for 24 hours. (Fever is defined as above 99 degrees without medication.)

A child will be sent home immediately if any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever: if a child has or has had within the past 24 hours (above 99 degrees)
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Eyes: red, glazed, discharging
- Ears: red, sore, discharging
- Contagious disease: “fresh” red spots
- Ringworm or impetigo

- Head lice
- Overall appearance of listlessness, extreme drowsiness, irritability, or other behaviors/symptoms that make it difficult for a child to function normally and safely

If symptoms occur while at the CDC, a parent will be notified and must come get the child immediately. There is no staff available to care for a sick child. The staff will complete an Incident Accident Form.

A child can return to the school 24 hours after the symptoms are gone and the child can resume normal activities. Please inform the teacher and/or director of any serious, contagious or prolonged illness. Please call in the event of an absence from school.

A sample Communicable Disease Reference is included in the back of this handbook.

### **L. Medications.**

We will not give medication to your child during school hours. Please schedule your child's medication to be taken at home before and after school. For special circumstances, see the director and complete all necessary paperwork. Medications include diaper rash creams, powder, sunscreen, Epi-pens, pain and fever medicine, and other over the counter and prescription medicines.

### **M. Injuries**

An Incident/Illness Form will be filled out by a teacher when a child has physically been injured or becomes ill during school hours, The parent will be asked to sign the form and it will be filed in the child's records. The parent(s) will receive a copy for their records within 48 hours, if requested. These reports help us improve our program: By recognizing the circumstances that lead to an injury or illness, we can implement solutions that will keep similar injuries from occurring. The reports also inform the parents so that they can let us know of their concerns and opinions.

### **N. What to bring/What to Wear**

To assure your child's full participation in inside and outside activities, please dress your child in play clothes (clothes that will not inhibit their movement and that you don't mind getting dirty) that are appropriate for the current weather. Unless it is extremely cold, hot, or storming, ALL classes WILL go outdoors each day as required by the state licensing requirements. Please send warm jackets, mittens/gloves, and hats for colder months and cool clothing for warmer months.

Footwear **must** enclose the toe area and have rubber sole. Tennis shoes are best. Each child should bring a change of clothing (underwear, socks, shirt, pants, etc) in a zip lock bag with his/her name on the bag. All children not capable of using the toilet should bring a labeled diaper bag with diapers and wipes. Bottles and cups must also be labeled with child's first name and last initial. Some children are more comfortable if they can bring something special from home to help them adjust to their new school environment (blanket, stuffed animal, etc.). Toys, however, may be brought to school only by permission of your child's teacher. Guns or other "violent" toys should ALWAYS stay at home; they are not permitted at school.

### **O. Lunch Time**

At the CDC we are committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the preschool

experience. We ask parents to pack nutritious, plentiful lunches. The children not only benefit physically but also learn the principles of good nutrition. The lunches should include a healthy balance of fruit, vegetables, grain, and protein source. PLEASE do not send sodas, candy, gum, chips, fruit punch, Kool-aid, sports' drinks, or other high sugar, non-nutritious foods for lunch.

Lunches should include a drink (no glass containers), labeled with the child's first name and last initial. Drinks can be plain white milk (not sweetened, kept cool with a cold pack), 100% real fruit juice (in original container) and water (no additives). We will not be able to heat your child's lunch. The CDC will not serve candy at lunches or during school. Candy will be placed in your child's lunch box for after school.

In compliance with State Licensing and good health practices, food and drink brought from home needs to:

- Meet the USDA's food guidelines.
- Be labeled with the child's name and the current date. Food with expired dates will be discarded.
- Be served with an ice pack if it requires refrigeration to stay cold.
- (If it is to be shared among the children) be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers. This includes birthday celebrations.

According to Texas State Minimum Standard 90% of fatal chokings occur in children under 4 years of age. Therefore we reserve the right to remove any food brought to our school that could be deemed a choking hazard. Children under 4 years old may not be served:

- Whole hot dogs (sliced & quartered are fine)
- Whole grapes (cut are fine)
- Nuts (try dried fruit instead)
- Popcorn
- Raw peas (cooked are fine)
- Hard pretzels (soft pretzels are fine)
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter (sandwich is fine)
- Chunks of raw carrots (cooked are fine)
- Meat larger than can be swallowed whole (cut into ½" squares for toddlers & 2s; sandwich meats are fine)

Toddlers/2s will not be allowed to carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while walking or crawling.

**Breastfeeding Policy:** At the CDC we encourage mothers to be able to breastfeed their little ones. Mothers may use the rocking chair in the infant room, or if privacy is desired the church has rooms we can access. Teachers can use the staff infant room to warm bottles of breast milk.

#### **P. Birthdays**

Please notify your child's teacher one week in advance if you wish to bring a special snack for your child's birthday. Snacks will be served in conjunction with lunch. All

goodies for celebrations must come from a commercially licensed kitchen (i.e. grocery store); they cannot be homemade. Please refrain from bringing in balloons as decorations as they pose a choking hazard and are an allergen that can create discomfort in some children. Birthday party invitations can be placed in each classmate's folder if all children in the class are being invited. Otherwise, we request that you mail out the invitations to their homes.

**Teacher Birthdays.** Parents and children often want to celebrate teacher birthdays as well. In order to make all of our teachers feel special on their birthdays, we ask that parents follow these guidelines to ensure each teacher feels loved and appreciated. On the teacher's actual birthday, a parent can bring in a birthday treat for the teacher such as cupcakes, cakes, donuts, bagels, fruit, or any other food item the teacher might appreciate (please follow the same guidelines for special snacks as outlined above). The teacher's birthday can be celebrated on two days, so that each class can celebrate with the teacher. The parents are welcome to decorate the teacher's classroom door and ask the kids to make cards.

We ask parents to refrain from soliciting money from the class parents to purchase a gift for the teacher. This helps ensure that each teacher is made to feel equally special.

### **Q. Guidance Techniques**

“Guiding” children in positive ways helps them to maintain a positive self-image and to learn internal self-control. Positive guidance techniques you will see include:

- Phrasing statements positively ( i.e., “walk inside instead of “don’t run”)
- Reinforcing appropriate behaviors
- Redirecting behavior
- Giving choices
- Modeling appropriate behaviors
- Encouraging verbalization of needs and feelings
- Giving guidance that is individualized and consistent for each child
- Praising and encouraging good behaviors

A sense of trust and security develops between the teacher and the young child when the child realizes that the teacher is there to “help” them with their behaviors and not to “punish” them. The goal of guidance is to help the child in his/her growth toward self-discipline, while nurturing a positive self-concept. Early childhood educators need to have a sincere interest in children, an understanding of their problems, and respect for them as unique individuals.

Please let your child's teacher know if you are using any different approaches to behavior management so we may better understand your child.

**Discipline:** We will never use corporal punishment or withhold food as a punishment; we will not humiliate, reject, or ridicule a child; use profane language; or place a child in a room unsupervised. We build trust and self-control.

### **R. The First Day of School**

It is common on the first day or first few weeks of school for children to feel varying degrees of separation anxiety. The CDC staff is trained to handle these feelings and take steps to help children feel more comfortable in their new surroundings. If separation

anxiety is happening to your child (or to you) please remember that this too is a learning experience. Parents can also help their children by:

- Speaking positively and confidently about the upcoming new experience.
- Bringing them to the Open House or for a visit prior to their start date so they can form a mental picture of their new surroundings.
- Allowing them to bring a security blanket, stuffed animal, etc. that they are already bonded to. Objects that remind them of home often help. All parents are encouraged to bring a family picture to school that can stay in the classroom all year. This too will help the child develop a stronger connection between home and school.
- Being actively involved in your child's preschool experience by asking questions, showing pleasure in their artwork, visiting with the teacher, etc.

If your child has trouble separating from you when you drop him/her off, the teacher will intervene and give your child one-to-one attention while you leave. The longer the parent stays in the room, the more difficult it may be for the child. A positive, confident "I'll pick you up after lunch, have a great day" will also help. ALWAYS tell your child when you are leaving so you can maintain trust. If your child has trouble initially at school, you may want to come early and spend the last 15 minutes playing with your child in his/her room so that when you leave it is with a happy memory. If you need help with separation time, we are here to assist you. Remember, it is OK to cry!

#### **S. Meeting "Special Needs"**

Does your child have a "special need"? All of us have special needs at times. A "special need" could mean that a child needs help adjusting to a special situation (birth of a baby, moving to a new house, death of a family member, or even something as simple as a new bed, etc.). Special needs can be emotional, social, cognitive, or physical. Please let us know what your child's special needs are.

#### **T. Bad Weather Policy & School Closures**

We will try to post our closure information on the local television stations for your convenience; however, if either Austin Independent Schools *or* Round Rock Independent Schools close *or* delay their school opening due to bad weather or other reasons, the CDC will be closed for the entire day.

In addition, the director can make an independent discretionary decision to close if he/she believes that closing would be in the best interest of the children and staff. If the closing occurs after the start of school, designated staff members will call parents to pick up their children at the earliest possible time. Children will remain in the program in the care of a staff member until you arrive.

If a day is missed due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, there will be no make-up day and there are no adjustments to tuition.

#### **U. Animals**

Animals may be present in our classrooms to enrich the environment. Approval from the office is necessary for any animal to visit. If an animal is to be present in your child's classroom a notification will be given to you in writing prior to the visit and a sign will be posted outside of the classroom door. If there are any concerns please see the teacher in

charge or the director. Pets or visiting animals must have documentation from a veterinarian to show that they are fully vaccinated and suited to be around young children. We do not allow pets to be on the playground for the safety of the children, protection of the equipment, and sanitary reasons.

### **V. Fieldtrips**

Fieldtrips may be taken by the 3- and 4-year-old classrooms. Parents will be notified at least 48 in advance of any fieldtrip option for their child. Children attending the fieldtrip will be transported by their parents to the fieldtrip location where they will meet the lead teacher. Parents will stay with their child throughout the fieldtrip. After the fieldtrip, parents are welcome to bring their child to school and sign them in for any remaining school hours.

Children attending the fieldtrip with their parent are expected to wear the CDC school shirt while on the fieldtrip. Orders will be taken beginning of each school year. Our state regulations require that each child must be easily identifiable with their childcare center's name and phone number which is present on our t-shirts. This insures their safety while away from the center. Parent permission to participate on school fieldtrips is found on the Admission Form.

Children NOT desiring to attend can come to school where the assistant teachers will conduct a normal day.

### **W. Gang-Free Zone**

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code was amended to require that information regarding gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in licensed childcare centers.

#### ***What is a gang-free zone?***

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang-related activity is prohibited and is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. Specific locations where certain gang-related criminal activity is now prohibited include, but are not limited to, public schools, playgrounds, video arcade facilities, and day care centers.

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. For example, certain gang-related activity that occurs within 300 feet of a video arcade facility is in violation of the new law, whereas certain gang-related criminal activity that occurs within 1000 feet of a school or day care center is a violation of a law.

#### ***How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends?***

The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your childcare program. Maps may be produced for the purpose of prosecution and may be updated by the local municipal or county engineer. Parents may contact their local municipality for a copy of the map if they choose to do so.

#### ***Why are gang-free zones needed?***

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the goal of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

***What does this mean for my day care center?***

Childcare providers are required to inform parents or guardians of children attending their center about the new gang-free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your program is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty.

**IV. OUR INFANT PROGRAM**

Our infant program provides a warm, nurturing environment where caregivers play and interact with the children as they care for their needs. The infants develop trust in their surroundings and their caregivers. The infant's individual needs are met while the caregivers assure a stable daily routine. Toddlers are encouraged to develop independence while maintaining a sense of security. Schedules for the infant program include Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. Children wishing to enroll should be 4 months old by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**A. What to Bring:** On the first day of school, each child must have on file all necessary paperwork plus the following:

- All dietary needs, including formula, juice, and lunch.
- Diapers and requested supply of wipes.
- Crib sheet and blanket.
- Personal needs (pacifier, stuffed animal, etc.).

All supplies (bottles, diapers, bags, sheets, etc.) must be **CLEARLY LABELED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME**. Crib sheets will be sent home daily if your child naps.

Infants and toddlers/2's are **not allowed** to carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while walking or crawling. They must be held or sitting while drinking.

As you enter the room, please either remove your shoes or put on disposable shoe covers located outside the room. Upon entering, parents and children need to wash their hands prior to engaging in any activity.

**Infants Need Paperwork!** Each day you will be asked to supply us with information that will help us care for your infant (when they last ate, slept, had a BM, etc.) When you come to pick up your child the teachers will also supply you with information about your child's day.

**B. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome**

To reduce the risk of SIDS, infants will be placed on a firm surface on their backs to sleep unless directed by a physician to do otherwise. After being placed down on their backs for sleep, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position.

**C. About the Infant Curriculum**

Yes, there is such a thing as an infant curriculum! In addition to maintaining the health and safety of your child, the infant/toddler staff will also be planning routines and curriculum for your child. They will be watching your child's development and looking for the many milestones that occur each year. The environment is the starting point for an infant/toddler curriculum. The environment includes a mirror where children can watch themselves on floor level, many sensory games and materials, crawling areas, dramatic play equipment, etc. Curriculum in this class includes outdoor play.

The staff for infant/toddlers interact with the children in the following ways: helping them to track objects, reading books, singing songs, puppetry, imitating sounds and facial expressions, uncovering a hidden toy (object permanence), banging objects together, balancing, standing and reaching out to grasp objects.

## **V. CURRICULUM**

### **A. How do children learn?**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), made up of Early Childhood professionals all over the country, has done extensive research on how children learn best and what is "developmentally appropriate" for young children. Here are some of the findings:

- Children learn best through concrete, play-oriented approaches.
- Curriculum should be tailored to meet the needs of the children. (Children should not be made to conform to a pre-set curriculum.)
- Workbooks, worksheets, coloring books, and adult-made models of art projects are NOT appropriate for the young child's preschool experience.
- In children's art, the "process" is more important than the "product." Adults need to remember that the children develop at different rates.
- Teachers should take "cues" from children to optimize their learning.

If we want children to learn, we must allow them to play! Brochures on "Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum" and "The Power of Play" are available in the CDC office.

Our mission is to develop competent, happy, and curious children. Teachers will provide a variety of activities to stimulate the children, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially every day.

Activities at the CDC are both planned and spontaneous. The CDC will provide opportunities that encourage the development of the child's self esteem and self control with the use of positive guidance, an appreciation of cultural diversity, and respect for each child's individuality.

### **B. Learning Centers**

In quality programs for children, the environment is also a teacher. "Learning Centers" are areas designed to "motivate children to learn through the interaction with a variety of developmentally-appropriate materials and equipment from which children can choose activities which interest them in becoming active learners." Through hands-on, child-centered play children learn by testing and exercising their bodies, handling, tasting, smelling, observing, hearing and learning new vocabulary,

acting out things and living things over, being accepted and accepting others, and solving their own problems.

### **1. Book/Reading Centers**

When children look at books and are read to, they learn:

- Left to right progression (pre-reading/writing skill).
- Appreciation for the written word.
- About other people and places (valuing diversity).
- To love books, remember details, and express their ideas.

### **2. Dramatic Play Center**

When children play in the dramatic play/home-living center they learn:

- What it feels like to try on other roles (mom, dad, baby).
- How to problem solve personal events (new baby, hospital visit).
- How to interact socially with others.

### **3. Art Center**

When children play in the art center they are:

- Strengthening their fine motor skills.
- Developing their creativity and self expression.
- Learning there are many ways to create.
- Developing pre-writing skills.

### **4. Manipulatives/Block Centers**

When children play in these centers they are learning:

- About math and geometric shapes.
- To understand size, weight, and number concepts.
- To control their eye/hand coordination.
- To match and classify objects.

### **5. Other Learning Centers (Sand, Water, Science, Music)**

Science is a way of looking at the universe. It is a way of investigating and learning problem solving. When children make playdough, they are learning how materials can change form thereby sharpening their observation skills. Through sand and water play, children learn cause and effect by trying to sink or float objects.

Music encourages children to use their bodies and learn to express themselves. They learn to discriminate between sounds, add new words to their vocabulary, and appreciate a variety of musical instruments and songs.

### **6. Playground/Outside**

As we watch children play on the playground we see, at first glance, children running, hopping, climbing, etc. If we look further we actually see the building and strengthening of large motor skills, children engaging in dramatic play, children learning about their bodies and what they are capable of, socialization, nature and science exploration, problem solving, and on and on. Outside time is very important to a child for the enhancement of all areas of development: physical, cognitive, social, and emotional.

**Please note:** Unless it is extremely cold, hot, or storming, we WILL go

outdoors each day. Remember, it is very important that the children wear clothes that will not inhibit their activities both inside and outside the classroom.

### **C. Our Lesson Plans**

Each teacher creates his/her own curriculum and activities based upon the observations made of the individual needs, interests, and developmental levels of the children in the class. Curriculum “emerges” and ideas are expanded when these observations take place. Higher learning takes place when problem solving, experimentation, and open-ended ideas are encouraged! Emphasis is not on acquiring facts and knowledge about a specific topic but rather on development of processes for learning.

“Emergent Curriculum is a planning process that is responsive to a particular group of people, in a particular place at a particular time. It requires that its practitioners trust in the power of play. It is about taking your own ideas and other people’s ideas, bouncing them off of each other, and trying them out on the children. Young children are active not passive learners. The ‘players’ are the staff and the children. The play really begins only when we meet the children. No teacher ever writes the perfect ‘script’ because the children are busy writing scripts, too.” From *Emergent Curriculum* by Elizabeth Jones and John Mimmo (1994)

## **VI. OUR PARENTS**

### **A. Parent-Teacher conferences**

Parent teacher conferences are held twice a year (more often if the parent or teacher requests it). The school will close one day each semester for conferences (see calendar for dates). Care will be provided for your enrolled child while you attend your scheduled conference time.

### **B. Communication/Notification**

One of our goals at the CDC is to provide a safe environment where children can learn to be open communicators and problem solvers. Therefore, we also encourage open dialogue between adults as well. Please let us (teachers and the director) know if you have any questions, comments, ideas, problems, or concerns.

Parents will be notified about any incident, illness, or emergency situation.

Please help us stay informed by keeping us up to date on your address, phone number, any changes at home, if you plan to be gone for an extended period of time, etc.

The local Childcare Licensing office at 908-9650, The Public Regulatory Services Child Abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400 and the state childcare website at [www.txchildcaresearch.org](http://www.txchildcaresearch.org) are resources that are available to ensure quality childcare practices.

### **C. Portfolio**

From the very beginning of school the teachers observe, take pictures, and document each child’s preschool experience and milestones over the year. Using these documentations (portfolios) during conferences give the parents and teacher a chance

to set goals and plan and discuss ways to better meet the needs of their children. With parents and teachers working together, the children will benefit! A portfolio will go home with your children on their very last day in the program. It can be used to follow their development over time. Important things in the portfolio will include photographs, art work, observational notes, and conference forms.

#### **D. Assessment**

As we are not trained professional therapists, the CDC will use observations of your child to help assess their developmentally-appropriate stage as well as to design the classroom and curriculum to meet the needs of your child. Assessment is the process of observing, recording, and otherwise documenting what children do and how they do it as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child. Assessments involve the multiple steps of collecting data on a child's development and learning, determining significance in light of the program goals and objectives, incorporating the information into planning for individuals and programs, and communicating the findings to families and other involved people.

These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families (daily discussions and parent-teacher conferences). Assessment results are used to benefit children by aiding the teacher with curricula, tailoring instruction for each child's needs and strengths, and program improvement. This information ensures that the program meets its goal for children's learning and developmental progress.

#### **E. Confidentiality Statement**

It is very important that each CDC staff and volunteer respect each child and family's right to privacy and confidentiality. Please do not discuss a child or a parent with another child or parent.

#### **F. For Your Information**

A variety of resources and referrals are available to parents including books and articles on child development issues. Please feel free to ask.

A copy of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Minimum Standards for Day Care, and the Standards for the Austin Rising Stars program are available in the office for any parent to review.

### **VII. OUR STAFF**

The staff at the CDC is made up of a least one Early Childhood Specialist (the director), Early Childhood teachers, and/or Early Childhood assistant teachers. All "lead" staff members are required to have at least 20 hours of professional training per year (15 hours for assistant staff). We know that ongoing training helps us to stay informed on current issues and developments in the field of Child Development Early Childhood Education.

In compliance with State Licensing and our accreditation programs the following are the guidelines under which we hire staff:

**Director:** Must have a least a Baccalaureate degree with at least 9 credit bearing hours of course work in administration, leadership, or management and at least 24 hours of specialized college-level course work in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or Early Childhood Special Education.

**All staff members** are trained in infant/child CPR and in First Aid each year. In compliance with State Licensing and our accreditation programs the following are the guidelines in which we hire staff:

**Teachers** must complete 20 hours of childcare related training per year. Thirty percent must have:

- A CDA or equivalent.
- Twelve semester hours in Child Development or Early Childhood Education and one year of experience.
- Two years paid experience while working toward a CDA.
- Two years paid experience while under the supervision of a staff member that has either:
  1. A CDA or equivalent.
  2. An Associate degree or higher in Child Development.
  3. A degree in Early Childhood Education or related field.

**Independent Babysitting.** The CDC does not refer, recommend, or endorse any employee, and shall be held harmless in any situation where an employee may independently babysit outside their regular work schedule on or off the CDC premises. Staff members are not acting as agents of the CDC when babysitting for families. Employment at the CDC does not infer or imply suitability for other work.