



The Childrens Center

A professional learning center

Parent Information Handbook

Visit our web page: www.thechildrenscenterar.com

2611 Prince St., Conway, AR (501)336-8881

E-mail: childrenscenter1935@hotmail.com

11501 Interstate 30, Little Rock (serving Saline and Pulaski County)

(501)455-2690

E-mail: childrens-center@sbcglobal.net

11610 Huron Lane, Little Rock (West Little Rock) (501)224-2003

E-mail: childrencenterlrj@sbcglobal.net

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The Children's Center Parent Handbook

INTRODUCTION TO THE CENTER

History

The first Children's Center located in West Little Rock was established in 1986. The Children's Center located on I-30 which serves the Bryant, Saline County, and South Pulaski areas was built in 1991. Finally, the Conway center opened in 1995. The three centers are closely owned corporations that operate separately but cooperatively. We have successfully served children and families for 24 years. We are proud of our long history and the positive impact we have had on the lives of so many children.

Mission and Purpose

The Children's Center exists to provide high quality care and education to children. The program seeks to meet the individual needs of children and families within a safe, nurturing, and diverse environment.

We believe that each child is a unique individual. We desire to serve the best interest of the children in our care. We believe that we can best do this by modeling respect, kindness and love. We believe that parents are the first and primary educators of their children and that parents trust us to supplement and complement the formation of ideas and values that begin at home. Our policy is to encourage and invite parents to observe and experience our program at any time.

Non-discriminatory Practices

The Children's Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer. This means we will extend equal employment and promotional opportunities to all individuals without regard for race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, handicaps or veterans status. This policy affirms our commitment to the principles of fair employment and the elimination of all vestiges of discriminatory practices that might exist.

Gender Equity

The first years of a child's life are critical in the formation of attitudes and behaviors. We believe that both boys and girls have an equal capacity for learning; therefore, we are actively working to promote gender equity in our program.

Multi-cultural Policy

We are committed to Multi-cultural education. Our children, families, staff and the community represents a variety of cultural backgrounds. We strive to create a program that reflects this diversity. We wish to encourage children to respect other cultures. We want to teach children to live happily and co-operatively in a diverse world.

Families

The Children's Center recognizes the diversity of family structures and lifestyles. Our program helps children to learn that each child does belong to a family. We believe it is important to recognize the variety of roles of family members in different families (e.g. Mother working, grandparents living in the home, fathers working at home, etc). Our program hopes to allow children to appreciate these differences.

Open Door Policy

The Children's Center has an open door policy. This means that parents have access to their children at all times. Parents are welcome to visit the Center at any time, but keep in mind that it may be difficult for a young child to cope with separating from a parent for a second time during the day. Children typically assume they will be picked up from the Center anytime they see their parent. It is difficult for them to understand that, although you are leaving, they are expected to stay.

We hope parents will arrange time to participate in classroom activities (read a book; build a block structure, etc). Anyone who spends *extended* time in a classroom is required to have a medical exam, references, and a background check on file.

Special Needs

Our center believes in the principles of equal opportunities and therefore welcomes children regardless of abilities, food allergies, asthma, developmental delays, and speech and language delays.

We will, however, look at the individual situation of every special needs child whose family might desire our services. We will consult with appropriate resources to determine our ability to provide the services required for each child.

It may be appropriate for a child to spend time in a classroom prior to enrollment to determine if their care can be met by our staff. It will then be up to center staff to determine the appropriateness of a child's placement in our program.

Sexual Harassment

The Children's Center forbids all forms of sexual harassment. The Center takes allegations of sexual harassment very seriously and will actively investigate all sexual harassment claims.

We believe that it is inappropriate for parents and staff to form a "dating" relationship.

Anti-bullying Policy

It is the responsibility of every member of The Children's Center community to keep our Center a safe and caring place, and to help make sure that no student is bullied at the Center.

BULLYING IS UNFAIR AND ONE-SIDED. IT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE KEEPS HURTING, FRIGHTENING, THREATENING, OR LEAVING SOMEONE OUT ON PURPOSE.

Examples of bullying include:

- Leaving someone out on purpose or trying to get other children not to play with someone.
- Spreading rumors about someone.
- Teasing someone in a hurtful way.
- Using put-downs, such as insulting someone's race or religion or making fun of someone for being a boy or a girl.
- Ganging up on someone.
- Stealing or damaging another person's things.
- Touching or showing private parts.
- Hurting someone physically by hitting, kicking, tripping, pushing, and so on.

Children at The Children's Center will do the following things to prevent bullying:

- Treat each other respectfully.
- Refuse to bully others.
- Refuse to let others be bullied.
- Refuse to watch, laugh, or join in when someone is being bullied.
- Report all bullying to an adult.

The staff at The Children's Center will do the following things to prevent bullying and help children feel safe at the Center.

- Closely supervise students in all areas of the building and playground.
- Watch for signs of bullying and stop it when it happens.
- Teach respect for others as a part of The Children's Center program.
- Respond quickly and sensitively to bullying reports.
- Take seriously families' concerns about bullying.

If an incident of bullying does occur, the staff will ensure that the immediate behavior stops and will reinforce that the behavior is totally unacceptable. The staff will redirect the child to more positive play. If further incidents occur with the same bullying child, the Director will ask that the parents meet to discuss ways to resolve these issues. The Director may suggest that the student who is doing the bullying meet with a counselor, social worker, or psychologist to help prevent future bullying. If bullying incidents continue, the consequences may include the

following: loss of recess privilege, removal from field trip, or removal from the Center program. All discipline matters are handled confidentially.

Staffing

All staff receives a minimum of 25 hours of Department of Human Service approved training each year to develop and strengthen their skills. We always have staff that is certified in CPR and First Aid.

Each staff member undergoes rigorous checks before being employed by the Children Center. They must have a current TB test, a child abuse record check, criminal record check, and multiple reference checks.

New staff, without the required formal education, must serve as “trainees” for the first six months of employment. During these six months, trainees are required to go through ten hours of orientation training and be supervised by more experienced staff.

GENERAL OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Provider ID

The Children’s Center, 2611 Prince Street, Conway, AR: #01935

The Children’s Center, 11501 I-30, Little Rock, AR: #23878

The Children’s Center, 11610 Huron Drive, Little Rock, AR: #21665

Licensing Information and Quality Accreditation

You have chosen a child care center that is licensed by the state of Arkansas and is an accredited Quality center which serves as an indicator of a high quality program. This Quality designation means that our Center has voluntarily undergone a comprehensive process of an internal self-study and also invited external professional review to verify compliance with the Arkansas Quality compliance criteria.

Note: Arkansas Act 1268 of 1993 established a refundable credit for taxpayers who place their children in a facility that has a certified early childhood program. The credit is equal to 20% of the federal child care credit. This early childhood credit differs from the standard child care credit because it is refundable and the excess of the credit over the tax liability will be returned as an over payment.

Sign-In and Sign-Out

All parents/guardians are given a secure code that is used to check in each child. Anytime you bring a child into the Center or remove a child from the Center, you must use your code to check your child in/out. There are some special circumstances that may require parents to also sign their child into the Center on a paper document.

If you are requesting that your child be given medication, you must also sign the appropriate medication sign-in book. (Read more about medication in the section on Health and Safety.)

Please remind your child to wash his/her hands before going into the classroom to play.

Persons Authorized to Pick Up

Children will be released from the Center only to authorized persons whose names appear on the application form or on written instructions from the parent. (A note of instruction should be given to the Center staff in advance BY THE PARENT - do not send a note along with the person who is picking up your child. A note brought by a person that we cannot identify will not be sufficient for us to release your child.) A telephone call will only suffice in the case of a real emergency and only then, if the parent gives the emergency pick-up person the family security code. Please give the teachers or Director advanced notice if someone else is picking up your child. The security of each child is our most important obligation. Parents must keep the emergency contact names and phone numbers up to date.

We consider the parent(s) who sign the enrollment forms and with whom we have primary contact as the parent(s) to whom we are accountable. Parents who are unfamiliar to us will not be allowed to pick up their child unless they are identified on the enrollment form as a parent. The primary parent must give permission, or court documentation must be provided identifying the person as a custodial parent before an unfamiliar parent or guardian may pick up a child.

Anyone who is picking up a child and is unfamiliar to a staff member **MUST** show identification before the child can be released. Anyone who does not provide identification will be turned away (this includes parents who are unfamiliar to us).

All individuals designated on the pick-up list must be at least 16 years of age. We will not release a child to anyone less than 16 years of age---NO EXCEPTIONS.

Curriculum

The Children's Center follows the recommendations of early childhood specialist who have developed the Adventures in Learning for Infants and Toddlers and Adventures in Learning for Preschool Children curriculums. We also follow the recommendations of the Creative Curriculum and use supplemental resources from the Opening the World of Learning (OWL) curriculum.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services and Early Childhood Education advocate activities for children to be developmentally appropriate. These activities promote success for the child because they are geared toward developmental stages and individual abilities and interests. Children's play is the essential component of a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Children need years of experience with real objects and events before they are ready to understand the meaning of symbols such as letters and numbers. Learning takes place as young children touch, manipulate, and experiment with things and interact with people. The teachers' role is to create an environment that supports the ideas and experiences of children and invites them to observe, be active, make choices, and experiment. Children engage in activities such as block building, painting, or dramatic play, which adds new information to what they already know.

Days are filled with planned and spontaneous moments of learning. Time is allowed for active outdoor play, imaginative games, independent discovery, and group activities.

Operational Hours

The Center opens Monday through Friday at 6:00 a.m. and closes each day at 6:00 p.m. (See information concerning Inclement Weather and Holidays).

Daily Schedule (See specific schedule posted in each classroom)

The Center opens at 6:00 a.m.

Breakfast will be served from 7-8:30 a.m. (approximate times)

Each classroom has their own schedule of activities posted in the room.

Classes continue learning and playing. There is time for books, music, art, block play, pretend/dramatic play and sharing with friends. There is time for a child to sit alone or quietly visit with the teacher. Outside play is a favorite time for most children.

Classes take time to put up toys, wash hands, and learn responsible behavior.

Lunch is served from about 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon.

It is then time to wash up, clean up, and get comfortable on the cots.

Rest time last for 1-2 hours (depending on the child's needs)

Afternoon snacks are served at about 2:30 p.m.

More clean up, classroom learning, and outside play.

The Center closes at 6:00 p.m.

Inclement Weather School Closing

We will try to remain open regardless of snow and ice; however, we may be late arriving. Understand that we will try to open on time, but bad roads could delay our arrival.

If Conway Public Schools dismiss early, due to weather conditions, we will not provide transportation. We will not call; you will be required to provide transportation. You may drop your child off at the Center and we will care for them until the center closes (which may be early due to weather conditions).

We will close at 5:00 p.m. on days when snow and/or ice make the roads dangerous. Please arrange to pick your child up by this time. (Late fee will apply.)

We do reserve the right to close the Center if the roads are too hazardous for travel. This would occur only in extreme circumstances.

Holiday Closing

The Center will be closed for one day for each of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The cost of your child care is determined accounting for these 6 closed days. Therefore, your weekly **tuition will remain the same** each week, including the weeks that contain a holiday.

Parking

The Center has limited parking space, so it is very important that you limit the time you park in the drive through. If you are going to be in the Center for more than five (5) minutes, please park in a parking space away from the front door of the Center. Be considerate of other parents.

When you park your car, turn off the motor and lock the doors before leaving the car. Never leave another child unsupervised in the parked car. If you have other children, bring them into the center with you. You must supervise all of your children while they are in the Center.

Remember to **SLOW DOWN** when you enter the Center parking area. Small children are everywhere and cannot always be seen. Please put away your cell phones when you are driving on Center property. Distractions can be fatal.

Clothing

Clothing that children wear to the Center should be comfortable, easy to put on and remove, easy to care for, and labeled with your child's name. **Please send your child in "play" clothes.** We offer art activities, water, sand, and outdoor play, so children need to wear clothing that allows them to move about freely and get dirty. Teachers cannot be responsible for keeping your child's "good" clothes clean throughout a busy day in a child care center.

During cooler weather, it is necessary for each child to dress appropriately. Children will go outdoors daily, unless it is raining or extreme weather conditions. Mittens, a heavy coat, snow

pants, and a hat will be necessary for winter play. Gym shoes (rather than sandals) are appropriate for the summer.

The Children's Center will not be responsible for clothing that is torn, stained, or faded while your child is in the center. Many surfaces at the center are disinfected several times a day and the product used may cause fading of some fabrics. Our activities often involve the use of paint or markers that may cause stains. Do not dress your child in expensive clothes because we cannot be responsible to the damage that may occur. We will do our best to help each child keep his/her belongings in the appropriate storage place, however, we are not responsible for lost clothing items, or any valuables brought into the center.

NOTE: Every classroom in the Center uses a bleach solution (as required by licensing regulations) to disinfect tables and clean toys. There may be times when your child's clothing can be damaged because they come in contact with a recently washed table. We try not to let this happen, but we cannot guarantee that it won't happen. This is another reason you should send your children in "play" clothes.

Car Seats

Arkansas law requires all children under the age of 6 years and under 60 pounds to be properly secured in a federally approved car seat or booster seat. You, as the parent, are responsible for providing a child safety seat to anyone who transports your child.

Children ages 6-15 must use a safety belt in the front or rear seat of the car (the back seat is recommended for children).

All parents in our program are expected to use the safe practice of securing their child in a car seat.

If you are leaving a car seat for another person to use in the afternoon, please store the seat in the upstairs teacher's workroom. Make sure the seat is clearly labeled.

Outdoor Play

All children well enough to be in attendance at the Center will be taken outdoors each day for play. The only exceptions are rainy days or days when the heat index or wind chill factors are extreme. Studies have consistently shown that children do not have lowered resistance to colds or other infections because of outdoor play, but are much healthier and have stronger resistance to illness with exercise out-of-doors.

Items Brought From Home

Our Center maintains a generous supply of materials, toys, and equipment for the children to use. Therefore, children are asked to keep toys and other personal items at home. This helps us to avoid hurt feelings if an item is lost or broken. Also, some toys may have choking hazards of which parents are unaware. Teachers cannot be responsible for personal possessions, such as toys, that children might choose to bring to school. If it helps your child to take a toy or special

item with them when they leave the house each day, leaving it in your car is a safe and secure place where your child can have it later.

There may be special game days planned with older children (part of our School Age Program) when they may bring labeled games into the center.

Telephone Usage

We ask that you not use your cell phone while you are bringing or picking up your child. Your child needs your attention during these times.

Birthday Snack

Parents are welcome to bring a special snack for their child to celebrate his/her birthday. Never bring any peanut products into the Center. We would prefer that you bring nutritious snacks but we will leave this up to individual parents. We do require that birthday treats must be 'store-bought'. Any food brought in for a birthday snack must arrive unopened, as it was packaged by the bakery or store where it was purchased, or regretfully, we will have to turn it away.

Please ask a teacher, in advance, for the number of children who will be in attendance on the day you wish to bring a snack. You are welcome to join your child during this snack time. Please remember that, due to safety reasons, we cannot light birthday candles or have balloons in the center.

Diapers and Wipes

Disposable diapers and wipes must be provided by the parents for all children until they are completely potty trained. Because most children learn to use the toilet sometime between the ages of 2-3 years, parents will be required to provide 'pull-ups' and wipes during this toilet training period. Please label your packages of diapers and wipes. We will use your diapers for your child only. Please check each day to see if your child needs more diapers or wipes.

Separation

Separation can be stressful for parents as well as children. We want to support you in this sometimes difficult, but very common, developmental process.

Sometimes children are upset during their first few weeks, and some don't express anxiety until a few weeks later when they feel comfortable enough to do so. This is completely understandable because they are in a new environment with people they don't yet know. It will take time for them to develop bonds and relationships with the teachers and children in their room. Please know that we will comfort and reassure your child. The teachers will acknowledge and talk about his/her feelings and we will need you to do the same. Keep in mind that children are very sensitive to the feelings of their parents, so if you don't feel good about leaving your child at the Center, they won't feel good about it either. Please talk about your child's experiences in a positive way.

When you leave your child, please don't 'sneak out'. Make sure that you are focusing on your child, not on your cell phone. Make the 'good-bye' and hug something he/she can count on, even if it brings some tears at first. When it's time for you to leave the classroom, after you say your good-byes, make the departure definite. Lingering can make a child unsure of what is expected of him/her. It is helpful when parents develop a routine (greeting the teacher, washing hands, etc). Consistency is the key. Over time your child will become accustomed to this routine and learn that you always come back when you say you will. Together, we will work through this important developmental process.

Guidance Techniques and Discipline Policy

Guidance techniques are designed and carried out in such a way as to help the individual child develop self-control and to assume responsibility for his/her actions. The rules are simple and understandable. We will redirect the child while clearly explaining the reason for our action.

If a child is removed from the group or an activity to gain control (**'time-out'**), it will be for a short period of time. Generally, a child having difficulty in one area will be redirected to another area to play.

Please remember that young children need the experience of interacting with other children on a consistent basis. Learning how to share and cooperate with others is an ongoing process for young children, and consequently some aggressive behavior **will** occur (i.e., hitting, yelling, name calling, biting, pinching, kicking, etc). Although we do not allow this behavior to persist, it takes time for a child to learn a more acceptable way of dealing with his/her anger and frustration (using appropriate words to express his/her feelings).

Generally the steps that we following when dealing with a child who is having problems following classroom rules are: Redirect the child to another area of interest; Remove the child from the group for a short time to 'time-out'; Discuss the child's feeling and Center rules; Wait for the child to make a decision to work and play successfully with the group; Help the child return to the group and be more successful; Comment on the child's good decision to play successfully with the group. Our goal is to encourage the children to develop empathy for others which will strengthen our class community.

Regulations Regarding Discipline

No child will be punished by corporal punishment or verbal abuse. Please keep in mind, **this policy also applies to parents**. Children may not be yelled at, spanked, or threatened to be spanked while at the Center.

The following behaviors are prohibited (**by ALL persons**) in a child care setting:

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching, and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear.
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom.
- Abuse or profane language.
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment; and

- Any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child.

It is also our policy that we will handle all discipline situations that may arise with the children while they are at the Center, according to our stated philosophy. If a parent has concerns regarding **another** child's behavior, we ask that you discuss your concern with the appropriate teacher or Director. Under **NO** circumstances will a parent be allowed to approach a child or his/her parents in an effort to deal with a situation oneself. We consider this method is inappropriate and cannot be tolerated.

Violent Behavior at the Center

The safety and security of all children, families, and staff is extremely important. In order to maintain a safe environment for all, The Children's Center has a strict policy surrounding violent behavior.

Center violence is defined as any action by a parent, employee, or visitor that either threatens to commit, attempts to commit, or commits an act with the intent to create physical harm to another. Any person who makes threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in physically violent act on the property of The Children's Center will be reported to the proper authorities and be removed from the premises.

Missing Parent

We will attempt to reach the parents through the phone contacts listed on the child's registration form. If no authorized person can be reached to pick up the child, the staff will wait until 6:45 p.m., and will then call the police department and Child Protective Services who will arrange for the child to be safely transported to an emergency caregiver. A note will be left on the Center door to direct the parents to the child's location and the Child Protective Agency phone number.

Visiting Professionals

The Children's Center cooperates with many professional groups within our community to provide the best possible program for your child. Health professionals may visit the Center to screen or provide care to qualified children. We sometimes have special programs on Fire Safety, Police Friends, or other Community Helpers. Instructors of gymnastics, dance, Karate, etc also may visit the Center.

All visitors to the Center must sign in at the front desk. Any volunteer who is consistently with the children must provide the Center with the same reference checks that teachers must provide.

Arkansas Department of Human Service Interview

DHS and/or their authorized representatives have the authority to interview any child enrolled in an Arkansas Licensed Day Care Center at any time without giving parents prior notice.

SCHOOL-AGE SUMMER PROGRAM

School-age summer care (Kid Kamp) is provided during the summer months for children who have completed kindergarten through sixth grade. The enrollment policies are the same for this age group as all others, so please refer to the procedures listed above for more enrollment information.

We realize that school-age children are ‘older’ and they are ready for more challenging activities, so we try hard to meet their needs. Kid Kampers go on many field trips during the summer. We see movies, play miniature golf, go bowling, and visit museums and parks. Our time at the Center is filled with arts and crafts, board games, dramatic play, block play, science experiences, and outside play. Our Kid Kamp rooms are designed to offer the children freedom to choose from many activities. We provide a very busy curriculum along with time for nourishment and rest.

All children and staff who go on a field trip must wear a Children’s Center tee shirt so they can be easily identified as part of the group.

Parents must sign a permission slip for EVERY field trip.

ENROLLMENT AND BILLING

Admission Procedure

To be enrolled in the Children’s Center, parents/guardians must provide the Center with vital information. The Child Enrollment Form must be completely filled out. There must be no spaces left unrecorded. If you have trouble providing all the needed information, please talk to the Director who will try to help you find the needed answers. This document will provide us with the names, address, and phone numbers of all responsible parties. It will also provide us with

needed medical and health information. It will also give the Center staff and medical personnel permission to treat your child in case of an emergency.

You must also provide the Center with a record of your child's "up to date" immunizations.

You must fill out an Index Card with emergency numbers and other information.

You must pay the non-refundable Enrollment Fee and the first week's tuition cost. The Enrollment Fee is per child and will be charged annually in September. An annual Supply Fee is charged each year in March. You may check the tuition and supply fee rates on the attached rate sheet.

You must agree to follow all policies and procedures of The Children's Center.

Payment Policy

Our tuition and fees are considered enrollment fees, NOT attendance fees. **Payment must be paid whether or not a child is in attendance.** There are NO days on which you do not have to pay for child care (unless you are a part of the Arkansas Voucher Assistance Program that may have special requirements). All child care fees must be paid in full in advance of the care to be provided. **Anyone who misses one payment will be charged a late fee and will receive a written notice. Child care may be terminated for anyone who misses two consecutive payments.** (If you are experiencing a temporary financial emergency, you must speak to the Director as soon as possible to discuss the problem.)

Child Care Subsidies

The State of Arkansas provides several funding sources that are available to families with limited incomes. If you believe you may be eligible for a child care subsidy, please see the Director for more information. We will refer you to the appropriate agency and they will determine your eligibility based on family size, work schedule, and income. (Funding is typically available for low-income, single parents.)

Those who are receiving a state subsidy must adhere to all rules established by the center and the Arkansas Dept. of Human Services. Parents need to make sure paper work is completed in a timely manner and deadlines are not missed. **If we provide any child care that was not approved by the subsidy program, the parent(s) will be responsible for paying the full cost of care.** There is always a waiting list for parents to get into this program, so if your child is consistently absent for child care, you may be dropped from the subsidy program. You must also make your subsidy caseworker aware of any changes in your class or work schedule, as this will affect your eligibility for child care and payments.

Late Fees

The Center closes each evening at 6:00 p.m. Parents/guardians who pick their child up after that time may be charged one dollar (\$1.00) per minute for every minute that they are late.

Tuition payments are due each Monday in advance of the week's child care. If the payment has not been received by Wednesday, you will be charged a \$15.00 late fee.

If the parent/guardian of a child does not appear to pick up their child, the staff member on duty will remain with the child; try to contact other authorized person to pick up the child, then at 6:45 p.m. the staff will call the proper authorities to pick up the child and transfer the child to a safe place.

Method of Payment and Returned Checks

The Children's Center is not able to accept cash payment. We need you to make all payments by Money Order, Cashier's Check or Personal Check. The check/money order record that you receive from your bank will serve as your receipt unless you need another printed receipt from the Center. If you need the printed receipt, please tell the Director so that the receipt can be automatically generated when your payment is recorded.

There will be an additional \$25.00 charge for every returned check we receive from the bank. The amount of the insufficient check and the \$25.00 charge must be paid with a Money Order or Cashier's Check.

Multi-child Discount

Families that have more than one child enrolled full time in the center will receive a discount of \$10.00 per week for each additional child. Children enrolled in the after school program are considered part-time and will receive \$7.00 as a weekly second child discount.

“Enroll a Friend” Reward Program

If you recommend The Children's Center to a friend who then enrolls their child in our Center, we will reward you by reducing your weekly tuition by the amount of the first weeks tuition paid by the new child. The payment will be made after the new child has paid for two weeks of tuition.

Accident Insurance

The Center carries accident insurance for children who may be accidentally injured while at the Children's Center. It is a secondary policy that will pay only the amount owed after your personal insurance policy has paid all that it will allow. Parents will need to bring copies of all medical bills and a copy of your own medical insurance payments to the Director who will see that the claim is made to the Center's insurance company.

Important Note: Parents are responsible for paying amounts which are not covered by insurance (including deductibles, amounts exceeding usual and customary charges and amounts exceeding maximum policy benefits).

Vacation Week

After your child has been enrolled in the Center for one year, the child will be granted one week vacation away from the Center, during which no payment will be charged. The regular child care payments are due for all other weeks.

Extended Leave of Absence

Extended leaves due to illness or family problems will be considered on an individual basis.

Notification of Absences

We appreciate a phone call when children will be absent from the center so that we can better plan for the daily program. If your child is absent due to a communicable illness, we need to know so that we can inform other families (i.e. chicken pox, thrush, strep throat, etc).

It is especially important that parents call the Center if your school age child is not to be picked up from school. If we expect your child to be at school for us to pick up and the child is not there, we must contact the school and the parents to locate the child. Please, be considerate in this matter.

Notification of Withdrawal

We ask that parents notify the Center two weeks in advance of withdrawal of the child from the Center enrollment.

Termination of Child Care

The Children's Center reserves the right to discontinue child care if we decide that the Center, child, or family is not benefitting from the arrangement. Child care may be terminated for (but not limited to) the following reasons:

1. If a child's behavior indicates he/she is not adjusting to the program, has needs the program cannot fulfill or accommodate, or is detrimental to the functioning of the class as a whole. If the staff and Director determine the Center cannot serve the child's needs, or if a child significantly disrupts the program for other children, parents will be given one week to find alternate child care.

2. If a parent or guardian exhibits behavior that is detrimental to the health and well-being of the children or staff in a classroom, or negatively interferes with the normal functioning of the classroom, s/he will be given one week's notice and asked to find alternate child care services. In an instance in which a parent is deemed verbally or physically hostile or abusive to center staff or children, the Center reserves the right to take measures to maintain a harmonious and safe center environment and child care may be terminated immediately.
3. Failure of a parent to abide by Center policies and procedures may result in the parent(s) being asked to find alternate child care. Disregard of Center policies and procedures might include, but are not limited to : delinquent payments; leaving a child past closing time; leaving a child unattended; endangering the well-being and safety of children; parents' reluctance to provide information or seek assistance for their child; failure to comply with agreed upon plan of action relating to child's behavior; failure to submit or update medical forms; arriving or departing with a child while under the influence of substances that leave the parent incapable of safely caring for a child.

Although we pride ourselves on serving a diverse population of children and families, with a wide variety of needs, we cannot maintain enrollment for a child or family who requires more time and attention than we are reasonable able to give. Although some children may require extra time and attention on occasion, we cannot continue to provide care for a child who is unable to function within the routine of the classroom and within the stated ratio. Some examples include a child who needs a constant one-on-one with a staff member, displays of chronic aggressive behavior (beyond what is typical), cannot manage transitions or the daily routine, cannot function or behave appropriately in a social setting.

There are times when a parent may feel another child's behavior is inappropriate and warrants dismissal. We want to be clear that there is a range of behavior for children of all ages that although not acceptable (biting, hitting, use of profanity, etc.) may be developmental and manageable within our setting. The Center's staff will make the determination if a child's behavior is beyond this developmental range to the extent we feel we are not able to successfully work with him/her.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

Medical Exams and Immunizations

It is important that each child has a Primary Care Physician and a Medical Home where his/her records are kept. It is recommended that children have regular health check-ups. The Center

must have all the information needed to reach the child's Medical Home if an emergency were to arise.

Parents are responsible to keep all of their child's needed immunizations up to date and to provide the Center with documentation that immunizations have occurred.

Illness

No child will be admitted who has a contagious or infectious disease. Parents and guardians shall be notified to pick up the child, if the child exhibits any of the symptoms listed below:

- Fever: A body temperature of 101oF or above
- Diarrhea: three (3) or more watery stools in a 24-hour period
- Vomiting: Vomiting on two or more occasions within the past 24-hour period
- Rash: Body rashes, not obviously associated with diapering, heat or allergic reactions to medications
- Sore Throat: if associated with fever or swollen glands in the neck
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness (lethargy; uncontrolled coughing, persistent crying; difficulty breathing; wheezing)
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Chicken Pox, until all sores have dried and crusted
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment
- Scabies, until after treatment has been completed
- Head lice (from the end of the day until after the first treatment)
- Any communicable illness

Any child who becomes ill and unable to participate in daily activities shall be separated from other children, supervised, and parents will be called to pick up the child.

A child must be free of all symptoms for twenty-four hours or have a doctor's note attesting that the child is not contagious before the child is allowed to return to the Center.

It is not our intent to allow children who are truly sick to stay at the Center, but it is also not our intent to exclude children who are only mildly ill. The Center staff understands that very young children may not feel well while teething, etc. We will call parents and, if the medication has been signed in and approved in writing by the parent, we will administer children's acetaminophen. Children with minor illnesses that are not contagious or cause a high temperature (allergies, teething. etc) and for which symptoms may be relieved with minor

treatment, may be brought to the Center, at the parent's and Director's discretion. We understand it can often be difficult to determine the seriousness of the situation when a child is not feeling well. The Center must rely on parents to make good decisions regarding their child's health, so please don't send any child to the Center if they are sick.

Daily Health Screening

Each morning our staff checks all children in order to determine if the child may be feeling unwell, have fever, or have pain. We attempt to start the day with a positive outlook and hope that all our children are happy and well.

Hand Washing

Washing hands often and correctly is an important part of reducing illness. Staff and children must wash their hands before entering play in the classroom. When parents bring their child into Center, they should first take their child to the lavatory to wash his/her hands before entering a classroom play area. Children and staff wash their hands several times throughout the day.

The Center provides germicide lotions in many areas of the Center for parents use. Please help us keep infectious diseases out of the Center.

Toilet Training

We are willing to assist parents in toilet training children at age two and older. Generally speaking, a child's muscles have not developed adequately until age two to exercise the control necessary to be successful in toilet training. We feel it is of the utmost importance that a child be prepared for this new experience so that chances of feeling a sense of failure or frustration may be avoided.

We have a large number of children who are in diapers or pull-ups. To help us be more organized and effective in assisting your child in training we need your cooperation on the following points:

1. Inform your child's teachers that you are planning to start working with your child on toilet training.
2. Practice at home with your child while he/she is still in pull-ups before using training pants.

3. When a child is ready to wear pull-ups for the majority of the day, you must bring several sets of extra clothing and pull-ups each day. All clothing must be labeled. Diapers and pull-ups will continue to be used during nap time and perhaps at other times during the day as long as the child shows a need for them.
4. A child will always be praised and encouraged for using (or attempting to use) the toilet. If at any time a child becomes anxious or upset about going to the toilet, we will not require the child to continue until he/she is less anxious.
5. A child must be fairly accomplished in toilet training before moving to the next classroom. We anticipate “accidents”, but a child must have the basic skills of using the toilet established before moving to the pre-school classroom.

Medication

Parents need to administer ALL medicine to their children at home whenever possible. Many medications can be administered twice a day, which means it can be taken at home rather than at the Center. Always check with your doctor to see if this is possible for your child’s medical condition.

If your child needs to have medication administered during the day, you must sign the medicine permission/instruction sheet on the front desk. Approved staff will give medication during the lunch period. Parents must provide clearly labeled medicine and store it in the locked medicine cabinet. Relock the cabinet after storing the medicine. **NEVER** leave medication of any kind in a diaper bag or school bag.

Medication will only be given in the manner for which it was prescribed by the doctor. We will not make any changes to the amount of medication or frequency that the medication is given. We will only give the medication to the child for which it was prescribed. The medication must also be a current prescription and not “out of date”. The medication must be in the original, labeled, prescription bottle with the name of the prescribing Doctor.

Over-the-counter medication will only be given in the manner that is directed by the manufacturer. The Children’s Center will not administer “cold or cough” over-the-counter medication because studies have shown that they are not effective for use in young children. Cough drops may not be given at the center; they are considered a choking hazard.

Incident/Accident Report

There are some occasions when a child might have a minor accident or be involved in a slightly unusual incident during their day at the Center. There will be written documentation of these accidents or incidents provided to the parents each time this may occur. The report will describe the circumstances, what action was taken, and will be signed by the staff member that was present. For any more serious problems, the Director will call the parents with a verbal report.

Biting Problems

The Center staff will attempt to understand the causes for a child's biting. Caregivers will be alert and redirect a child who attempts to bite to another area of play. A very young child (18 months and younger) who bites another child on the face may be confused about giving "kisses" and means no harm. A toddler who bites his/her friend on the hand or arm is often trying to take a toy away from another child. The Center staff must be alert to these situations and provide sufficient toys and redirection for the children involved.

In any instance of biting, the injured child will be given immediate attention and loving, sympathetic care. Caregivers will wash the injured area thoroughly. An Incident Report will be made and given to the child's parents. A copy of the reports will be kept in the child's file.

The parent of the biting child will be notified and given an Incident Report. If the child continues to bite, the Director will hold a meeting with the child's parents to discuss ways to improve this behavior. In extreme cases, "biters" may be asked to leave the Center until the bad habit changes.

Under no circumstance, will the identity of the biting child be revealed to anyone other than the child's own parents.

Supervision of Children at the Center

Parents are responsible for the safety and well being of their children any time they are together at the Center (during Parent programs, at drop-off, and at pick-up times), however, The Children's Center staff will step in if we feel a child is exhibiting unsafe practices.

Please do not allow your child to wander or run off anywhere in the center without your supervision (classroom, stairs). There are many potential dangers throughout the center, so it is imperative that children are always supervised.

When entering and exiting the building, your child must remain with you at all times. They should not run ahead to their classroom or run out the front door without you. (This is teaching them a very unsafe practice.)

Rest Time

All children are required to rest a minimum of one hour each day. Teachers assist children in resting by reading stories, providing soothing music, and rubbing backs. Children are not required to sleep, but are expected to rest quietly on their cots during this time.

Please keep in mind that if children are tired, they will fall asleep on their own and we will not wake them or prevent them from sleeping based on a request of a parent. The only thing we can do is to instruct teachers not to rub his/her back or assist him/her in falling asleep.

Parents need to provide one labeled crib-size flat sheet and one labeled thin blanket for their child. Please do not bring pillows or large, fluffy blankets. (These items must be able to fit between stacked cots). Sheets and blankets must be taken home each Friday, washed, and returned on Monday.

Accidental Injuries

In the case of a serious accidental injury to your child, we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If necessary, we will call 911 and an ambulance will take your child to Conway Regional Hospital. Because of this, it is essential for parents to let us know the following information:

- Where you can be reached while your child is in attendance at the Center.
- Physician's name and phone number
- Emergency contacts and phone numbers

If injuries are not of a serious nature, we will apply first aid and notify parents at the end of the day or as soon as possible.

Risk Management Manual

The Children's Center attempts to minimize any risk to children and staff; however, there are times that emergencies may occur (fire, storm, etc). In an attempt to be prepared for unforeseen dangers, we have prepared a Risk Management Manual for our parents and staff. Our staff train and practice procedures that can help minimize risk. Please read your copy of the Risk Management Manual so you can know how unknown emergencies will be handled at the Center.

Food Service

One of the most basic requirements of any day care program is to provide adequate nourishment for each child. The Child and Adult Care Food Program provide guidelines for food preparation and service. Meals are available to all enrolled children without regard to race, color, national origin, handicap, sex, or age.

We are required to serve meals to **ALL** of the children throughout the day. This includes infant formula and baby food.

We serve breakfast, a.m. snack, lunch, and afternoon snack to all children who are enrolled during the times those meals are served. Meals will **NOT** be served at any other time, so be sure

your child arrives on time so he/she does not miss a meal (mealtimes vary according to age groups, so be sure to check your child's classroom schedule).

We are required by licensing to provide these necessary meals throughout the day. If your child arrives after 7:00 a.m., your child should eat breakfast at home before coming to the Center. Food from home is NOT allowed to be brought into the classroom, so please have your child eat breakfast at home if they are arriving after 7:00 a.m.

Food Substitutes

We are required by DHS and the Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide all the required meals throughout the day for children enrolled in our program. This means that parents are NOT allowed to restrict their child's diet while they are at the Center based on a child's dislikes or presumed allergies. We do, however, allow food substitutes based on medical or religious reasons as explained further.

Any child requiring a special diet due to medical reasons MUST fill out our form regarding food allergies and intolerances, and produce a note from their doctor with a detailed explanation of the allergy. Specific foods to be avoided must be listed on this form, and it MUST be signed by a medical doctor. The parent must then provide an appropriate substitute for that food.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Home –School Communication

We value our relationship and communication with parents, as we serve as partners in the care of your children. We encourage you to let us know anything that might help us in our work with your child.

Teachers will share information with you about your child's day on a regular basis. Although we want you to be aware of certain situations and behaviors your child may be exhibiting at the center, we do not expect you to "fix" it or to punish your child. We will handle the situations that arise, but just want parents to be aware of what we are doing in the classroom as it pertains to your child.

The Parents Bulletin Board, posters, notes, newsletters, e-mails, website etc. are all ways to provide parents information concerning Center curriculum, policies, announcements, and general information about young children. Please read this information so you can remain informed

about Center policies and procedures. Important information regarding billing and enrollment are also included in these memos.

Also feel free to write notes to the Director or staff and drop them into the locked box on the front desk as a quick and easy way of communicating with the Center staff.

Parent conferences with the Director are encouraged anytime that a parent has a question or concern. A portfolio with samples of each child's work and developmental history is available for parents to examine and discuss with the Director and teachers. The Spring Open House is also a good time for parents to visit the classrooms and examine their child's portfolio.

To enhance parent-teacher communication, we ask that you refrain from talking on your cell phone while dropping off or picking up your child.

Throughout the year, there are many opportunities for parents to be a part their child's classroom activities. Each fall the classes celebrate a Fall Festival with games, prizes and costume parade. We encourage each family to participate in the Fall Festival fun. We encourage parents to join our classroom celebrations which are held at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Independence Day. We invite our Dad's to drop by for "Doughnuts for Dads" for Father's Day. We also want our Mom's to join us for "Muffins for Mom" for Mother's Day.

We hope our parents will participate in day-to-day classroom activities by volunteering to read a book, share a story, or help with an art project.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information is a very important aspect of our program. Sometimes we encounter situations such as a parent who expresses a concern about another child's behavior. Although we understand your concern for the welfare of your child, we cannot discuss detailed information about other children and families with you. Please keep in mind that children develop at very different rates and it's not realistic to expect all children to "behave" the way you expect them to. What is disturbing to one parent is not as upsetting to another. As professional staff, we have to decide what behavior is unacceptable and beyond what is considered typical for that age. Please know that we are always working with individual children and families, but we cannot disclose this information to you. Parents need to be assured that we won't discuss their child's development or progress with others, so this applies to your child as well.

Only staff who has a "need to know" will receive information that is deemed confidential. Only parents and administrative and teaching staff will have access to your child's file.

Parent Conferences

Parents are invited to speak with classroom teachers or the Director at any time concerning center matters or your child's development. It is best to talk directly to the Director if you have concerns regarding your child or your child's classroom...or if you have concerns about a staff member, Center policy, or procedure.

We strongly encourage all parents to arrange a time for a conference with the Director and Teacher to talk about your child's progress or any concerns. A parent conference should be held whenever a parent, teacher, or Director feels it is necessary. We are eager to discuss your concerns and goals for your child at any time.

We encourage parents to arrange a conference with the Director each Fall and Spring. If parents are not able to schedule a conference, a written assessment of the child will be sent home.

Child Assessments

The teachers document each child's development using portfolios. These are a compilation of photos and descriptors of a child's milestones and achievements as they move through our program. Each child's portfolio is shared with the family during conferences but stays at the center, and is passed on to new teachers as a child progresses through the program. The portfolio will be given to each child as they leave our program so the parent has documentation of their growth and development.

Other professionals are welcome to visit the Center to observe a child and/or talk with our teachers. It is our intent to work cooperatively with parents and others to successfully meet the individual needs of each child.

Parent Concerns

As a child care center, we are a community of children, parents, and staff all interacting and sharing our lives together. In a community, people work closely together and hopefully interactions are positive, helpful, kind and understanding. Yet it is to be expected that from time to time, people will experience some conflict, concerns, and difficulties.

We recognize that parenting is one of the most difficult, intense, and rewarding experiences in your life. We want you to share your thoughts, hopes, and dreams for your child. You want what is best for your child, and we know it is your job to advocate and protect your child.

We, as a staff, will make mistakes. When these mistakes occur, we want you to tell us. As a staff, it is our goal to offer your family the best child care services possible. In order to meet our goal, we need your input, your suggestions, your questions and concerns.

Parent Resource Library

The Center has books, magazines, videos, etc that contain information that is helpful to anyone interested in children. We offer this library of information to parents who might like to check material out for a period of time. We have information dealing with topics such as toilet training, self-esteem, ages and stages of development, etc. Feel free to ask the Director for assistance.

PROCEDURE FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Who Should Report?

All child care workers in the State of Arkansas are required by law to report any suspicion of child abuse and neglect. This law and the requirements of DHS do not allow us to ignore any report or evidence of abuse or neglect. We are not allowed to make any judgment ourselves; we are simply required to make a report. A report must be made by the caregiver even if the only evidence is the complaint or report from the child. The Department of Human Services will then investigate and make a judgment whether or not the report of abuse or neglect is substantiated by the evidence.

Any judgment or definition of abuse or neglect is NOT allowed by any childcare worker. DHS is solely responsible for making this decision.

All persons who are mandated to report suspected abuse and neglect are presumed to be acting in good faith. Thus, they are immune from legal liability as a result of a report.

How Should They Report?

Call the Child Abuse Hotline whose number is posted near the office.

If DHS accepts the report and decides to investigate the charges, an investigator is required to visit the child and his/her family.

Staff Investigations

In the event that any employee has a complaint of child abuse or neglect filed against them, it is the policy of the Center that during the period of investigation by DHS, that employee will not be allowed to supervise children.

All employees' names are sent to the Child Abuse Registry for investigation as part of our hiring process. We always check both personal and professional references. All new staff are also checked through the Child Abuse Registry and Criminal Record Registry. If any complaint of abuse or neglect is substantiated, the employee will be immediately terminated.