



Serving South Carolina's Lowcountry

Parent Handbook

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Supersedes any previous versions of Parent handbook.

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The Children's Center Inc.

Parent Handbook

Welcome to The Children's Center

Our Mission

THE CHILDREN'S CENTER provides affordable high quality early education and childcare services for working families. We strive to be the standard of excellence for child development and care in the Lowcountry, enabling parents to fully participate in the local workforce and ensuring every child is ready to achieve success upon entering kindergarten.

The Children's Center, Inc. was established in 1967 by community leaders who understood the need for quality care. We are the second oldest non-profit organization on Hilton Head Island, and one of the highest educational impact child care programs in our community. We are honored that you have chosen to partner with us in the care of your child. The Children's Center, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization. The Center is not a government agency. The government support received by the Center is from the USDA meal subsidy program and ABC Quality child care vouchers.

This handbook is designed to explain our policies and procedures. Our doors are always open and we are looking forward to a wonderful, positive relationship with you and your child(ren).

Location

The Children's Center, Inc.
8 Nature's Way
Hilton Head, SC 29926
(843) 681-2739 (Office) (843) 681-3875 (Fax)
info@thechildrensc.org

The Children's Center, Inc., complies with fire, health and licensing standards required by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and is accredited by ABC (Advocates of Better Care, South Carolina). The Children's Center, Inc., does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, physical disability or political affiliation.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The Children's Center's program is based on the philosophy that each child has the right to a nurturing environment and that children learn through self-directed play and hands on experiences. Our goal is to provide a learning environment that will enhance and promote the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and creative development of each child.

Equally important, we strive to instill in each child a sense of belonging and success. We recognize and appreciate that parents are a child's primary teacher. We encourage open communication. We maintain an open door policy. You are invited to visit your child's classroom at any time, unless a court order stipulates otherwise.

FEE POLICIES AND ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Prior to enrollment, parents must complete all required registration forms and submit current immunization records as required by the State of South Carolina. Upon completion of all required registration documents, a conference will be scheduled with a member of the education team to review policies and procedures and answer any questions. A member of the education or leadership team can answer your questions throughout your time at The Children's Center.

Enrollment at the Center is full time. Space in the classroom is reserved for your child as the result of your enrollment. Therefore, **you are responsible for weekly payments regardless of your child's attendance** except as provided below. All tuition payments are payable in advance of service.

Administrative Fees: Parents or Guardians of children enrolled must pay a non-refundable annual administration fee of \$65.00 and a classroom supply fee of \$10.00 per child. Families enrolling after Oct 1st of each year will pay an administrative fee of \$33.00. Each January, the annual fees are re-applied to your account. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to update fees as necessary.

Weekly Tuition: The first week's payment is due in advance. Payments may be made by check, money order or credit card. **NO CASH WILL BE ACCEPTED**. Please indicate the child's name on the method of payment you choose. You may drop off your payment in the white payment box located outside of the front office. Weekly payments are due in the business office on Friday the week before attendance. Payments received after 6:00 pm on Monday will be assessed a late fee of \$15.00. Payment is required prior to dropping your child off Tuesday. Families with outstanding balances are subject to their child being put on a *Do Not Accept* list until such a time as the account is paid in full or payment arrangements are made with the Executive Director. Families are required to make payments to hold their place in their assigned classroom regardless of attendance. Tuition credits are not issued for any scheduled holidays.

Tuition Assistance: The Children's Center is dedicated to offering early education and child care services that are affordable for all families. Families are charged full tuition until TCC has verified household income. If a family is eligible for tuition assistance, your account will be credited and weekly billing adjusted. To be eligible for tuition assistance, parents or guardians must be working or be a full time student. Tuition assistance is not available for families with non-working parents or guardians.

The Children's Center can provide guidance in applying for South Carolina ABC Child Care voucher program for eligible families.

Vacation/Illness: Each child is eligible for 5 consecutive days per year to be used for vacation. You must notify The Children's Center in writing if you plan to use these days. Notification must be made within 2 days of use of your free time, otherwise charges will be made to your account. During these days, your child cannot be in attendance at the Center. Additional uncharged weeks may be granted for illness if supported by a physician's excuse. Families are eligible for this credit after they have been concurrently enrolled for three consecutive months or longer.

If your child is away from school due to an illness, tuition is still required to be paid to maintain your child's active enrollment status. If a child is out of school for more than three consecutive days AND has a doctor's note, tuition adjustments can be made for time away due to illness.

Withdrawal: If you wish to withdraw your child from our program, a two-week written notice is required. A **\$25 penalty** will be charged if a written notice is not received. To return to the Center after withdrawal, all outstanding balances must be paid in full prior to re-enrollment.

If a child is withdrawn from the center for two months or longer, parents will be required to pay the administration fee of \$65.00 to re-enroll their child. Exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the Executive Director.

Service Charges: There will be a NSF service charge of \$30.00 for any returned checks. The amount of the check plus the service charge is due immediately to avoid interruption in services. A money order will be required for a period of one month after a NSF charge is on your account. A second NSF charge will require, payments in money order for a period of at least six months. A service charge of \$2.00 per transaction will be added to all credit card payments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of information about the child and family will be maintained at all times. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the parent/guardian, principal, teaching staff and licensing agency. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone by any means, without the expressed written consent of the parent/ guardian or a court order.

ACCESS TO CLASSROOM

The Children's Center allows parents free and full access to their children at our center, unless a court order, State or Federal mandate stipulates otherwise and as long as the visit does not disrupt instructional activities or classroom routines.

MEALS

All students receive a nutritious, hot breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack daily. This is partially funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Food Program. All meals served are in accordance with USDA guidelines. Children must arrive at the Center before or during their classroom's scheduled mealtime in order to be served. It is your responsibility to know meal times for your child's classroom. Children arriving from local elementary schools after these times will be served, in accordance with USDA policy.

Menu substitutions are permitted, if there is current documentation from your child's physician on file for food or milk allergies. Meals cannot be saved for late arrivals. The Children's Center is a peanut and peanut product free facility. We request that no child or parent bring food containing peanuts or peanut products into our classrooms. This is to assist those children and adults who may have peanut allergies remain safe on our campus.

Any outside food brought into the facility must first be approved by Center administration.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

The facility is open Monday – Friday from 6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Federal regulations require that children are not allowed to exceed 10 hrs per day in a child care center. An attendance schedule must be provided by the parent at time of registration. This schedule can be modified in writing at any time, but changes must be approved by the Education Manager in advance. Children are not allowed to be dropped off before or stay after their scheduled time. A \$10 per minute charge may be billed to your account if your child(ren) is dropped off or picked up outside of their approved attendance times.

The Children's Center Inc., closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. daily. A late pick-up fee of \$10 per minute, per child will be charged for any child(ren) picked up after 6:00 p.m. All fees will be charged to your account and must be paid to the business office with your next scheduled payment. NOTE: The Department of Social Services will be contacted if the child is not picked up by 7:00 p.m.

For the purpose of operating a coherent educational program children must arrive at the center by 10:00 a.m. In emergencies, parents must call the Education Manager or the main office and receive permission for your child to arrive late. For security purposes all persons who drop off and pick up children from the Center must be listed on the child's registration form and have appropriate identification on file.

If a parent or child has a medical appointment prior to 10:00 am and desires to return to the Center for the remainder of the day, two requirements must be met. First, the parent/guardian is required to inform the Center prior to the appointment that the child will return after 10:00 am. Second, a note stating the name of the doctor and the appointment

time must be provided to the front desk at drop-off. Children may not return to the Center during naptime (11:45 am – 2:00 pm) as it disrupts sleeping children.

(PLEASE DO NOT OPEN OR HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR ANYONE)

We take the security of your children very seriously. Authorized people all have codes or an administrator will allow them access to the classrooms with appropriate identification. A copy of a current drivers licence is required to be on file for all authorized persons for identification purposes. Center staff are required to check the driver's license of persons retrieving children and to verify their validity on the child's registration form. Not everyone knows all the parents, so please do not be offended when asked for identification. It is for the security of your children. Parents are required to accompany their child(ren) to their rooms in the morning and when picking them up from their rooms in the afternoon. **Parent must sign their child(ren) in and out every day, at the front desk and in the classroom.**

Parking lot expectations include:

- During arrival and pick-up of your child(ren), parents are required to turn off all motor vehicles when left unattended.
- Do not park in a handicap space without appropriate designation.
- We are a "children's center", when entering and leaving the property please maintain a slow and safe speed. Children are known to run into the parking lot without looking first.

Parents are expected to refrain from use of cell phones when they enter The Children's Center. Parents are requested to refrain from cell phone use at all times while they are escorting their children on Center property.

Please keep your child(ren) with you at all times when arriving and departing, as traffic is heavy and small children are difficult to spot between parked cars. **Supervision of children before and after leaving the classroom is the responsibility of the parents. Parents may not leave their children unattended in the halls.**

Each classroom has a system of written communication with parents. It is the **parent's responsibility** to check their child(ren)'s messages each day and to check for other written notices and communications. Daily schedules and weekly lesson plans are posted in each room and parents will receive an orientation to these schedules and lesson plans by the classroom staff.

TRACKING PROCEDURE

The Children's Center staff will make use of a classroom tracking system where teachers note the location of each child in their care at least every thirty minutes on a tracking paper. Children will never be left unattended and the classroom lead teacher is responsible for knowing each child's location from the time they are dropped off to the time parents arrive for pick-up.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

THE CHILDREN'S CENTER IS A NON-SMOKING FACILITY. SMOKING IS NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE ON CENTER PROPERTY, INCLUDING INSIDE YOUR CAR.

Our health policy is designed with both adults and children in mind. In many cases it is not in the best interest of anyone for a sick child to remain at the center. At the same time we understand that it is difficult for a parent to miss work. While there is no entirely satisfactory solution, we will ask a parent to take his/her child home and keep him/her home if we feel he/she needs to see a doctor, is contagious, if there is a risk of illness to the group or if the child requires prolonged individual staff attention which interferes with the safety and normal functioning of the group. Extreme misbehavior that requires prolonged staff attention will be dealt with in the same manner.

CRITERIA USED FOR SENDING A CHILD HOME

1. Fever higher than 100 degrees
2. Vomiting when accompanied by fever
3. Diarrhea (three or more loose stools)
4. Suspected contagious diseases such as: pink eye, impetigo, chicken pox, ringworm, head lice, hand foot mouth
5. Illness, which prevents participation in group activities
6. Extreme misbehavior that endangers the security of other children

CRITERIA FOR ALLOWING A CHILD TO RETURN

The child will be permitted to return to class when he/she is:

1. Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medicine
2. Free of vomiting for 24 hours
3. Free of diarrhea for 24 hours
4. Medicated for 24 hours for head lice and is nit free
5. Medicated for 24-48 hours after the first dose, as prescribed by a doctor and no longer contagious and has been cleared by a doctor.

DISPENSING MEDICATION

The lead teacher or designee is responsible for keeping a record of and dispensing medication. Prescribed medications may be administered if the label indicates the child's name, recommended dosage and date of expiration. A parent authorization form is required for all medications. If a child requires frequent medication for a recurring chronic medical condition, the parent must obtain a doctor's note allowing the center to administer the medication as needed, this form is required to be updated annually.

Non prescription medication, such as cough medicine, requires written doctor's orders and parental authorization. Instructions from the physician must appear on the orders received by the Center.

All medication must be turned into the office for storage in a locked area as required by Department of Social Services until needed for administration. Office personnel are responsible for providing medication to teachers at appropriate times. **If your child is noticeably ill, please do not bring your child to school until a physician has seen them.**

Help your child stay healthy and ready to learn. We hope your child does not have to miss being at the center due to an illness or disease. The best protection is prevention. You can help prevent many illnesses by making sure your child receives immunizations and by making sure your child washes his/her hands often. Upon arrival at the center, it is requested that you wash your child's hands. This will help reduce the spread of illness in the facility.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If a child is seriously ill or injured at The Children's Center, one teacher will administer first aid while another tries to contact parents. If a child must be transported to a hospital, 911 will be called to transport the child. A staff member must accompany the child while another remains at The Children's Center and continues trying to contact parents. If the Executive Director is not present he/she will also be contacted immediately. The child's entire file and medical record should accompany the staff member and child to the hospital.

Procedure to be followed:

1. Administer first aid
2. Contact parents
3. Secure medical attention and/or send (and accompany) child to the hospital unless advised otherwise by parent when contacted
4. Inform Education Manager or Executive Director
5. The Education Manager or Executive Director will inform D.S.S

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In the case that The Children's Center must close without notice, parents will be contacted to immediately return to the Center to pick up their child(ren). Members of the staff will remain on site until all children have been picked up.

In the case of inclement weather, please check The Children's Center Website and/or Facebook page. **It is the policy of The Children's Center to close whenever Beaufort County Schools are closed for weather related reasons.**

When a closing results in more than one consecutive day of non-operation, tuition will be credited for the number of days closed, minus the first day. This means if the Center is closed for one day, there will be no tuition credit, but if the Center is closed for four days, tuition will be credited for three of those days.

APPROPRIATE INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN

Discipline guidelines are based on an understanding of the developmental needs of the child. Intervention must consider the individual child and the circumstances of the incident. What is effective in one set of circumstances may not be appropriate in another. While there is no one "correct" way to respond to misbehavior, the ultimate goal is to maximize the growth and development of the child while providing protection of the group and the individuals within it.

Techniques employed at The Children's Center are constructive and positive in nature. Discipline at The Children's Center strives to enable the child to solve his/her problems in socially acceptable ways and to foster the development of feelings of mutual respect of rights and feelings of others. (See ABC Discipline Policy for details) In the event a child's emotional, developmental or social needs cannot be met by The Children Center, the teacher will confer with the Education Manager and the child's parents to discuss additional intervention strategies. If a child consistently hurts himself or others and is found to have needs beyond the scope of The Children's Center, the child will be dismissed from the Center.

TECHNIQUES FOR HANDLING VARIOUS DISCIPLINE SITUATIONS

- Redirect the child to alternative situations.
- Make changes to the learning environment by redesigning, enriching or impoverishing it.
- Help the child see alternatives, make decisions and develop problem-solving skills.
- Teach, model and encourage appropriate behavior.
- Create simple, reasonable rules and work with other staff members to ensure consistency.
- Use logical consequences.
- Use behavior modification techniques.

DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES FORBIDDEN BY THE CENTER

- No child shall receive corporal punishment, including spanking.
- No child shall be subjected to cruel treatment, humiliation or verbal abuse.
- No child shall be threatened or denied food as a form of punishment.
- No child shall be punished for soiling or wetting of clothing or materials.

All staff is obligated to follow the techniques listed above and will inform the Education Manager if they witness any behavior contrary to the policy from anyone present in the Center.

CLOTHING

Each child will need at least one change of clothing (weather related), labeled with their name. The clothing should be left in the child's cubby for "emergencies". The child should be dressed comfortably for an active school day. Socks and nonskid, comfortable shoes such as tennis shoes or sneakers are a necessity. Sandals, flip-flops, dressy shoes, cowboy boots, etc. are not allowed at any time as they are unsafe when children are running, climbing, etc. Please remember that children are active and often are involved in "messy" art work and outdoor activities. Although we try to keep children's clothing clean, it is not always possible. Please dress your child for play, as clothing may get soiled. The Children's Center, Inc. will not replace lost, missing or damaged clothing or toys.

TOYS- The Center provides ample toys and materials for children to share. Please do not send any toys to school, as the Center will not be responsible.

VISITING THE CENTER- Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit their children anytime during the day. Please inform the classroom teacher of any planned visits in order to prepare the children for change.

CHILD ABUSE- Suspected cases of child abuse will be reported to the appropriate agency in accordance with state laws and licensing regulations. The Children's Center is mandated by the State of South Carolina to report any and all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect. (*SC Code of laws, Title 63, Chapter 7 Children's Code – SC Statute 63-7-310 and 63-7-20*)

POTTY POLICY AGES 3 AND OVER - As a child transitions into a 3-4 classroom, the responsibility for toileting becomes child centered. Teachers are available to guide and verbally instruct a child in their toileting requirements, but will not be responsible for cleaning the child after using the toilet. Parents are encouraged to help their child develop independence in their toileting skills in order to help them ensure they are totally clean after using the restroom. It is the practice of our Center that all children must be fully potty trained to move into a 3-year-old classroom. Parents are encouraged to work with their child's teacher to help ensure their child's potty training success.

ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL

The Center reserves the right to drop a child from enrollment for the following:

1. Delinquency in payment of tuition.
2. Inability of the Center to meet a child's needs.
3. Inability of a child to adjust to the Center.
4. Failure by the child to abide by health policies and other Center policies and procedures.
5. Failure of a parent to cooperate with the Center in addressing difficulties or concerns with the child's behavior or development.
6. Inability of parent to abide by Center policies, procedures and operations.

7. Tardiness at pick-up time, following three (3) documented late pick-up occurrences.
8. Failures of parents receiving childcare subsidies to abide with subsidy regulations.
9. Displaying or creating situations that negatively affect the safety, morale or well being of the children and/or staff.
10. Providing false information to the Center.
11. Failure to supervise child(ren) before entering and after leaving the classroom(s).
12. Failure to keep Center informed of parent's whereabouts resulting in inability to reach parents in emergency situations. Department of Social Services may be contacted to take over care of the child.
13. A child being in attendance for more than 10 hours daily.

NOTE: **The Department of Social Services will be contacted if the child is not picked up by 7:00 p.m.**

CURRICULUM

The Center utilizes various curriculum options for all age groups. Teachers develop a monthly lesson plan for their class with age appropriate skill building activities. The Center also serves as a home away from home for the children and many routines that are followed at the Center are routines that are followed at home. Age appropriate activities are designed for the following developmental areas:

Physical Cognitive Creative
Language Social-emotional Problem solving

In order to serve your child/children best, The Children's Center uses State of South Carolina validated forms of educational and developmental assessments.

South Carolina Early Learning Standards for children from birth to age five are the basis for all curricular activities. The Children's Center is passionate about our purpose of preparing children for success and these learning standards provide a road map for us to help your child build a foundation for success. The Board of Trustees has approved using these standards to provide a method of tracking a child's development beginning from their arrival at our Center, as early as six weeks, through their graduation into kindergarten. Teachers will incorporate standards into their daily lesson plans, providing opportunities for your child to grow and develop at their own pace.

Daily Schedules and weekly lesson plans are posted in each room and parents will be provided an orientation to these schedules and lesson plans by the classroom staff.

FIELD TRIPS

The Children's Center's policy regarding field trips is to inform parents at least one week in advance of the pending trip. Parents are required to sign a permission slip that outline where the children are going, how they will be transported and which teachers will be traveling with them. The Children's Center will maintain DSS ratios at all times during the trip.

CENTER CALENDAR

Weekly fees are not discounted for holiday closures except for the week between Christmas & New Year. The Children's Center will be closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Martin Luther King Day (third Monday of January)
- President's Day (third Monday of February)
- Team Lowcountry (annually in the Spring for Professional Development)
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November) and following Friday
- The week between Christmas and New Year's Day (varies)

**Christmas Eve will be reviewed annually for holiday status*

A recognized holiday that falls on a Saturday will be observed on the preceding Friday. A recognized holiday that falls on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday.

COMMUNICATING CONCERNS

We encourage parents to communicate any concerns and ask any questions in an effort to keep open lines of communication to benefit your child. We also believe it is important to communicate directly with the person most appropriate to address the issue or answer the question.

We ask all parents to begin with their classroom teacher, then move forward to the Education Manager, then the Executive Director. If the appropriate person is not immediately available, please leave a message and you will receive a return call within 24 hours.

All comments and suggestions are valued by our staff and we appreciate your time to communicate with any member of The Children's Center staff.

Your child(ren)'s teacher will schedule semi-annual parent-teacher conferences to discuss your child(ren)'s progress. It's a time for you to ask questions and express concerns. This time is set aside from daily classroom activities to have an uninterrupted conversation about

your child. **Parent-Teacher conferences are mandatory.** Parents are required to participate either by phone or face to face.

Email is the primary method of communication between our Center and parents. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure information is correct and up to date in your child's record. The Children's Center will never share personal contact information with any outside organization unless required to do so by court order. We discourage parents from communicating independently with a child's teacher through personal social media outlets as this is not considered an official form of Center communication. Teachers are available by individual appointment or by telephone. Parents are encouraged to "Like" the Children's Center's Facebook page where general Center communication and activities are shared.

CENTER SECURITY

The Children's Center places the safety and security of your child and our staff as a top priority. Many security features have been instituted for this reason. Parents are given an individual four-digit code to access both the lobby and the classrooms, you are asked NOT to share this code with people who are not on your child's formal pick-up list. Classrooms are monitored by an internal camera system to ensure the children are safe at all times. These cameras are for internal use only. The Children's Center has an Emergency Action Plan manual that guides our response to multiple emergency situations. Those responses are practiced on a regular basis to ensure both children and staff can respond safely during an emergency.

The Children's Center reserves the right to change or update this manual at any time deemed necessary for improved operations at our Center.

PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

The parent handbook describes important information about The Children’s Center, and I understand that I should consult my child’s classroom teacher or other staff member regarding any questions not answered in the handbook. I have chosen service provided by The Children’s Center voluntarily and acknowledge that there is no specified length of commitment. Accordingly, either I or The Children’s Center can terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time.

Since the information, policies, and benefits described here are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions to the handbook may occur. All such changes will be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that this handbook is not a contract for services. I have received the handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

PARENT NAME (printed): _____

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____