

**APPENDIX I
SAMPLE PARENT HANDBOOK**

[NAME OF CENTER]

[PICTURE OF CENTER]

PARENT HANDBOOK

PARENT HANDBOOK

[CENTER ADDRESS]
[CENTER PHONE NUMBER]

OUR MISSION

[Program name] is an early childhood education and care program created to provide high-quality early childhood education for children and families living in [Community name]. [Program name]'s mission is [state mission].

AGES SERVED/HOURS OF OPERATION

[Program name] provides services for children from ages six weeks through [maximum age] years old. Operating hours are Monday through Friday [insert operating hours]. We will be closed various days for holidays and professional development days. Please stop by the office and pick up a center calendar or visit our website at [list website].

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Center may be closed due to inclement weather conditions. [Provide information on how you will inform families of closings.] We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this might cause.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents are welcome to visit their child at any time during the day. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the program by reading stories, volunteering in the classroom, becoming actively involved in parent meetings and serving on committees. If you are joining your child for breakfast or lunch, please give 24-hour notice to your child's teacher.

FEES FOR SERVICES

[Program name] has enrollment and selection criteria based on the following:

[Insert the criteria you use in your selection process when there are openings]

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

The Department of [name the department in your state responsible for the child care subsidy program] provides child care subsidy for those who qualify. To determine if you are eligible for this program you will need to contact this department and set up an appointment. Your eligibility is determined by your income, family size, and the number of children in child care. If approved, you will receive a letter providing you with information about the number of hours your child can attend and the amount of your co-payment if applicable. When you receive your letter, bring it to the center and the Director will assist you. If it is determined that you have a co-payment, it must be paid by [date due] each month. You are required to sign in and sign out daily in order that [program name] receives payment for services provided to your child.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is important in order for your child to fully receive the benefits of the program; therefore, we encourage you to bring your child to class every day, even on the days when you are not working, at center or training. If your child is going to be absent, please notify the center as soon as possible.

All children are expected to arrive by **[Insert the time established by your center]**. If you plan to arrive late, because of a previously scheduled appointment or an unexpected situation, please let the center know of your situation. If your child has not arrived and you have not called in that day, a staff member will follow up with a phone call.)After your child has been absent for 5 days and we have been unable to contact you, your child will be dropped from the program and will be replaced with one from the waiting list.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

An adult must bring your child to the classroom and sign him/her in at the start of each day. If you are going to be late in the morning, please notify the center. Children must be picked up prior to **[insert time for latest pick up]**. There is late fee of \$1 a minute up to a maximum fee of \$20 which is due upon pick up that day.

Safety Tips during Arrival and Departure

- Turn off or turn down loud music.
- Drive very slowly when approaching the building.
- Turn your car off and take the keys out of the ignition before entering the center.
- Do not leave small children unattended in your car.
- Refrain from using your cell phone while in the building.

CELL PHONE USE

Talking on your cell phone is discouraged when picking up and/or dropping off your child. This is a special time for you to engage in conversation about your child with center staff.

TOBACCO USE

[Program name] is a tobacco-free premise. Tobacco use of any kind is prohibited. This policy extends to electronic or vapor cigarettes.

FIREARMS, WEAPONS, AND EXPLOSIVES

Firearms or weapons, open or concealed, are prohibited on center property or at any center-sponsored event.

MEDICATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

It is our policy to assist parents by administering prescribed medications in their absence. In order to do this, the proper paperwork must be completed by the parent or guardian with the staff. All medication must be packaged in the pharmacy container with prescription's original information and instructions on the label. Staff are also able to administer over-the-counter medication with a doctor's written order. New medication must be started at home and the child must be on the medication 24 hours prior to their return to the center. This includes sunscreen and non-prescription medications. **[See your state's child care licensing regulations for additional guidance.]** All medications brought to the **[program name]** must be left with the **[staff member responsible]**.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Each parent is encouraged to take advantage of volunteer opportunities that may include [list volunteer opportunities]. A volunteer book is located at the front desk which we would ask you to use to sign in and out.

DRESS CODE/CLOTHING

Children should be dressed appropriately for the weather. Please provide a coat (and hat and gloves) as needed on cooler days. Shoes must be worn at all times. All sandals must have an ankle strap. We ask all parents to provide an extra change of clothing to keep at the center site. All clothing should be labeled with your child's name. [Need to determine if diapers need to be provided by the parent or by the Center.]

TOYS

Your child may bring a special small-sized blanket that he or she is attached to, to be used during rest time. Please do NOT send toys from home as they may get lost or broken. Books and CD's/tapes that a child wishes to share with the class should be marked with the child's name and given to the teacher.

HEALTH

Your child's health is very important to us and is also shown to help with center readiness.

Below is a List of the Center's Health Requirements:

- Every child must submit a current immunization record and provide up-to date records throughout the child's enrollment.
- [Other health requirements may be required by your state child care licensing division.]

ILLNESS

According to [your state's child care licensing division], we are unable to accept a child [list all illnesses for which children must be excluded]. When your child has a sore throat, earache, stomach ache, fever, or any suspected contagious illness, he/she should not come to class. Not only will this help your child regain his/her health more quickly, but it will also protect the other children in the program. If your child is going to be absent due to illness, please notify your child's center before 9:00 a.m.

[The language suggested below is an example of wording that could be used. However, it is important to check with your state's child care licensing regulations to ensure you are following proper procedures.]

You will be contacted immediately if your child becomes ill at the center. If you cannot be reached, your emergency contact will be notified to pick up your child. While waiting to be picked up, your child will be allowed to rest in the classroom but will not participate in activities with the other children. For the protection of all, children suspected of having an infectious disease must have a physician's statement and be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to center.

If a life-threatening emergency involving your child occurs while attending [program name], you will be notified and 911 will be called to transport your child to the nearest hospital. If a parent cannot be reached, your emergency contact will be notified. It is important that you notify the center to update your center records whenever there is a change in your address, phone number, or emergency contact person.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

If there is reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected, [program name], has a legal responsibility to report it to the State Child Abuse Hotline or law enforcement officers.

FIELD TRIPS/TRANSPORTATION

Occasionally, preschool classrooms will schedule field trips during the year. Transportation is provided by [bus company] if needed. Some of the field trips will be in walking distance. A permission slip will be provided prior to all field trips. Those children who do not have permission to participate will be accommodated at the center.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

It is important to teach your child about safety. Practical, skills-based training has been demonstrated to improve child pedestrian behavior. Take time to teach your child to:

- Look left, right and left again before crossing the street. Cross when the street is clear, and keep looking both ways while crossing. Walk, don't run.
- Understand and obey traffic signals and signs.
- Cross at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks when available. Do not enter the street from between parked cars or behind bushes or shrubs.
- Stop at the curb or at the edge of the road if there is no curb, before crossing the street. Never run into a street without stopping-even for a ball, pet or any other reason. Darting into the street accounts for the majority of child pedestrian fatalities.
- Walk facing traffic, on sidewalks or paths. Walk as far to the left as possible if there are no sidewalks.
- Watch for cars that are turning or backing up.
- Be sure and supervise your children until they show you they are safe pedestrians.

HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES

From time to time, [program name] will share home activities which you can engage in with your child. The activities will supplement classroom experiences which are designed to promote your child's development. We encourage you to participate in these activities with your child.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE

In order for a child to develop intellectually, it is important for a child to learn acceptance, cooperation, respect, and self-discipline. In order to run a successful classroom, clear and concise rules, limits, and expectations concerning classroom behavior and discipline are explained to the children. Teachers use a variety of methods in the classroom to encourage proper behavior. Redirection, setting limits and using a Safe Place are a few of the most commonly used methods of positive guidance used in order to promote the above characteristics. **Corporal punishment (spanking, hitting or yelling) is not used in the program nor is it allowed on the premises.**

[CONTINUITY OF CARE (IF APPLICABLE)]

We provide continuity of care where each child stays with the same teacher for their first three years in order to develop secure relationships. Research has shown that when very young children remain with the same teacher, it allows them to comfortably explore and learn from their environment.

PARENT/CENTER PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

As parents and teachers, we take the responsibility of caring for your child very seriously. The latest research has shown that the following activities will lead to your child's long-term center success. Therefore, we agree to enter into this partnership to ensure that your child and your family receive the greatest benefit possible from the [program name].

[Program Name] Agrees to:

- To keep parents up to date on any changes that may occur in the classroom or onsite.
- To participate in daily family style dining which provides the children with additional opportunities for learning.
- To participate in [regularly scheduled home visits if applicable] and parent conferences.
- To provide and demonstrate at home-activities designed to promote appropriate developmental milestones and to increase the language and literacy skills needed for future center success.
- To provide volunteer opportunities for parents that will enable them to participate in classrooms and parent meetings on a monthly basis.
- To send home weekly communication that provides updates on a child's progress and that provides information on current happenings on and off site.
- To establish and maintain on-going communication with parents and address any concerns parents may have in a timely and respectful manner.
- To embrace the opportunity to do whatever it takes to make sure that all children are set up for success in the [program name].

Parents Agree to:

[Program name] is a high-quality early childhood program that will partner with you to help prepare your child for success in kindergarten and beyond. Your participation is important to us and to help ensure that your child benefits from the program, we ask you:

- To understand that you are the most important and central person to your child's education.
- To update all contact information, including current residence and emergency contacts on a monthly basis to ensure that we always have current contact information if we need to reach you in case of an emergency.
- To ensure your child attends [program name] every day and arrives on time to participate in the full program that is offered
- To notify the center when your child is ill or will be absent.
- To understand that your child may be removed from the program due to excessive absences.
- To participate in parent meetings.
- To participate in [home visits if applicable] and parent conferences provided by teachers.
- To participate with your child in at home-activities designed to promote language and literacy skills that will ensure future center success.
- To establish and maintain on-going communication with [program name] staff and address any concerns immediately and professionally.
- To review information that is sent home in your child's weekly communication folders.
- To understand that nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks are provided during the center day. Due to health regulations, only food provided and prepared by the center can be served at the center. All outside food is prohibited.
- To keep my child's immunizations and Health exams up to date, handle any medical needs that arise and provide health documentation to classroom staff when necessary.
- To empower yourself to become an active participant in your child's development and education.
- To evolve into an advocate for your family and your child by taking advantage of the opportunities and resources that are provided through [program name].

TRANSITIONS

At [program name], we believe that how a parent and a teacher handle a transition with a child (whether it is a new child coming into the program; a child transferring between classes; or a child transitioning into a public center) is the key factor in minimizing the child's anxiety about the change. Please keep in mind that the more information a parent, teacher and child have in advance, the more likely that the transition will be easier. Below are some pointers to support a smooth transition.

Transitioning into the Program

Separation Anxiety: What can you do to make goodbye easier?

- Talk about changes before they happen. Discuss things that will be the same as well as different.
- Visit the new setting to familiarize your child.
- Accept and validate your child's feelings. Give them words to help them express what they are feeling and experiencing.
- Provide a blanket, picture or other small familiar object for your child to keep at center.
- If possible, prepare your child for your morning departure by giving him/her notice.
- Add a special goodbye ritual to your child's morning routine.
- Assure your child you will return by identifying a specific event in their day, like snack time.
- Make sure to tell your child you are leaving and go-don't delay. Sneaking out can increase your child's feelings of fear and sadness.
- Goodbyes are difficult for parents too! It's okay to stay a little while but try not to linger.

Transferring to a New Class

Once your child is ready to move to a different class or school, your child's teacher will meet with you to develop a transition plan that will aid in a smooth transition from one classroom to the next. [Insert your program's transition plan.]

- Children will transition when they reach the age of [insert age(s)], pending an opening in the next age classroom.
- Parent and child will meet the new classroom staff.
- Children will spend time in their new classroom prior to the actual move.
- The center will determine the classroom placement with consideration of parent's preference.

WEATHER POLICY

There are great benefits of children going outside even when it's cold. Children of all ages need fresh air and exercise.

- Going outside each day helps keep children healthy. It reduces the risk of catching colds or other illnesses because infectious organisms are less concentrated outdoors.
- Sunlight exposure to the skin helps provide a child's body with much needed vitamin D which assists in the growth of strong bones.
- When children can go outside, it instills in them the importance of physical activity and exercise to stay healthy.
- Time spent outside affords children an opportunity to break free from the structure of the indoor classroom, especially for those children who are very active and love the outdoors.

Infants can also participate in outside activities. The following guidelines will be used when considering taking children outside: [The temperatures listed may be different for your state.]

- When temperatures are at or below 32° F, including wind chill factor, outdoor time should be limited to no longer than 15-minute intervals. *Take precautions to make sure that infants and all children stay warm and dry.*

- Coats should be worn if temperatures are below 55° F.
- When temperatures are at or above 100 °F, including heat index, infants should not go outside.
- When temperatures are between 95-100° F, outdoor time should be limited to 15-minute intervals.
Take precautions to make sure that infants and all children stay in shaded areas and are protected with sunscreen and drink plenty of water.

The term “weather permitting” means almost every day, unless there is a weather advisory or public announcement related to extreme cold or heat that may cause health problems. “There is no bad weather; only bad clothes.” Therefore, children should be dressed properly and taken out on most days. This might require that the schedule be changed to allow children outdoor play in the early morning when it will be very hot later in the day. Or it might require that the children have boots or a change of clothes when the grass is wet.

CHILD RECORD POLICY

In accordance with The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), [program name] may disclose, without consent, “directory” information such as a student’s name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, [program name] must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the center not disclose directory information about them. [Program name] must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA.