

PARENT HANDBOOK

THE CHILDREN'S CENTER

At the First Congregational Church, UCC
Woodstock, Connecticut

Dear Parent,

In an effort to avoid misunderstandings regarding The Children's Center's policies, we ask that each family read through the *Parent Handbook* and check with the Director if there are any questions. Some policies and schedules may change during the year, and notification of such changes will be given to all families at that time. After you have read through the *Handbook*, please sign the form below and return it to the Director. It will be kept in your child's folder.

I, _____, have read the Parent Handbook for The Children's Center. I am familiar with the policies listed in the Handbook and agree to comply with all regulations.

_____ Parent's signature

_____ Date

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Children's Center mission is to provide Quality care and education that fosters the social and emotional development of children in a loving, safe and enriching environment that supports the family and the community.

OUR PROGRAM GOALS

It is the objective of The Children's Center to:

- Provide a quality program for all the children at The Children's Center
- Provide a safe, wholesome, caring atmosphere
- Nurture growth in a loving, healthy environment
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities
- Foster interpersonal relationships with children and families
- Provide an atmosphere that encourages respect, responsibility, resourcefulness, and cooperation
- Provide opportunities to continue to educate staff
- Provides educational resources for parents and staff

The staff at The Children's Center will work very hard to provide a positive experience for every child. We will do everything we can to meet the varied needs of the children enrolled. There may be times, however, when we will not be able to meet the needs of a child and or family. In such a case, after exploring the resources available to us, we may determine that our Center is not the best place for a child. We will then work with the family to find childcare arrangements that are better suited to the child and family.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Children's Center offers a variety of services that nurtures growth in a loving, safe and healthy environment. The quality of our program is shaped by a commitment to the physical and emotional well being of the children we serve and maintains the highest standards of care, educational programming, and interpersonal relationships.

The center encourages children to form positive and affirming relationships with adults and other children. Our program has a safe and

challenging atmosphere where families can leave their children confident in the care they will receive.

Additionally, our program is designed to stimulate the development of certain basic values: self worth, curiosity, initiative, creativity, responsibility, resourcefulness, and awareness of others.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING

Organization provides for smooth functioning of a program, which enables staff to devote their energies to the children. To that end, the Center will:

- Develop staff schedules based on adequate caregiver/child ratio.
- Provide regular curriculum planning based on assessed needs of individual children and the group as a whole. Curriculum areas will include, but not be limited to: art, dramatic play, language, large motor development, small motor development, music and movement, cooking, outdoor play, and science.
- Carry out daily and weekly cleaning and disinfecting of eating areas, sleeping areas, equipment and manipulatives.
- Assess children's development on an ongoing basis.
- Communicate with parents in regard to their child's activities, development, eating and sleeping habits, and bodily functions.
- Maintain easily accessible emergency information on all children.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“Child development” encompasses a broad spectrum of behaviors that children display. A child's development must be taken as a whole and then divided into five areas: physical, language, social, cognitive and emotional.

Our program recognizes the interaction of every developmental area. Our goal is to expand a child's frame of reference, enhance competence, and promote creativity and foster individuality.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The environment of The Children's Center is child centered. It is stimulating, inviting, interesting and comfortable. The children are able to make choices throughout their day and have control over their interactions. Safety is a priority; therefore, we take preventative measures to ensure each child's well being.

DAILY SCHEDULE

While planning is essential for quality programming, it is also necessary to be flexible. The following is an outline of a "typical" day.

Preschool Schedule

7:00 - 8:30 Greeting Children & Free Play

Available activities include: dramatic play, fine motor manipulatives, large motor play, library reading and texture table.

8:30 Activity Time

Exploration and use of all learning centers including: art, language arts, math, easel, and games.
Science or Cooking Project Starts.
Other Teacher Directed Activities Begin.

9:00 Snack Begins

10:15 Clean Up

10:30 Topic Related Circle Time

Morning greeting, calendar, weather, singing, finger plays, games and stories, sharing.

11:00 Outdoor Play

(Half day preschool concludes at 11:30)

11:55 Lunch

12:45 Mini Circle Time

Teacher Led Discussion & Story

1:00 Rest

Activities such as writing center, manipulative and books are provided for children who do not nap during this time.

3:00 Snack & Story

3:30 - 5:30 Outdoor & Free Play, Family Groupings and Pick Up

Infant/Toddler Daily Schedule

Please refer to this only as a guideline

7:00	Greeting Children & Free Choice (room exploration)
9:00	Snack
9:15	Diapering/Potty Time
9:30	Group Circle Time – Story, Songs, Finger plays, Calendar
9:50	Craft Project/Activity/Game
10:15	Outdoor Play
11:30	Diapering/Potty Time
11:50	Lunch
12:15	Clean Up
12:30	Naptime/Quiet time (children who do not nap will be provided with quiet activities)
3:00	Diapering/Potty Time
3:15	Snack
3:30	Clean Up
3:40	Outdoor Play
4:30	Diapering/Potty Time
4:45 – 5:30	Outdoor & Free Play, Family Groupings and Pick Up

If it is raining outside, or it is too chilly, the children will not go outside. In some cases the time outside will be shortened

For Infants, feeding, sleeping & diapering activity times are accommodated.

PARENT GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Hours

The Children's Center is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Families arriving earlier than 7:00 a.m. must wait outside until the Center is officially open.

Late Fee Policy

In order to maintain appropriate teacher/child ratios, it is crucial that your child be dropped off and picked up at the specific times for which he/she is registered. If a parent arrives after the appropriate pick-up time, a fee of \$1.00 per minute will be imposed. This is payable on the following business day to the bookkeeper. At the time of late pick-up the parent will be asked to fill out a "late pick-up" form, which will state the expected time of pick-up and the actual time of pick-up.

The teacher present as well as the parent must sign this form. The correct time will be determined by the time on the clock outside the Director's office, which will be checked regularly for accuracy.

Center Closings

The Center is open year-round, except for the following days: New Year's Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July Fourth, Labor Day, one week during July (you will be informed of the exact dates during the previous fall), Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving, the day before the November Church's Christmas Fair, Christmas Day, and the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. *Tuition is due for the days the Center is closed, with the exception of the week in July and the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, which are tuition free.*

Snow Closings

It is our intent to meet the childcare needs of working parents. For this reason, we will remain open under all weather conditions unless they are unsafe for parents, children, and staff. If driving conditions are hazardous, the Center may have a delayed opening and/or an early closing, or may be closed completely. The decision to delay opening until 8:30 a.m. will be made and broadcast by 6:30 a.m. If it is necessary to remain closed all day, this decision will be made and broadcast by 7:30 a.m. In the event of an early closing, a decision will be made and broadcast by 12:00 noon, and all parents will be contacted by telephone.

All delays and closing will be announced on radio station WINY (Putnam, 1350AM). Since a decision to close the Center may not be made until 7:30 a.m. please continue to listen to your radio for updated reports.

WEEKLY TUITION DOES NOT CHANGE BECAUSE OF SNOW CLOSING. EVERY EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO KEEP THE CENTER OPEN.

ATTENDANCE

Parents must call The Children's Center to inform the staff that their child will be absent for the day. Tuition must be paid regardless of attendance. If your child will be absent, please call the Center as early in the day as possible to notify the staff.

TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

Please notify the Center, in writing, two weeks prior to termination of enrollment. You will receive a final statement of account from the Financial Administrator indicating your balance due. Enrollment is not considered terminated until we receive written notification.

PAYMENT OF FEES

1. There is a registration fee of \$25.00. The first two weeks tuition is due when the child begins daycare.
2. Tuition is due every two weeks. It is billed on Friday for the following two weeks' attendance and is due the following Monday or on the first day of the child's scheduled day. You will receive a payment schedule for the year outlining when payments are due. If payment is not received by the due date, your child will not be accepted at the Center until payment has been made.
3. There is a \$10.00 late fee for any payments not received on the appropriate date. If the fee plus payment is not received by 5:30 p.m. on Monday or the first day of the child's scheduled day, the child will not be accepted at the Center on Tuesday or the next scheduled day, until payment is made.
4. There is a discount of 10% for a second child in the family. The adjustment will be made on the lower tuition. A 15% discount is given for a third child.
5. Scholarship applications are available in the office.

DEPARTURE

When an unauthorized adult is to pick up a child, the staff must receive a note or telephone call from the parent prior to the pick-up, or the child will not be released to the person. Identification will be required at time of pick-up.

When someone whom the staff has not met arrives to pick up a child, the staff will:

1. Check to see if the parent has called or written to give permission for the person to pick up the child.
2. Check the sign-in sheet to see whose name is written in under the “pick-up” column.
3. Check the “authorization to release” form to see whether the person’s name is on the list. If it does not appear on the release form, and prior parental permission has not been given, the parent will be contacted by the Center staff before the person will be permitted to leave the Center with the child. Picture identification will also be used.

PARENTAL VISITATION

In accordance with the State of Connecticut Department of Health Services regulation, parents shall be permitted to visit the facility at all times. The Center has extended this regulation to include visiting the children as well as the facility. The Center will not prevent any parent from visiting his/her child unless:

- A copy of a divorce settlement stating specific restrictions to visitation is on file at the Center
- Or**
- A copy of a court order restricting contact between parent and child is on file at the Cent. When another adult wishes to visit a child at the Center, the staff must receive prior written consent from the parent.

MANDATED REPORTER

The State of Connecticut requires that all members of day care institutions be on the lookout for, and report to the State, any and all suspected cases of child abuse. The Children's Center is, therefore, obligated to report to the State any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN

During the times when both staff and parents are in the Center, it can be very confusing as to who is responsible for the children. The following guidelines should be observed:

1. While dropping off a child, the parent is responsible for delivering the child to the classroom and making a teacher aware that the child has arrived. At this time, the staff assumes responsibility for the child.
2. While picking up a child, the parent assumes responsibility for the child as soon as he/she has been removed from the group. Parents and children are, however, expected to follow Center rules for behavior while still at the Center.
3. When a parent comes to the Center to visit, either for a planned occasion or a unscheduled visit during Center hours, the child remains the responsibility of the staff in the classroom
4. When parents, staff and children are present for a scheduled event outside of regular Center hours, the children are the responsibility of the parents. Parents are still expected to abide by Center policies and rules, as for as their children are concerned, while at the Center.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND STAFF

To ensure confidentiality and to make sure information regarding your child is handled appropriately, the following guidelines have been outlined for communicating with staff:

1. If you have a question regarding your child's daily activity such as eating, sleeping, etc., you may ask a teacher.
2. If you have question regarding a change in schedule, having someone else pick up or drop off your child, a special event for your child's birthday, etc., please speak with the Director (or with a teacher, if the Director is unavailable.)

3. If you have a concern or question about your child's progress, general behavior, and/or development, please contact your child's teacher to arrange an appointment if necessary.
4. If you have a question or concern regarding the Center's policies, please contact the Director.
5. The Children's Center will attempt to send a newsletter two times a month with information on what your child is doing during the week. The summer may have fewer notices but at least one a month.

NOTICES

Each adult picking up a child will be responsible for checking the children's personal storage space (cubby) for items that need to go home. Also, your child's mailbox needs to be checked daily for individual notices. When notices require a response, we will appreciate having the information returned as soon as possible. If emergency numbers or other vital information should change throughout the year, please notify your child's teacher immediately so we can update our records.

DISCIPLINE

We, at the Children's Center, strongly believe in positive methods of discipline. These methods promote self-control, positive self-esteem and cooperation.

If a child behaves inappropriately, he/she is redirected. (The teacher may say, "Blocks are not for throwing but for building," or "Let's find another toy to play with/" If the behavior is repeated the child is given a warning. ("If you continue to ... then you will be showing me that you need to leave this area and choose something else to do.") Now the child has had a limit set and it must be followed through. This means that if the inappropriate behavior continues, then the child must, as warned, leave the area. If the child does not respond to the above alternatives, or acts aggressively towards another child or staff member, the child is removed from the group to a quiet area of the room where he/she is able to think, perhaps play alone for a while and regain self-control. After a short time, a teacher talks with the child about what happened and the child is encouraged to rejoin the same group.

At no time will a child be made to feel like a bad person. Positive language and discipline will ALWAYS be used. NO PHYSICAL FORM OF DISCIPLINE - HITTING, PUSHING, ETC. WILL EVER BE USED.

Any child who hurts other children may be asked to find another day care setting that is more appropriate.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Please send your child to the Center in washable play clothes. Although our paint and markers are washable, we will not inhibit a child's creativity and exploration by limiting his/her activities to neat things. Also, every child must have a complete set of extra clothing to be kept in his/her cubby at all times. Accidents happen!

Sheets for the cots are requested for rest time. If any other bedding is desired which will make rest time more pleasant, you are encouraged to bring such items from home. All bedding items must go home on Fridays to be laundered. ALL ITEMS FROM HOME MUST BE CLEARLY LABELED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.

In order to prevent conflicts, we ask that children utilize the many toys provided by the Center and refrain from bringing in personal toys from home. (This does not include comfort items such as blankets, dolls, or stuffed animals used at rest time.)

MEALS

Each child must bring a lunch, complete with beverage, from home. A refrigerator is available. We encourage awareness of the nutritional value of lunches that you provide for your child. Please try to send at least one protein, one grain, a fruit or vegetable, and a dairy product.

FOODS TO AVOID

Drinks: Hi-C, soda, fruit DRINKS, (as opposed to JUICES, which have no added sugar) and Kool-Aid.

Foods: Donuts, Twinkies, cupcakes, high sugar content desserts, jam, candy, gum and nuts.

Nutritious snacks will be provided by the Center and will be served mornings and afternoons.

BIRTHDAYS

If you would like your child to celebrate his/her birthday at The Children's Center, please refrain from bringing in party favors so other children who may not be able to provide birthday favors won't feel uncomfortable. Some other great ways to celebrate include bringing in your child's favorite story to be read to the group; bringing in a treat to share; or donating an inexpensive book to the Center in honor of your child's birthday. (Please remember that these are all *optional*.)

OUTDOOR PLAY

Outdoor play is essential to the all-around good health of the children. We spend time outside, either going for short walks or playing on the playground, every day, weather permitting. PLEASE DRESS YOUR CHILD ACCORDINGLY. Even on cold days during the winter, we make every effort to get outside so the children have a chance to run and get fresh air. On bitterly cold days the Director and teachers will make the decision as to the safety and suitability of outdoor play. It is actually healthier for children to get out in the fresh air than it is to remain inside in a warm, stuffy classroom, breathing everyone else's germs!!

We are sometimes asked to allow a child to remain inside if he/she has been ill. Because outdoor play is so important, and it is usually not the direct cause of illness, it is our policy to have all children participate in outdoor play. If a child is too sick to play outside, then he or she is too sick to be at the Center and would benefit from extra rest at home.

ILLNESS

It is very difficult to know when a child is too sick to be at the Center. Parents and staff alike must rely on vague symptoms and sometimes-awkward criteria for making the decision. It is our responsibility here at the Center to provide a safe and healthy environment for ALL children. In order to do that, we must exclude ill children from our program. We do not have the facility, resources or training to care for ill children while maintaining a quality program for the rest of the children.

We will exclude children from the program who: are too ill to participate fully and comfortably, may have a communicable illness, or cannot be cared for adequately by the staff.

If we must send a child home due to illness, it is our expectation that the child will **remain at home until he/she has recovered** sufficiently to return to full activity at the Center.

The staff conducts daily health checks on all children as they arrive at the center. Children who are obviously ill and not feeling well may not be permitted to remain at the Center. The CENTER STAFF will make the decision whether or not to accept responsibility for the care of a child who appears mildly ill (i.e. runny nose, cough, etc). If the staff agrees to accept this responsibility, the parent will be contacted throughout the day to update the child's condition. Parents may be asked to come get their child early if the child's condition deteriorates or he/she requires more care than is possible in this setting.

Some specific conditions for which children will be excluded from the Center are:

- Symptoms of a confirmed case of a contagious condition such as: chicken pox, impetigo (infected sores), scarlet fever (red rash, high fever, sore throat), scabies (itchy rash, fever), pediculosis (head lice), pinworms (intense rectal itching, especially at night), conjunctivitis. The child may return to the Center after the condition is no longer contagious. This will vary, depending on the condition and treatment used. Check with your child's teacher or a Director regarding the policy for specific conditions.

- Fevers: a Child will be excluded from the Center when he/she has an elevated temperature and exhibits other symptoms of illness. The height of fever does not correlate to the seriousness of the illness and will not necessarily be a determining factor in our decision to accept or exclude a child from our program.
- Vomiting and/or Diarrhea: Vomiting and diarrhea can both be very dangerous conditions, since children can easily become dehydrated. If a child has vomited and is exhibiting other symptoms, the child should remain at home. Many things can cause diarrhea, and it is often difficult to determine the exact cause. A child with loose, watery or explosive stools that have increased in frequency will be excluded from the Center when it becomes impossible to contain, or the child exhibits additional symptoms of illness.

It is important to keep your child at home to minimize the spread of illness and to restore his/her health to enable full participation in Center activities.

One of our primary goals is to provide a safe and healthy environment for your children. If we allow children to attend when they are not well, then we are not providing such an environment. Our decisions are based on what we feel is best not only for **your child** but best for all the children and staff as well.

The Nurse Consultant helps to outline policies regarding health issues, and visits the Center regularly to observe and/or check the children.

MEDICATIONS

If it is necessary for the staff to administer medication to a child during the day, the following procedures **must be followed**:

1. Written permission from the prescribing physician and written consent from the parent must be presented.
2. Medication must be in the original container, and clearly labeled (child's name, name of medication, dosage, date.).
3. Medication and authorization form must be handed directly to a staff person, not sent with the child's belongings.

4. Standing orders from a physician will be accepted only for over the counter medications (i.e. Tylenol, cough medicine, etc.)
5. For the safety of the children, staff will not administer any medication until ALL of the procedures have been followed.

Also, for the safety of the children all medication administered at the Center will be logged, and no first dose of a medication will be given. If a child refuses to take the medication, and it is felt by the staff that forcing medication and/or restraining a child to administer it could cause injury to the child, the medication will not be given, and the parent will be contacted.

If a parent is unable to comply with the above procedure, the parent is welcome to come to the Center to administer medications to his/her child at any time.

Notes or questions about this handbook: