

PARENT HANDBOOK



The Children's Center

A journey towards learning

7533 Old Alexandria Ferry Road, Clinton, MD 20735

Phone: (301) 856-1680

email: thechildrensctr@gmail.com

web: www.thechildrensctr.com

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I The Children's Center Open Door Policy

We encourage parents to take an active part in the Center's activities. We encourage parents to come in at any time.

II Philosophy & Inclusion

The Children's Center, Inc. is dedicated to the concept of meeting the needs of the young child. It is a childcare facility that accepts responsibility for the care and education of the young child, this includes the needs of children with disabilities or special health care needs. We believe that "play is children's work"; therefore, all endeavors of teaching are from an informal, relaxed perspective. We emphasize that learning ought to be fun and that care daily should instill the adventure of discovery and the delight of learning in a nurturing environment. We will work with families and special service providers to meet the needs of all children.

III Objectives

Intellectual Development

We strive to present children with a rich opportunity to be their age, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically.

Group Interaction

We strive to present children with the opportunity to interact with each other on a regular and supervised basis.

Self-Awareness

We strive to present children with the opportunity to become aware of themselves both as a member of a group and as an individual.

Environment

We strive to present children with the opportunity to explore their community and their natural surroundings.

IV Licensing

The Children's Center is licensed by the State of Maryland Department of Human Resources.

V Procure

We use Procure, a childcare management software that simplifies all your childcare program operations so you can focus on what matters – the children.

VI Schedule

- a. The Center normal operating hours are 07:00 am to 05:30 pm but may follow a modified schedule.
- b. To maintain continuity of the class program, it is imperative that your child arrives before the 9:30 am cutoff time. Exceptions will only be extended to children with doctor's notes or to children accompanied by other forms of written explanation. There will be a 5-minute grace period after which, a late fee of \$1:00 per minute will be assessed.
- c. The maximum hours a child may attend per day is 10
- d. Each child must be checked in & out of the Center. Please notify the office upon arrival and departure
- e. A late fee will be charged when arriving to pick your child up after the designated 10 hours
- f. You will be required to pay the late fee of \$25.00 after the closing hour and \$1.00 per minute upon arrival
- g. Please notify us if you anticipate being late
- h. The Center is closed on all Federal holidays. Please see our list of scheduled closings posted in the front office and on our website
- i. If the Federal government is closed, the Center will be closed. If the Federal government has liberal leave or unscheduled leave, we will open at 9 a.m. If none of these two conditions occur the Center retains the right to close based on our local weather conditions
- j. If the Center closes early, please arrive on time to pick up your child so that no one is placed in a compromising position.

Tuition

The tuition for Infant/Toddler is	\$370 per week
The tuition for 2-year-olds is	\$265 per week.
The tuition for 3-year-olds is	\$265 per week.
The tuition for 4-year-olds is	\$265 per week.
The tuition for part-timers is	\$175 per week.
The Drop-In rate is (only for prior students)	\$75 per day.

Tuition is due on Monday morning.

- Non-refundable registration fee of **\$50.00** will be required.
- One week's deposit is required for all new enrollments. This deposit is returned upon proper withdrawal notice and while the account remains in good standing
- 2 weeks of notice is requested upon withdrawal of your child
- There is a **\$20.00** late fee for tuition paid after Tuesday
- A **\$35.00** fee will be charged for all returned checks.
- In our effort to provide the best possible care for your child, we implement a great deal of planning and organizing. This is essential for the growth and stability of our center; therefore, **tuition is based on enrollment and not attendance.** Tuition must be paid even if your child is not in attendance.

VII Late Fee

Please note that the fee is due before the services are provided or on Monday of the week of services.

- If the tuition is late by a week, the center will notify parents/guardians
- If tuition is late by two weeks, the center will initiate a suspension notice and the child can only return upon full payment.
- At the end of the third week of no tuition payment, a Termination notice will be issued. A child will only be allowed to return upon complete payments, space availability & the registration fee.

VIII Lunch and Snack

A healthy diet can make a world of difference in a young child. Good eating habits are not something we are born with, but rather something we learn. The Center emphasizes foods with less sugar, preservatives, fat, and sodium and we encourage the children to try a variety of healthy foods.

- a. Two nutritious snacks are provided each day. You may pack additional snacks if you wish but remember to keep them healthy.
- b. The center has ceased catered lunch since the COVID days so please send daily lunch.
- c. The center follows a no heat able policy, so any food brought from home should require no heating.
- d. Open Cereal boxes are not allowed so please make sure cereal is in a plastic container with lid.

IX Program

Our program is structured but informal, we run a play-based process and development curriculum where we teach language arts, math, science, and social studies in a “hands-on” manner through a variety of ways that are listed as follows:

Arts and Crafts

Children will engage in activities such as painting, coloring, cutting, papier-mâché, and a range of other artistic media that encourage self-expression and introduce them to artistic traditions from diverse cultures.

Dramatic Play

Your child will act out stories and poems and participate in role playing.

Field Trips

Your child may take trip to local stores, farms, walks, parks, and other places geared towards the young child. Field trips may occur several times a year for children 3-years-old and older. Parent participation is strongly encouraged.

Free Play

Organized free play is one of our best sources of learning. Each classroom is designed in a way that allows your child to choose from block play, water play, housekeeping, a science area, manipulatives, and a variety of other centers of play that encourage learning through self-discovery.

Language Development

Your child will have stories read to them daily and constant adult verbalization, and in this way, gain the ability to communicate verbally. Children are in a print rich environment, where writing and reading are strongly encouraged.

Music

Your child will sing, dance, and have the chance to play a variety of instruments. They will be exposed to many different types of music from different times and cultures.

Physical Activities

Your child will be encouraged to climb, jump, run, walk, and ride in appropriate environments.

Science and Nature

Your child will be exposed to the natural world around them through exposure to various animals, plants, and environments.

Cooking

Your child will participate in the preparation of a variety of foods such as, popcorn, eggs, salads, etc.

Screen Time

At The Children's Center, we recognize that young children learn best through active, hands-on exploration and meaningful interactions with caregivers and peers. In accordance with Maryland childcare licensing regulations and developmentally appropriate practices, we maintain a limited and purposeful approach to screen time.

General Guidelines

- ❖ Screen time is not a regular part of our daily schedule and is used only occasionally to support curriculum-related goals or for special events.
- ❖ Children under age two are not exposed to any screen media.
- ❖ For children age two and older, screen time (including video, TV, or interactive technology) is limited to no more than 30 minutes per week, and only when the content directly supports learning objectives.
- ❖ Passive viewing (e.g., watching entertainment programs) is not permitted during operating hours.
 - Educational Use Only
 - When used, screen time must:
 - Be age-appropriate, educational, and aligned with learning topics or classroom investigations.
 - Encourage active engagement, such as pausing for discussion or prompting related activities.
 - Be supervised by a staff member who facilitates the learning experience and ensures it is used constructively.

Alternative Activities

Children are always offered an alternative activity if they do not wish to participate in screen-related experiences. We prioritize activities that promote language, literacy, physical activity, creativity, and social-emotional development.

Family Input

We respect family preferences regarding screen exposure. Families are welcome to communicate any specific requests or restrictions regarding their child's participation in screen-based activities.

**This policy is aligned with Maryland EXCELS guidelines and MSDE's recommendations on appropriate technology use in early childhood programs. **

X Clothing

Comfort, washing ability, and the weather should be your main considerations when your child is dressed. Children should not be concerned with keeping clean. Dress your child for here as you would dress them at home to play.

- a. A complete change of clothing must always be kept at the center. Make sure all clothing is labeled with your child's name.
- b. Children are required to spend time outdoors. It is important to dress your child in the appropriate attire for outdoor play.

XI Nap Time

Your child will rest from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will need to bring in a small blanket and crib sheet, labeled, and in a container. The blankets should be taken home at the end of every week to be washed and then returned on Monday.

XII Health & Safety

Child's health and safety is the most important part of our care, and we take immense efforts to make sure that a child in our care is always safe. We take pride in providing a safe and healthy environment in our center:

- ❖ Adequate supervision of qualified staff is a priority while playing outside or during learning activities inside. We follow all guidelines for fire and disaster safety.
- ❖ We conduct periodic fire-drills
- ❖ We continuously keep our center sanitized with bleach, during and after an activity or before and after using toilet, hand washing procedure is followed by all children and staff.
- ❖ Entrance to the center is always locked and secure. It can only be opened by a key from outside or via the unlock buzzer from inside the center.

Children are required by the Health Department to have outdoor play. If your child is too sick to go outside, then he/she is too sick to be at school. Should your child be too sick to attend school, please send a note when your child returns stating the reason for his or her absence. Also inform us, if your child is on any type of medication, as it may affect your child's behavior during the day.

If your child gets sick during the day and you are called, please come immediately. If you cannot be reached, one of the other people listed in our files for emergency notification will be contacted to pick up your child.

Please keep your child home if the following occur, also your child may be sent home for the following:

- ❖ They are too ill to play outside.
- ❖ They have a fever.
- ❖ They have a productive cough or a thick yellow or green discharge from their nose.
- ❖ It has been less than 24 hours since an episode of diarrhea or vomiting.
- ❖ They were treated less than 24 hours ago with antibiotics for an infectious condition.
- ❖ They have been exposed to and contracted communicable disease, and the recommended incubation period has not passed.
- ❖ They have any condition that is contagious to others.
- ❖ Standard once a month fire drill is performed to ensure that the staff as well as the children are aware of the evacuation procedures in case of an emergency.

Medication

Due to insurance specifications, if your child must receive medication during the day, you must provide a signed consent form for the staff to administer medication to your child.

Health Forms

The Health Department provides us with specific forms which you are required to have filled out and signed by your physician. These forms must be completed before your child may attend. Your emergency numbers are vital to your child's safety, so please keep the Center informed of all changes e.g. phone # etc.

Potty Training

While The Children's Center encourages parents/guardians to potty train their child before enrollment, the staff at Children Center, at no extra charge, will help your child in the two-year classroom with Potty training. Children older than 2 years of age who are not fully potty trained will not be admitted to the center nor will they be allowed into the 3-year-old classroom.

XIII Newsletter

Each month you will receive a calendar and newsletter from your child's classroom. This will inform you of important activities and unit topics each month. Please take time to read over the information that is sent home so that you can stay informed and involved in your child's class.

XIV Discipline Policy

The Center operates on the premise that young children cannot be “bad”. The types of inappropriate behavior most often seen in young children (tantrums, refusal to cooperate, hitting other children, and failure to follow rules) are usually the result of the child’s developmental level. For this reason, the Center uses the following guidelines for promoting positive behavior and for responding to problem behavior:

Environment

Our environment is safely arranged to allow freedom of movement and choice with abundant supplies and duplicates of favorite toys and activities.

Redirection

With upset toddlers or very young preschoolers, we may offer a substitute toy or engage them in some other activity to quickly resolve problems or conflicts. When in need, children are redirected towards activities that are in line with their needs.

Language

Children can become frustrated by their lack of verbal skills necessary to solve problems. Children are guided and encouraged to use their words.

Rewarding Positive Behavior

We all need acknowledgment for a job well done. We encourage positive behavior with a smile, hug, and “Good job!”. We try to catch the children doing something right.

Time Out

We all need time out from time to time and sometimes we find it necessary to place children on time out. This is used as a last resort and not to humiliate the child. It is a calming down time. Children are made to sit only for a few minutes and are never isolated. We use this time to discuss what has happened and find a more appropriate solution to the problem. Discipline is a learning process and not something that should be painful, degrading, or humiliating. It is important that we nurture a positive self-conception in our children! The Center feels that hollering, threatening, or hitting children is emotionally and physically abusive and will not be tolerated. Discipline is a challenge to everyone, if you feel you need help, you can talk to your child’s teacher or to the director & their useful articles & books in the office.

- While the Center respects the right of every parent to discipline his/her own child in a personal way (except where child abuse or neglect is concerned), parents who are in the Center may not hit, spank, belittle, or raise their voices to other people’s children or their own. This is upsetting to everyone and disturbs the peace of the Center.
- The Center will inform parent/guardians once a child has been disruptive. After notification, if the behavior of the child doesn’t improve where the child remains disruptive, the center reserves the right to put the child on probation.
- The Center acknowledges that our program may not meet the needs of every child and therefore reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of a child that remains disruptive and presents a threat and danger to him or herself and/or to other children.

XV Fundraisers

Several times a year we sponsor fundraisers to purchase special equipment which we would not be able to purchase otherwise. Your cooperation and enthusiasm in selling the product are what keep our tuition affordable.

XVI Miscellaneous Information

- a. Please inform us by phone or a note if someone else is to pick up your child.
- b. Please accompany your child in and out of the building. Be sure that the office is notified of your child's arrival/departure.
- c. An accident report will be filled out for major scratches, bumps, and bruises. A copy of this will be given to you. If your child suffers a serious injury, you will be notified immediately.
- d. Does your child have special needs? If yes, a copy of your child's IFSP/ IEP is requested.
- e. While any major policy updates are directly communicated with parents, the updated handbook is always maintained on our website, so we encourage you to check it from time to time.

XVII Conferences and Communications

Please feel free to discuss any ideas or problems with us at any time. Your children's teacher is available for discussion as well as the owner or director, so please inform us of your suggestions or concerns whenever you need to. In addition to general input, we also have the option for parents to schedule formal conferences with senior staff, teachers and/or management. Conferences can be scheduled at the parents' request through the main office. Our available conference hours are between 1:00 & 3:00 pm Monday-Friday. Please note that 20 minutes is generally the time allotted for each conference.

XVIII Guide to regulated Childcare

For questions, concerns or to file a complaint contact your Regional Office, please familiarize yourself with:

https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/2/guide_to_regulated_child_care.pdf

Please fill out the following and return this page to the office to be placed with your child's paperwork.

I have read The Children's Center's Handbook and fully understand and agree to abide by The Children's Center's policies and regulations.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____