

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Parent Handbook

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**Mission Statement, Goals, and Philosophy
Policy No. 1**

We strive to create a compassionate school family culture that provides a safe learning environment for the children of Early Care and Education. We believe that children experience the greatest growth when they feel safe and connected.

We acknowledge the importance of teaching the children of our future a skill set to ensure self-regulation and problem solving. We work together; teacher, child, and parent, to establish routines and rituals that provide predictability and consistency within our classrooms.

Our Mission Statement, Goals, and Philosophy help guide the decisions made by Early Care and Education in the areas of administration, family engagement, and the overall program to provide an optimal learning environment for the children.

**Welcome
Policy No. 2**

Welcome to Early Care and Education! We are delighted to partner with you in providing a nurturing, holistic environment where your child can grow, learn, and thrive. This parent handbook is essential to our center's policies, procedures, and philosophy. Clear communication and mutual understanding of expectations are vital to ensuring a successful experience for families and our team members. Working together creates a supportive, safe, and enriching environment that fosters each child's physical, social, emotional, and academic development. We look forward to building a solid relationship with your family throughout your child's journey with us.

The School Director at each school is responsible for the daily management of the center. In the absence of the School Director, the Director of Education, Director of Administration and/or the Director of STEM Station is the designated person in charge. A designated individual may also be in charge in the absence of the Leadership Team mentioned above.

Throughout this Parent Handbook, the Director of Education, the Director of Administration, and/or the Director of STEM Station will take the place of the School Director when the School Director is not available.

**Licensing Information
Policy No. 3**

3.1 State Licensing Authority

Minimum Standards 746.501(22,23)

Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulations

A full printed copy of the licensing regulations/standards can be found at the front desk.

Parents may also find the licensing regulations on the internet at the following link

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/protective-services/ccl/min-standards/chapter-746-centers.pdf>

Parents may also review a copy of the childcare center's most recent licensing inspection report posted on the Parent Communication board in the front entry or on the licensing website listed above. Parents may reach childcare regulations by using the website above or calling/visiting the local offices listed below:

Dallas County - (214) 583-4253

8700 North Stemmons Freeway Suite 104

Dallas, TX 75247

Denton County - (940) 381-3400

535 S Loop 288 Suite 2001

Denton, TX 76205

Tarrant County - (817) 321-8604

1501 Circle Drive Suite 310

Fort Worth, TX 76119

These regulations/standards are included as part of this Parent Handbook as if they were written herein and it is the responsibility of every parent to read, understand, and follow these regulations.

Employees and parents are required to uphold the regulations and standards issued by The Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulations Minimum Standards at all times.

Employees and parents are required to immediately notify the School Director of any violations of licensing regulations by any person in the organization.

3.2 National Accreditation

National Accreditation Commission

A full printed copy of the accreditation standards can be found at the front desk. For additional information on The National Accreditation Commission visit the website below <https://www.earlylearningleaders.org/accreditation/accreditation-overview/>

These standards are included as part of this Parent Handbook as if they were written herein.

Employees and parents are required to uphold the standards and guidelines published by The National Accreditation Commission at all times.

Employees and parents are required to immediately notify the School Director of any violations of the accreditation standards by any person in the organization.

3.3 Texas Rising Star

A fully printed copy of the Texas Rising Star standards can be found at the front desk. For additional information on Texas Rising Star visit the website below <https://texasrisingstar.org/parents/>

These standards are included as part of this Parent Handbook as if they were written herein.

Employees and parents are required to uphold the standards and guidelines published by Texas Rising Star at all times.

Employees and parents are required to immediately notify the School Director of any violations of the Texas Rising Star standards by any person in the organization.

Enrollment Policy No. 4

Enrollment at Early Care and Education is open to children from six weeks to thirteen years of age. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability, and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability.

When visiting our center for the first time, parents will be asked to complete an Early Care and Education Inquiry Form. A state/government issued ID will be required to verify information on the Inquiry Form before a tour will be given and prior to enrollment paperwork passed out to the parent. Early Care and Education front office staff will make a copy of the state/government ID for our records.

Parents can apply for enrollment of their child in Early Care and Education by completing the Enrollment Application and paying the registration fee. The registration fee is non-refundable. A certified birth certificate for each child must be presented with the Enrollment Application. The birth certificate must match the information provided on the Enrollment Application unless an applicable court order is provided. Early Care and Education front office staff will make a copy of the birth certificate for our records. In the event that a court order is on file for the child being enrolled, a certified copy of the court order must be attached to the Enrollment Application. Early Care and Education front office staff may once again ask for a state/government ID to verify that the information on the Enrollment Application matches the birth certificate and/or court orders.

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the completed Enrollment Application, Physician's Statement, Tuition Express Application, Income Eligibility Form, Emergency Release Form, Food Program Enrollment Form, signed Tuition Agreement, registration fee, current immunization records or notarized immunization exemption affidavit, and signed Parent Handbook receipt.

The Enrollment Application and Tuition Agreements are not meant to serve as contracts guaranteeing service for any duration.

Early Care and Education reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

Continued enrollment at Early Care and Education is contingent upon the parent's, emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures of

Early Care and Education as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition.

Parents are required to notify Early Care and Education immediately should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or at any time thereafter change. Changes may be submitted via email to the School Director or Director of

Administration. Failure to maintain up-to-date information may result in the child(ren) being disenrolled from the program and forfeiture of any registration fee and/or tuition.

Tuition Policy No. 5

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians are required to sign a Tuition Agreement prior to enrollment of their child in Early Care and Education. Parents are required to indicate to whom all billing information and correspondence are to be addressed.

5.1 Payments

Payment is due on Monday of each current week as specified in the current rate schedule. Tuition is payable according to the tuition schedule whether or not the child attends. All parents must complete the Tuition Express Application and be set up on ACH draft for tuition payments.

Tuition does not include fees for field trips and extracurricular activities such as gymnastics, dance, and sporting activities.

5.2 Late Fees

A \$15 per day late fee will be added for all non-payments. If tuition and/or late fees are not paid by Friday, then the child cannot return to care the following Monday until paid.

5.3 Subsidized Care

Early Care and Education does accept childcare subsidies. Parents of a subsidized child must complete all required paperwork and submit it on time to Texas Workforce Child Care Assistance to continue enrollment at Early Care and Education. The Texas Workforce Child Care Assistance must authorize care prior to enrollment of the child. Parents of subsidized children are also required to sign a Parent Share of Cost Agreement, agreeing to be personally responsible for the payment of tuition, in the event they become ineligible to receive childcare subsidies.

5.4 Discounts

Early Care and Education offers a multiple-child discount for one or more siblings enrolled during the same school year. The youngest sibling pays the full tuition rate and each additional child's tuition is discounted 10% per child. Early Care and Education also offers a 10% discount for parents who have served in the military as well as

parents who are actively employed with an Independent School District. Parents will be required to provide a copy of identification such as a military ID or ISD badge to receive the discount. Discounts are only applicable when tuition payments are made on time. The full tuition rate, plus any additional late fees, will be charged when tuition payments

are late as per the late tuition policy stated above. Only one discount may be applied to the family's account at a time.

5.5 Vacation/Absent Credit

If your child is absent for five consecutive days, you may request an absent credit equal to one half of your weekly tuition. **Parents must request an absent credit in writing by email prior to the absence.**

5.6 ACH Returns

All families are required to be set up on ACH draft for tuition payments. ACH drafts are automatically run on any account with a balance on Monday mornings. In the event that a draft is returned by the bank, a \$35 insufficient return fee will be automatically added to the account. Upon notification of the return, the family will be notified and payment by credit card or money order will be immediately due. If payment is not received upon notification of the return, then a \$15 per day late payment penalty will be added to the account for each day the balance is not paid starting with the day tuition was originally due.

Families will be unable to return to care on Monday following the notification of the return until the account is paid in full.

In the event that the family has three or more ACH returns in a 12-month period, a deposit equal to two weeks tuition will be required to continue care. In the event that the family has five ACH returns in a 12-month period, enrollment at the school will be terminated.

For families with subsidized care, if the account has three or more ACH Returns in a 12-month period, you will be required to pay your full monthly copay by the 1st of the month to continue care.

5.7 Extended Closure Tuition Policy

Should the school be required to close for unexpected reasons, full tuition will be due for the first two weeks of closure. If the center is closed for longer than two weeks, 50% of tuition will be due. Parents may give a 30-day notice to withdraw from the program if they feel it is in the best interest of their family. 50% of the tuition will be due during the 30-day notice period. A full registration fee will be required to re-enroll in the program.

5.8 Non-Payment

Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at Early Care and Education, however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the School Director immediately. If alternative arrangements for payment are approved, you will be notified by the School Director.

5.9 Annual Registration Fee

A registration fee is required upon enrollment with Early Care and Education. The registration fee is an annual fee due on the first Monday of September each year. Registration fees are \$150 for one child or \$200 for multi-child families. If the registration fee was paid within 90 days of the due date, then no additional registration fee will be billed until the following year. Registration fees are non-refundable.

**Confidentiality
Policy No. 6**

Within Early Care and Education, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of Early Care and Education who have a “need to know” in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about employees, other parents, and/or children will not be shared with parents, as Early Care and Education strives to protect everyone’s right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, or other health related information of anyone associated with Early Care and Education.

Outside of Early Care and Education, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided by law. Parents will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of Early Care and Education, people with whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information.

Any parent who violates the Confidentiality Policy will not be permitted on school property thereafter. Refer to the policy regarding Parents Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding dis-enrollment of a child when a parent is prohibited from accessing school property.

You may observe children at our center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees of Early Care and Education are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

**Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect
Policy No. 7**

Minimum Standards 746.501(26)

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Early Care and Education are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of Early Care and Education are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behaviors, or conditions prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Early Care and Education take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the employees of Early Care and Education cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in “good faith.”

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child’s body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season.
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate meals including a drink for your child - Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time - Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child.
- Sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

If parents feel they need assistance with possible child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, we encourage you to get help. Please call the National Parent Hotline at 1-855-427-2736 or visit <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Am/parents.asp> or <http://www.getparentingtips.com>

The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you would like to report any suspected abuse or neglect.

**Parent Code of Conduct
Policy No. 8**

Early Care and Education requires the parents of enrolled children at all times to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of Early Care and Education is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Early Care and Education but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. **Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on school property thereafter.** Please refer to the Policy on Parent's Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding disenrollment of the child when a parent is prohibited from accessing school property.

8.1 Swearing/ Cursing

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on school property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed towards employees of Early Care and Education.

8.2 Threatening of Employees, Children, Other Parents, or Adults Associated with Early Care and Education

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today's society Early Care and Education cannot afford to sit idly while threats are made. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the school will not assume the risk of a second chance. **PARENTS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.**

8.3 Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Child or Other Children at Early Care and Education

While Early Care and Education does not necessarily support nor condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the childcare center. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish

another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or School Director. Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavioral concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or director will address the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the School Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our school have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center.

8.4 Smoking

For the health of all Early Care and Education employees, children, and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on school property. Parents are prohibited from smoking in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of Early Care and Education. Parents who are smoking in their cars must dispose of the cigarette prior to entering the parking lot.

8.5 Violations of the Safety Policy

Parents are required to follow all safety procedures at all times. These procedures are designed not as mere inconveniences, but to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees, children, and associates of Early Care and Education. Please be particularly mindful of Early Care and Education entrance procedures. We all like to be polite; however, we need to be careful not to allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you may, in fact, be polite, however that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in our organizational chain. Be alert and mindful. Immediately report any breaches to the School Director.

8.6 Confrontational Interactions with Employees, Other Parents, or Associates of Early Care and Education

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of Early Care and Education or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

8.7 Violations of the Confidentiality Policy

Early Care and Education takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all people associated with the school. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with Early Care and Education. Any parent who shares any information

considered to be confidential pressures employees or other parents for information, which is not necessary for them to know, will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

8.8 Cell Phone Usage

Proper parent communication is imperative when working with young children. It is difficult to communicate when cell phones are in use. Effective December 1, 2010, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services passed new regulations prohibiting the personal use of cell phones in classrooms. Please end all calls prior to entering the building so that our teachers and directors can properly communicate with you.

8.9 Questions or Concerns

Minimum Standards 746.501(20)

If parents have questions or concerns about our program, we encourage you to have open communication with your child's teacher and the School Director. Through open communication, we can ensure that all parties are well informed and working as partners in the child's education. From time to time, the School Director may complete a "Parent Concern Form". Parents will receive a copy of this form with the appropriate outcome.

Parent's Right to Immediate Access Policy No. 9

Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(1)

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at Early Care and Education, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Early Care and Education must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are awarded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for a more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with Early Care and Education, **both** parents shall be awarded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Early Care and Education cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Early Care and Education suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Early Care and Education employees will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments with the School Director and are allowed in the childcare center only at the discretion of the School Director. An employee of Early Care and Education will accompany visitors at all times, throughout the center.

Early Care and Education will dismiss any child whose parent is prohibited from entering school property. Due to the parents' right to immediate access policy, as well as state and federal regulations, Early Care and Education cannot have a child at the school when the child's parent is prohibited from access. Early Care and Education will not agree to any request to maintain a child's enrollment even if the parent agrees to stay out of the school. Such an agreement is a violation of the law and will not be entertained.

9.1 Parent's Rights

A parent or guardian of a child enrolled in a childcare center has the right to:

- Enter and examine the childcare center during its hours of operation and without advance notice.
- File a complaint against the childcare center.
- Review the childcare center's publicly accessible records.
- Review the childcare center's written records concerning their child.
- Receive inspection reports and information about how to access the childcare center's online compliance history.
- Have the center comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the child.
- Be given the contact information for the childcare center's local Child Care Regulation office.
- Inspect any video recordings of an alleged child incident of abuse or neglect involving their child provided that: video recordings of the alleged incident are available; the parent or guardian does not retain any part of the video depicting a child that is not their own; and the parent or guardian of any other child in the video receive prior notice from the center
- Obtain a copy of the childcare center's policies and procedures handbook.
- Review the childcare center's staff training records and any in-house training curriculum.
- Exercise these rights without receiving retaliatory action by the childcare center.

**Dismissal
Policy No. 10**

Early Care and Education reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause.

Parents will be refunded any unused tuition within two weeks of the dismissal. A school check will be mailed to the address indicated in the child's file. Any past due balances must be paid within 30 days of the dismissal. An invoice detailing the past due balance will be forwarded to the address indicated in the child's file within one week of the dismissal. Any balance remaining after the 30-day period will be referred to the school's legal counsel for collection.

The School Director or designee will assist the parent in gathering their child's belongings at the time of dismissal and parents are required to leave school property in a calm and respectful manner, immediately. Early Care and Education will request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative while gathering their child's belongings upon dismissal.

A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the School Director if they wish to return to school property following a dismissal. Appointments are made at the discretion of the School Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent.

Following a dismissal, any parent or child who harasses, threatens, or in any manner causes harm to anyone affiliated with the school by calling, writing, or any other means, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, by Early Care and Education.

**Withdraw
Policy No. 11**

A 30-day written notice is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper notice is given, any unused tuition will be refunded within thirty days of the withdrawal. If the required notice is not given, parents will be charged tuition for two additional weeks.

The parents and child, following their last day of enrollment, are not permitted to reenter school property without prior permission from the School Director. A withdrawn child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the School Director if they wish to return to school property following the last day of enrollment at Early Care and Education. Appointments are made at the discretion of the School Director and are not a right of the withdrawn child or parent.

11.1 Change in Schedule

Parents who wish to change their child's days or times of enrollment in Early Care and Education must submit a request to do so 30 days in advance of the proposed change.

The School Director will notify the parents in writing if the new schedule is available. A schedule change will not be considered to be final until a new Tuition Agreement is signed. If the schedule change requires an additional registration fee, the change will also be contingent upon payment of said registration fee. If the requested schedule is not available parents may choose to continue with the current schedule until such time as the requested schedule becomes available or may choose to withdraw their child from the program. The date of the request that the School Director receives the schedule change will be used to toll the 30-day notice required for withdrawal.

**Court Orders Affecting Enrolled Children
Policy No. 12**

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (ex... Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Early Care and Education must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are awarded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for a more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with Early Care and Education, both parents shall be awarded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Early Care and Education cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Early Care and Education suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, Early Care and Education is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of Early Care and Education cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. Early Care and Education will report any violations of these orders to the court.

Arrival Procedures Policy No. 13

Parents are required to sign children in utilizing the ProCare Connect app **AND** sign the child in on the sign in/out sheet located near the classroom door. In order for all enrolled children to benefit from the curriculum and activities planned, **all children must arrive by 9:30am**. Children must be dropped off by 9:30 am each day, to minimize disruption to the learning environment. Please notify us in advance if your child has a doctor's appointment and will be arriving late. A doctor's note is required to drop your child off after 9:30 am. To prevent disturbance during nap time, children will not be accepted after 11:30 am, even with a doctor's note. Late arrivals are a disruption to the classroom and other children and may break the established routine of the classroom.

13.1 Health Checks

Minimum Standards 746.501(27)

Parents are required to notify the child's teacher or School Director of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. The parent must present the special instructions in the form of a letter and verbally discuss them with either the classroom teacher or School Director. These special instructions include but are not limited to: Early Pick Up, Alternative Pick Up Person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the teachers and directors should be aware of to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

13.2 Notification of Absence

Parents are required to inform the center by 8:30 am if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to more effectively maintain appropriate ratios and help the classroom teacher effectively plan for the day. If the parent does not notify the school of a child's absence, the school will contact the parent. A \$5 No-Call fee will be charged anytime a parent fails to notify the school of an absence. Parents who fail on three occasions in one school calendar year to give proper notice of an absence will result in the child being dismissed from the program.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the School Director not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with employees on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the School Director and provide documentation of the diagnosis from a healthcare professional, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Early Care and Education will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality.

13.3 School's Right to Refuse Admission

Early Care and Education reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause.

Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. The need to maintain compliance with Child Care Regulations.
2. The director deems the child too ill to attend.
3. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to the child, employees, or other children enrolled in Early Care and Education if the child were to be present at the center.
4. Parents failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
5. Parents failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

Pick Up Procedures

Policy No. 14

Minimum Standards 746.501(a)(2)

Once a parent signs their child out and the child is handed over to the parent, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on school premises.

Parents or persons designated to act “in loco parentis” are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at time of pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or another authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent(s) is unable to meet at the school during the course of the day.

14.1 Late Pick Up

Our schools are licensed to care for children from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm. Parents must pick up their children no later than 6:30 pm. A parent is late picking up their child at 6:30 pm. All measurements of time are to be according to the Early Care and Education clock located at the front desk.

A late fee of \$35 for the first minute per child plus \$1 for each additional minute per child will be charged for late pick-ups. Late fees must be paid at the time of pick up. The child will not be allowed to return to care until all late pick-up fees are paid in full.

A child’s care will be terminated should the child be picked up late on three occasions in one school year regardless of the reasons for the late pick-up. It is the parent’s

responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or Emergency/Alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time.

14.2 Persons Appearing to be Impaired by Drugs/Alcohol at Pick Up

The employees of Early Care and Education will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to the employees of Early Care and Education to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit the school from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, Early Care and Education employees will delay the impaired parent as long as possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police, and Child Protective Services.

Any other authorized person who attempts to pick-up a child and appears to the employees of Early Care and Education to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. The employees of Early Care and Education will contact the child's parents, local police, and Child Protective Services to notify them of the situation.

14.3 Emergency/Alternative Pick Up

At enrollment, parents will complete emergency/alternate pick-up information on the Enrollment Form. Parents are encouraged to include on this form any, and all persons who, during events, may at one time be asked to pick-up their child from Early Care and Education. In an emergency the child's parents will be called first. If they cannot be reached employees will call the people listed on this form until someone can be reached. Parents do not need to be listed on the emergency contact list. The nature of the parental relationship affords the parents (in the absence of a court order indicating otherwise) the right to pick up their child.

Should the employee contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the emergency list. Failure of the parent to make such arrangements will result in dismissal from the program.

Parents will be asked to determine which persons (if any) on the emergency/alternate pick-up list have the right to act "In Loco Parentis." In Loco Parentis status affords the pickup person the right to discuss confidential information about the child's day including but not limited to, incident/accident reports, and behavior issues. In the absence of this designation the people on the emergency/alternate pick-up list are only afforded the right to pick up the child. Teachers are not permitted to discuss the child's day with them.

The persons on the emergency/alternate pick-up list will be required to provide a government issued photo ID prior to the school releasing the child. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

All changes and/or additions to the emergency/alternate pick-up list must be made in writing, be dated, and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form. Employees of Early Care and Education are prohibited from being listed on the emergency/alternate contact list.

Early Care and Education reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the emergency/alternate contact list for any reason, including but not limited to violations of the policies/procedures contained herein. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s)

to inform each person on the emergency/alternate list of the policies/procedures contained herein.

CPR and/or the appropriate First Aid will be administered if your child is seriously injured until help arrives. 911 will be contacted immediately for assistance. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible. Information given in your enrollment packet will be used at this time. Please remember to keep your child's records updated.

Policy No. 15
Minimum Standards 746.501(14)

School-age children will be transported to and from public school and during the summer on field trips. Early Care and Education does not transport children under the age of 5, except in emergency situations.

State law requires:

- Vehicles transporting children shall be in safe operating condition and drivers shall have a current Texas Driver’s License.
- Children shall be loaded and unloaded at the curbside of the vehicle, or in a protected parking area.
- A child shall not be taken on field trips unless a parent or guardian has signed permission forms.

School Calendar
Policy No. 16
Minimum Standards 746.501(1)

Early Care and Education will be open five days a week, Monday through Friday from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm except for designated holidays.

Early Care and Education will be closed for the following holidays:

New Year’s Day	Martin Luther King Day	President’s Day
Good Friday	Memorial Day	Juneteenth
Independence Day	Labor Day	Columbus Day
Thanksgiving Day	Day after Thanksgiving	Christmas Eve
Christmas Day	Day after Christmas	

Early Care and Education may close early on certain days during the holiday season. No refund or credit will be given for the holidays. We will normally observe these holidays on the day the government sets for observance. As a rule, if the holiday falls on Saturday, we will be closed on Friday. If the holiday falls on Sunday, we will be closed on Monday. Full tuition is due for these weeks as well. Notices of closures will be posted in advance.

**Emergency Closings and Inclement Weather Information
Policy No. 17**

In the event that significant events accompany severe weather, such as a loss of power or water, the school will close.

Our center follows local school district guidance when it comes to school delays or closings. If local school districts within our city are closed due to inclement weather, the center will be as well. Please watch the local news for updates. Early Care and Education does not credit or prorate for winter weather closures.

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing by ProCare Connect message, postings on the school's social media page, and/or by email.

Should the school need to close in the middle of the day, the director will attempt to reach the child's parents first to arrange for pick up. Should the director be unable to reach the parents, the people listed on the emergency/alternative contact form will be called until pick-up arrangements can be made. The director will notify the parents or emergency/alternative contact person at the time of the call, of the pickup location should the children need to be evacuated from the childcare center. Parents or emergency/alternative contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.

Should the center need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures of less than five school days.

Policy No. 18

Early Care and Education uses the Frog Street curriculum for our infants, toddlers, preschool, and pre-kindergarten classrooms. This curriculum believes that children learn best through actively engaging with people and things in their environment. Children are involved in hands-on experiences, real-life adventures, and assisted discovery as they explore concepts through play. Early Care and Education is a place where essential readiness skills are nurtured through play, investigation, and of course, fun! This program provides developmentally and age-appropriate activities and materials for exciting and wonder-filled environments. To learn more about the Frog Street curriculum visit <http://www.frogstreet.com/>.

Select schools of Early Care and Education have partnered with CCMS (Child Care Management Services) and the TEA (Texas Education Agency) to provide specific classrooms that take part in an alternative curriculum. These classrooms continue to use the Frog Street curriculum in addition to The Creative Curriculum. To learn more about The Creative Curriculum visit <https://teachingstrategies.com/product/the-creativecurriculum-for-preschool/> or speak with your School Director.

STEM Station, our school age program for children kindergarten through fifth grade, implements S.T.E.A.M (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) based activities that correspond with weekly curriculum themes throughout the school. STEM Station also utilizes the Life Is Good Superpower activity kit that empowers students to meet the world with resiliency, joy, and optimism through core competencies of social and emotional learning.

Early Care and Education uses Conscious Discipline as a positive method of discipline and guidance. Conscious Discipline is utilized in all of our classrooms throughout the day by implementing rituals and routines, breathing techniques, and structures that promote safety, connection, and problem solving. See Policy 19 Discipline for additional information and visit <https://consciousdiscipline.com/> .

18.1 Sample Daily Schedule of Activities (for 18 months – 5 years)

Early Care and Education classrooms follow a daily schedule designed specifically to meet the children's developmental, social, emotional, and personal needs. All schedules

are contingent on the needs of the children and may vary from day to day. Below is a **sample** of your child's typical day:

6:30	Arrival and Child-Led Activities
7:00	Transition to Classrooms and Child-Led Activities
8:00	Breakfast
8:30	Morning Greeting Circle
9:00	Stretching and Yoga
9:15	Literacy Lesson, Art, and Center Rotations
9:45	Gross Motor Activities/Outdoor Play
10:15	Social and Emotional Development
10:30	Math and Science Lessons and Center Rotations
11:30	Restroom, Transition to Lunch
11:40	Family Style Dining
12:10	Read Aloud Time
12:20	Quiet Time/Nap
2:30	Snack
3:00	Circle Time Review
3:30	Alphabet and Counting and Center Rotations
4:00	Physical Movement/Outdoor Learning
4:30	Group Activities
5:00	Child-Led Activities
5:30	Closing Activities
6:00	Departure

18.2 Classroom Assignments

Classroom assignments are based on each individual child's chronological age, developmental age, emotional age, and physical age. Early Care and Education typically will transition children to new classrooms twice a year, however from time to time we may request a transition sooner based on the individual child's needs.

18.3 Teacher to Child Ratios

Early Care and Education follows the teacher-to-child ratios established by the National Accreditation Commission and Texas Rising Star, which is lower than the state licensing ratios. From time to time, due to staffing shortages or other operational challenges, the school may default to state designated ratios. Early Care and Education will never run higher ratios than established by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulations unless a significant event or emergency arises.

18.4 Nap and Rest Time

Supervised rest periods are provided for all children under five years of age who remain in Early Care and Education for six or more hours a day, and for all other children who show a need for rest time. Your child will be provided a mat to rest on to be kept at the school for naptime. Nap and rest times are required by the Texas Department of Health

and Human Services Child Care Regulations. Due to these regulations, parents cannot request that their child be exempt from nap or rest time.

18.5 Personal Care Supplies Needed

All children must have a complete change of clothing, **clearly marked with the child's name**, left at Early Care and Education. Children need to be dressed appropriately for the weather. Caps, mittens, and warm clothing must be worn during the cooler seasons for the daily outdoor playtime. Accidents can happen, even to older children, or if they get wet on the playground. For safety reasons, boots, sandals, and flip flops are prohibited.

Parents must supply all bottles for their child. Early Care and Education provides toddler training cups, diapers, and wipes. Please label everything with your child's first and last name.

We use washable crayons, markers, and paint during art time, but the children's clothing may get stained from just being kids! Please dress your children in play clothes since PLAY is what we do!!

Please leave all valuable items at home since Early Care and Education cannot be responsible for broken or lost items.

18.6 Birthday and Holiday Celebrations

Most children enjoy celebrating special events with their friends (birthdays, new babies, and holidays). Parents may send a store bought, nut-free treat to share with the class. Treats must be in the original store-bought packaging and are to be unopened. Please make arrangements with the teacher three days in advance when planning a special occasion.

Early Care and Education believes in inclusion and celebrating each child's beliefs and important days. If a parent does not want their child to participate in a holiday celebration, they may choose to keep their child at home for that day. No reduction in fees or tuition will be given.

18.7 Parent/Teacher Conferences and Communication

Minimum Standards 746.501(6)

Open communication with parents is very important to children's success. Early Care and Education have multiple ways of communicating with parents. In some situations, parents may be asked to sign documents acknowledging that communication has taken place. Signing such documents is not an admission or agreement in any way, yet acknowledgement that communication took place. Failure to sign documents is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.

Listed below are ways that Early Care and Education may communicate with parents:

- Our electronic monitor located in the front lobby
- Through email notifications
- Written memos placed in your child's weekly folders or cubby
- Social media sites such as Facebook
- Smartphone notifications through the ProCare Connect app
- Verbal communication with the child's teachers and director

Parents will be offered a Parent/Teacher conference twice each year. This is a formal conference with your child's teacher to discuss academic and developmental progress in the classroom. Parents will be asked to sign up for a date and time for their conference. Parents will be required to sign acknowledging that they are unable to attend or do not wish to attend a Parent/Teacher conference.

18.8 Screen Time

Early Care and Education does not allow children under five years of age to use any screens (iPad, tablet, computer, or phone) for any reason. Screen time for children over five years of age is limited to no more than 1 hour per day in compliance with the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Regulations Minimum Standards; except for school aged children who are utilizing a computer or tablet/iPad to complete school or homework assignments.

Discipline Policy No. 19

Minimum Standards 746.501(7)

Early Care and Education employees are trained to use a positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. Just a few examples used in this situation are praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior, reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear positive statements, and redirecting behaviors. Early

Care and Education does not use "time out" as a form of managing behavior. Early Care and Education employees will never use Corporal Punishment or negative discipline that may hurt or humiliate a child.

Research has shown that positive guidance teaches children skills which help them get along in their physical and social environment. This aims to develop personal standards in self-discipline, not to enforce a set of inflexible rules. Giving children understandable guidelines and redirecting their behavior helps them to develop internal control of their actions and encourages acceptable behavior. Positive cooperation is required from the family when dealing with disruptive behavior. We feel that consistency from all parties involved is the best way to handle these issues. Early Care and Education reserves the right to terminate care for a child's discipline problems at any time.

Early Care and Education employees are trained in Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline techniques and beliefs are always used in the classroom. These techniques and beliefs include:

- Our role is to teach behavior, not stop behavior.
- Adults see themselves as role models in the classroom. Adults are to behave in the same manner expected of the children.
- Using active calming techniques for both children and adults
- Understanding that all behavior is a form of communication. When children act out, it is an opportunity to teach, not punish.
- Meeting the needs of the children so that they can meet the needs of their peers.
- Allowing children to express their emotions while supporting and comforting children in distress.
- Understanding that all children can only see the world through their version of reality, and helping children see the world as a positive place to live.
- Being optimistic and positive about all children enrolled in our program.
- Greeting each child every morning in a positive and impactful way.

19.1 Suspension and Expulsion of Children

Minimum Standards 746.501(8)

Early Care and Education is proud of our history of working with the individual needs of our children and will work with the parents whose children may need additional support. When applicable, we will make referrals to outside support services including but limited to, early intervention, speech, occupations, and physical therapy and other types of services, and participate in IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings where appropriate to best meet the needs of the child.

Early Care and Education will make reasonable accommodations to their policies, practices, and procedures as appropriate in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Early Care and Education is not required by law to fundamentally alter or change the services provided for a child displaying dangerous/inappropriate behavior, developmental delays, and/or disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Early Care and Education will allow outside resources/therapists into the program to work with any child as needed, provided those services are communicated in advance, the provider of the services has the appropriate clearances to be in the building, the behavioral/therapeutic plan is shared with the administration and the resource/therapist works cooperatively with Early Care and Education employees to meet the needs of the child. The presence of the resource/therapist must mitigate any and all safety risks the child presents to themselves and to others and must be collaborative and complimentary to the program. Should the resource/therapist be disruptive to the program or not have authority or ability to mitigate, through appropriate therapeutic methods, the child's dangerous behaviors, the child may be excluded from the program.

Any child who is a safety threat to themselves or to others will be subject to suspension/exclusion and/or disenrollment from the program if the dangerous behavior cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodations provided for under applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Temporary suspension from the school may be necessary for the safety of the child and others while any appropriate evaluations are completed and/or while securing the appropriate support services from the appropriate agency.

Early Care and Education will always provide written documentation to the parents of any child that is subject to referral for outside support services for any behavior, developmental delay, or disability. Further, through formal and informal conferences with the teachers and administrators, written incident and accident reports, and letters, Early Care and Education will communicate with parents/guardians of children exhibiting behaviors that are dangerous to themselves or to others, the steps taken to accommodate the child, and notifications that the child will not be able to return to the program until support services are in place.

Items from Home Policy No. 20

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys and/or electronic items from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. This includes cell phones and video games. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Parents are encouraged to consult the School Director should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy.

If the parents fail repeatedly to enforce this policy with their children, the director will call the parents and require that they come to the school and remove the item.

Early Care and Education will provide a mat/cot for the children in classrooms with nap/rest time.

All items brought in for use as part of the curriculum will be inspected by Early Care and Education staff for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of Early Care and Education.

School-age children in our STEM Station program may bring tablets or computers for schoolwork related purposes as outlined in Policy 18.8 Screen Time. Early Care and Education is not responsible for damage and/or loss of such tablets or computers.

Dress Code Policy No. 21

21.1 Children's Clothing

Children are engaged in various activities during the course of the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable clothing.

Parents are prohibited from dressing children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures. These types of clothing present challenges for children in relation to toileting.

Children are not permitted to wear open-toed and/or open-backed shoes. The most appropriate type of shoes for participation in school activities are rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes.

Children over 3 years of age are required to have at least one seasonably and size appropriate complete change of clothing at the center at all times. Children under 3 years of age are required to have at least two seasonally and size appropriate, complete changes of clothing at the center at all times. A complete change of clothing includes shirt, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes. Teachers will post reminders for parents to update changes of clothing as the weather begins to change. Coats must be provided in the winter months.

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, and scarves. Early Care and Education is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

21.2 Jewelry/Accessories

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program. In addition, Early Care and Education will not be responsible for lost or stolen valuables. It is the parents' responsibility to enforce this policy with their children. Should a child come to school wearing any jewelry, parents will be required to take it with them, or to return to the school to remove the jewelry if it is discovered after the parent leaves. Repeated (more than three violations per school year) violations of this policy are considered to be a violation of SAFETY POLICIES and will result in dismissal from the program.

Hair beads, barrettes, bobby pins, etc. are not to be worn by children. These accessories are considered to be safety hazards. When choosing accessories for your children, be mindful of the potential safety issues they present not only for your child, but also for the older and younger children attending Early Care and Education.

Early Care and Education is not responsible for damage to or loss of any articles of clothing.

21.3 Parents' Clothing:

Parents are required to be dressed in appropriate clothing while at Early Care and Education or involved in any Early Care and Education sponsored events. Inappropriate clothing would include revealing, extremely short, ripped/torn (in inappropriate places), and/or see-through articles of clothing. Anything with suggestive or vulgar language is prohibited.

Parents wearing high heels, work boots, or shoes with wet/dirty soles, will be required to remove their shoes prior to entering any classroom with children under 1 year of age. This will reduce the risk of injury to a child on the floor and will help to maintain a clean

floor. Parents can simply leave their shoes outside the classroom door prior to entering the classroom. Parents with bare feet must wear foot coverings/booties when entering the classroom.

**Field Trips
Policy No. 22
(STEM Station Families ONLY)
*Minimum Standards 746.501(16)***

Early Care and Education frequently supplements the in-class curriculum with off premise field trips. Parents are required to give written permission for their child to attend each field trip. Notification of a field trip will be sent home in advance of the trip, with all pertinent trip information including destination, date, time, reason for trip, and mode of transportation. Accompanying the notification paper, teachers will include a permission slip to be filled out, signed, and returned to the teacher prior to the date of the trip. The field trip permission slip must be filled out completely and accurately before a child can attend the field trip.

If parents wish to attend the trip with their child, they should discuss attending with the School Director.

Early Care and Education provides all required supervision for all field trips, but always invites and welcomes parents to attend.

Parents will not be permitted to transport any child, other than their own, on an Early Care and Education sponsored trip.

If you choose for your child to not participate in a field trip, they will not be allowed to attend school on that day. No reduction in tuition or fees will be granted in these situations.

Due to safety risks and child tracking procedures, children may not be dropped off or picked up on a field trip. Parents must schedule appointments around the field trip schedules.

**Parent Participation/Volunteers Policy
No. 23
*Minimum Standards 746.501(21)***

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child's school activities. There are many different ways in which parents can participate and volunteer at the childcare center. Parents may volunteer to attend trips, read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events. Teachers will have posted in their classrooms any volunteer opportunities available. Parents who are not interested in volunteering directly

in the classroom may donate items, do maintenance work, or assist in the front office. These volunteer opportunities will be posted in the front office area on the parent bulletin board.

Any parent who volunteers in the classroom on a regular basis will be required to pay for and secure all criminal background checks, as required by our licensing regulations. Any person, including parents, with felony convictions, sex offender convictions, and/or open investigations into any criminal activities will not be permitted to volunteer in the classroom, or on field trips.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order. For example, if a parent is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that parent will only be able to volunteer on those days. Parents with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted to volunteer with the express written permission of the custodial parent.

Early Care and Education reserves the right to make volunteer assignments. Early Care and Education does not guarantee the volunteering parents will be assigned to locations where their child(ren) is present.

Health and Safety Policy No. 24

24.1 Pre-Enrollment Requirements

Minimum Standards 746.501(11,13)

Each child is required to complete a pre-enrollment packet of information. This packet is to be returned to the center's office 3 business days prior to the child's first day of attendance. All children are required to have a complete up to date immunization record on file at Early Care and Education. This is per our licensing regulations. If you have

chosen not to have your child immunized, a notarized waiver form must be obtained by a physician. Immunizations may be waived for certain reasons. Please discuss this with the School Director to determine whether you have the right to be enrolled and not have your child immunized. Parents are required to have a waiver on file in place of an immunization record, so that the center can maintain compliance with licensing regulations.

All children are required to have a Physician's Statement form filled out by a licensed medical professional, in order to attend Early Care and Education. The Physician's Statement Form, indicating the child's fitness to attend Early Care and Education, must be completed by a licensed healthcare professional and returned to the School Director 3 business days before enrollment.

24.2 Children with Severe Allergies

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the "Food Allergy Emergency Plan" form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child's physician and parents or legal guardians and must be updated as needed. This form can be obtained by request from the School Director.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

24.3 Communicable Disease /Illnesses

Minimum Standards 746.501(3)

Early Care and Education follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics Model Health Policies and Procedures Manual. A copy of this manual is on file with the School Director and is available upon request for review. Additionally, copies can be purchased, for a nominal fee, from the National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC).

Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 1 hour of notification by phone. If a parent is reached but cannot pick their child up within 1 hour, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form. The director will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent cannot be reached, the director will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease; including, but not limited to the following: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea that cannot be contained in diaper, vomiting, temperature measuring greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees, rash, or sores. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must present a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. Early Care and Education reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the director believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

When children are ill, they must not return to the center until they are symptom free without medication for 24 hours. If your child is sent home due to a fever, he/she is not permitted to return to the program the following day at a minimum. A fever is defined as a temperature reading on a thermometer of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more as taken under the arm.

Diarrhea is defined by stools that are more frequent or less formed than usual for that child and not associated with changes in diet. Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet-trained children if the diarrhea is causing "accidents". In addition, diapered children with diarrhea should be excluded if the stool frequency exceeds two stools above normal for that child during the time in the program day or whose stool contains blood or mucus. Readmission after diarrhea can occur when diapered children have the stool contained by the diaper and when toilet-trained children are not having "accidents" and when stool frequency is no more than two stools above normal for that child during the program day.

Parents will be notified immediately if their child has the presence of head lice. Parents of the affected child must treat the child for head lice before they can return to care.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the School Director. This enables our administration to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our

school. This information will only be shared with employees on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the School Director and provide documentation of the diagnosis from a healthcare professional, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Early Care and Education will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality.

24.4 Biting

Early Care and Education recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the infant through 2 ½ year old classrooms. Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bitten or will bite another child. The teachers and directors understand that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember this is a developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the teacher is working to identify situations which provoke or elicit this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The teacher will not punish or harshly discipline children in the younger classrooms for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with teachers and directors to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's care terminated.

Children older than 3 years of age may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. For children in this age group who bite, the teacher will use the discipline procedures outlined in the discipline section of this handbook, as well as observe the child to determine what provokes or elicits this inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to cooperate with teachers and directors to help their child control this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's care terminated. Furthermore, children in the older age groups, who bite 3 times in a school year will have their care terminated since the safety of all the children in the program is of the utmost concern of Early Care and Education.

Parents will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the course of the day. The teacher and director may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is considered to be confidential and cannot be disclosed. The employees of Early Care and Education cannot discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other party. It is recommended that any child involved in a biting incident be seen by their family physician if the parents are concerned about communicable diseases possibly resulting from the biting incident.

24.5 Dispensing Medication

Minimum Standards 746.501(4)

Early Care and Education will only over the counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. Early Care and Education will only give medication to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. The initial dosage of medication must be administered by the parent unless written

permission from a doctor for life-threatening situations such as administration of an EpiPen. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given. **Early Care and Education will only dispense prescription medication that is prescribed three or more times a day. Medication prescribed once or twice a day must be given by the parents at home.**

Early Care and Education does not provide any medication for children. Any medication needed for life-threatening situations such as an Epi-Pen must be provided by the child's parents with the appropriate documentation.

Parents are required to complete a Medication Form each day that medication is to be dispensed. Medication Forms can be found at the front office. Medication Forms, doctor's notes, and medication are to be turned into the School Director.

Early Care and Education will dispense over the counter, fever reducing/pain medication (ex. Children's Tylenol, Children's Motrin) on an as needed basis, with a doctor's note detailing the recommended reasons for administration and appropriate dosage. Parents are required to supply an unopened bottle of fever reducing/pain medication clearly labeled with their child's name. (One note and bottle of fever reducing/pain medication is required per child.) Prior to administering fever reducing/pain medication, the director will contact a parent or person listed on the emergency contact form, if a parent cannot be reached, to inform them of our need to administer the medication. The director will also inform the parent or emergency contact person if it is necessary for the child to be picked up due to illness. Refer to the policy listed above regarding picking up ill children.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that all prescription medication is properly labeled by a pharmacist and replaced prior to the expiration date.

Medications delivered by a device such as Epi-Pens, inhalers, and nebulizers must have written documentation from the doctor indicating when it is appropriate to administer such medication; including signs and symptoms that the medication is needed. The parent must also demonstrate to employees who will be administering

medication through a device the proper use and any special care after use of the device. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that life-saving medication be replaced prior to the expiration date and an updated doctor's note is on file.

24.6 Fire/ Emergency Drills

Minimum Standards 746.501(5)(24)

Early Care and Education conducts monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Parents, employees, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this

is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into or out of the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, the director or designate will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. As with the ill child pick up policy, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation are expected to have patience with the employees as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the school is in the midst of a fire/emergency drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the teachers and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the school is having a real fire/emergency situation, parents will be asked to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all employees and children and gives the employee permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and employees to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

Parents may review the complete Early Care and Education Emergency Preparedness Plan posted in every classroom and on the Parent Communication Board.

24.7 Alternative Safe Locations

Minimum Standards 746.501(24)

Should the administration of Early Care and Education or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the childcare center be too dangerous to be occupied, the employees and children will be taken to an alternate location

detailed in the Early Care and Education Emergency Preparedness Plan. Once the children are assembled here, the director will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

24.8 Incident/Accident Reports

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the course of the school day, the teacher will complete an Incident/Accident Report. The Incident/Accident Report will be provided to the parents by the classroom teacher.

Parents or persons designated to act “in loco parentis” are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up time. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent is unable to meet at the center during the course of the day.

Should a person other than the parent or one designated to act “in loco parentis” pickup the child, a parent or person designated to act “in loco parentis” must sign the Incident/Accident Report and return a copy to the School Director within 24 hours. Failure to sign and return an Incident/Accident in this time period will result in your child’s exclusion from the program until such time as the report is returned signed.

24.9 Food

All age groups:

Minimum Standards 746.501(10)

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide notification, in the form of a doctor’s note, of any allergies (food or otherwise), with instructions for treatment should a child have an allergic reaction. Please refer to the Health and Safety Policies contained herein for further information.

Parents are required to provide written notification from a health care professional of any food/dietary restrictions. (i.e. lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat free/gluten free diets). Early Care and Education never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in breakfast, lunch, or snack time for behavior reasons.

Birth through 17 months of age:

Early Care and Education provides formula for the children enrolled in our programs. If a parent wishes to provide an alternate formula, they may do so at their expense. There is no reduction in fees or tuition for parents who provide their own formula or food.

Parents are required to complete a feeding schedule for their child on a monthly basis, or as the child’s feeding requirements change. Teachers will complete a daily sheet for each child detailing for the parent what the child ate, when, and how much.

3 year and older classrooms:

Early Care and Education offers children a morning breakfast at approximately 8:30 am, a half-hour lunch at approximately 11:30 am and an afternoon snack at approximately 2:30 pm. If children are to participate in breakfast, they must arrive prior to 8:30 am in order to receive breakfast.

All meals are family style, with the children sitting at tables, to promote good manners, eating habits and socialization skills. Teachers will encourage children to eat their main entrée first, followed by healthy snacks.

Early Care and Education does not allow candy bars, sodas, or candy treats such as Skittles, Starbursts or gum, as part of a child's lunch or snack. If you wish for these foods to be a part of your child's diet, please give them to your child at home.

Early Care and Education prohibits any food item in glass containers (except baby food in the infant classrooms), as well as aluminum cans. These can be safety hazards for the children and teachers.

Early Care and Education will provide a healthy afternoon snack for all children in 3 years of age and older age groups, served with water, fruit juice, and/or milk. A list of the daily meals and snacks available to the children will be posted in the classroom on a monthly basis.

Breastfeeding

Minimum Standards 746.501(25)

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. Appropriate, private feeding locations will be made available. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the classroom teacher and director.

24.10 Nut Free Center

Due to the extreme nature of allergic reactions to nuts and products containing nuts in some children, Early Care and Education prohibits nuts and/or foods containing nut products on Early Care and Education property, and/or at Early Care and Education sponsored events. These nut allergies can be so severe that exposure to nuts can result in an anaphylactic reaction. An allergic child can have a reaction from simply smelling nuts on someone's breath or touching nut oil residue left on a countertop, not only from consuming nuts or nut products. This includes, but not limited to, milk made with nuts such as almond milk.

Due to the possibility of cross-contamination, (this occurs when one food is prepared with items previously used to prepare foods with nuts, or nut products), Early Care and Education does not allow homemade snacks at the center. While Early Care and Education understands that parents enjoy providing homemade snacks for birthdays

and holidays, we must be mindful of the safety of all children enrolled in Early Care and Education.

Since Early Care and Education is a nut free environment, parents can purchase the items to make homemade snacks and make arrangements with the classroom teacher to make the snacks as part of a classroom lesson. Only Early Care and Education utensils, bowls, and bakeware may be used to prepare these foods.

24.11 Firearms and Weapons

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of firearm, ammunition, and/or weapons on school property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

24.12 Infant Sleep Safety

Minimum Standards 746.501(9)

Early Care and Education follows the Infant Sleep Safety Guidelines as listed in the Child Care Regulation Minimum Standards and as outlined by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. All infants will be placed on their backs to sleep. To avoid suffocation, nothing is allowed in the crib but the infant, including blankets and stuffed animals. Sleep positioning devices are prohibited unless instructed by the child's health care professional. An Infant Sleep Exception form must be completed by the health care professional. All cribs at Early Care and Education meet the CPSC safety guidelines. Crib compliance documents are on file in the front office. Pacifiers are allowed, however straps that are attached to the child's clothing and pacifiers with stuffed animals attached are prohibited.

24.13 Hearing and Vision Screening

Minimum Standards 746.501(12)

Hearing and Vision Screening for possible vision and hearing problems is required by the Special Senses and Communication Disorders Act, Texas Health & Safety Code, Chapter 36, for children who are 4-years old. Early Care and Education will schedule annual screenings at our school. Parents may also bring in screening proof from their local pediatrician.

24.14 Water Activities

Minimum Standards 746.501(15)

Parents will be notified in advance of swimming and other water play activities. Splash/Sprinkler Play is offered at all locations during the summer months. Parents are asked to bring in a swimsuit, swim diaper (if applicable), water shoes and a towel on their child's assigned splash day. Children wearing regular diapers will not be allowed to participate in Splash Day.

24.15 Animals

Minimum Standards 746.501(17)

From time to time, Early Care and Education may have classroom pets that meet the requirements of Child Care Regulations. A notice to parents will be posted outside any classroom door when a pet is present.

24.16 Insect Repellent and Sunscreen

Minimum Standards 746.501(19)

Early Care and Education will apply sunscreen and/or bug repellent as needed.

Sunscreen and bug repellent must be provided by the parent, must be in the original container, and must not have expired. A Sunscreen/Bug Repellent Permission Slip must be completed by the parent before these items can be applied.

24.17 Health Checks

Minimum Standards 746.501(27)

Early Care and Education employees will do a visual check of the children upon arrival each morning. If a teacher or director notices anything unusual they are required to point this out to the parent at that time. If your child has an accident overnight, please notify the teacher and director when dropping off so that we can assist in watching the child for side effects. Early Care and Education teachers may complete an Incident Report to document these situations.

24.18 Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Minimum Standards 746.501(28)

All Early Care and Education employees are encouraged to receive an annual flu shot and the Covid-19 vaccination. Early Care and Education employees are required to be current on their Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine to help protect children from illnesses.

24.19 Gang-Free Zone

Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(2)

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a licensed childcare center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty.

24.20 Parking Lot Safety

Early Care and Education is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and productive environment for all people occupying our schools. Considering the significant risk posed by vehicle exhaust emissions, especially to children, we ask that vehicles in our parking lot avoid idling for any longer than 5 minutes. Vehicle exhaust is linked to increases in asthma, allergies, and heart and lung disease. Children are especially at risk because their lungs are still developing, and they inhale more air per pound of body weight than adults.

When entering and exiting school property parents should drive slowly and avoid distractions as young children are present while parents are loading and unloading children from their vehicles.

Early Care and Education cannot be held liable for damages that occur in our parking lot. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that their vehicle is secure before entering the building and that no valuable property such as purses or brief cases are left in plain sight. Please understand that it is your personal responsibility to be proactive with your vehicle and personal belongings. Our cameras will only monitor certain areas of the parking lot and could act as a deterrent to criminal activity. Our primary focus remains with your children and their safety within our school.

24.21 Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activity

Minimum Standards 746.501(18)

Early Care and Education strongly believes and supports the need for physical activity each day.

When children participate in physical activity every day, multiple health benefits accrue. Regular physical activity builds healthy bones and muscles, improves muscular strength and endurance, reduces the risk for developing chronic disease risk factors, improves self-esteem, and reduces stress and anxiety. Beyond these known health effects, physical activity may also have beneficial influences on academic performance. In addition, cognitive skills and motor skills appear to develop through dynamic interaction. Research has shown that physical movement can affect the brain's physiology.

Infants will be given opportunities for physical activity, including supervised tummy time.

Toddler age children will participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten children will participate in a minimum of 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

School age children who are in attendance for a full day will participate in a minimum of 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day. School age children who are only in attendance after school will participate in a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play each day.

Opportunities for active play may overlap with outdoor play when the weather permits.

Early Care and Education will promote all children's active play every day. Children will have ample opportunity to do moderate to vigorous activities, such as running, climbing, dancing, skipping, and jumping, to the extent of their abilities.

All children will participate each day in:

- Two occasions of active play outdoors when weather permits.
- Two or more structured or teacher-led activities or games that promote movement over the course of the day.
- Continuous opportunities to develop and practice age-appropriate gross motor and movement skills.

Physical activity may take place in the classroom or on the playground when the weather permits.

When participating in physical activity, children's clothing should protect them from sun exposure and permit easy movement (not too loose and not too tight) that enables full participation in active play. Footwear should provide support for running and climbing. Hats may be worn to protect children from sun exposure.

Examples of appropriate clothing/footwear include:

- Gym shoes or sturdy shoe equivalent
- Clothing for the weather, such as a lightweight, breathable jacket without any hood and neck strings.

Examples of inappropriate clothing/footwear include:

- Footwear that can come off while running or that provide insufficient support for climbing.
- Clothing that can catch on playground equipment, such as those with drawstrings or loops.

When weather conditions prohibit outdoor play, physical activities will occur in the classroom during the scheduled outside time. Classroom teachers have activities planned in advance for "rainy days".

24.22 Supporting Inclusive Services to Children with Special Care Needs

Early Care and Education is proud of our history of working with the individual needs of our children and will work with the parents whose children may need additional support or have special care needs. When applicable, we will make referrals to outside support services including but limited to, early intervention, speech, occupations, and physical therapy and other types of services, and participate in IEP (Individual Education Plan) or ISFP (Individualized Family Service Plan) meetings when appropriate to best meet the needs of the child.

Early Care and Education will make appropriate accommodations for a child with special care needs as recommended by the child's healthcare provider and/or qualified professionals affiliated with the school district or an early childhood intervention program. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to adapting equipment, procedures, and methods to meet the child's needs in the classroom setting.

Early Care and Education will allow outside resources/ therapists into the program to work with any child as needed, provided those services are communicated in advance, the provider of the services has the appropriate clearances to be in the building, the behavioral/therapeutic plan is shared with the administration and the resource/ therapist works cooperatively with Early Care and Education employees to meet the needs of the child. The presence of the resource/therapist must mitigate any and all safety risks the child presents to themselves and to others and must be collaborative and complimentary to the program. Should the resource/therapist be disruptive to the program or not have authority or ability to mitigate, through appropriate therapeutic methods, the child's dangerous behaviors, the child may be excluded from the program.

Early Care and Education will utilize any recommended adaptive equipment that has been provided by the parent or resources/therapists.

Early Care and Education does not provide separate classrooms for children with special care needs. Research has shown that children with disabilities benefit from learning alongside their peers in an inclusive environment. Inclusive classrooms promote lifelong skills such as empathy and compassion as well as increase social emotional development for all children.

**Staff Employment by Clients Policy
Policy No. 25**

The staff of Early Care and Education is prohibited from being employed by any client (current or former). Parents are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Parents who employ Early Care and Education staff will have their services terminated and any tuition or registration fees will be forfeited. Staff who become employed by current or former clients of Early Care and Education will have their employment with Early Care and Education terminated.

Employment refers to any relationship outside of the school's services which involves an employee of Early Care and Education interacting with current or former clients of Early Care and Education. Such relationships include but are not limited to, baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny services, and carpooling regardless of whether or not those services are voluntary or paid.

Employees of Early Care and Education are prohibited from participating in social networking relationships with clients of Early Care and Education. This includes, but not limited to accepting or requesting a friend request on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram.

Cameras and Photographs Policy No. 26

Early Care and Education has closed circuit cameras in all classrooms, hallways, outside areas, the lobby, and the parking lot that capture video and audio. Cameras are for surveillance purposes only. The privacy of the children is very important to us. For this reason, the cameras are not available over the internet.

26.1 Photographs

Early Care and Education believes in the benefit of using real life pictures in our educational program. Photos taken of the children will be done with a school owned camera and will only be used in our program. If parents choose to take pictures of events held at our program, they may only photograph their child, unless written permission is given by the other parent. Please note during certain parent events, such as Pre-K graduation, Christmas programs, and Carnivals, photographs may be taken. If you wish for your child to not be photographed, you may want to remove them from these events.

Early Care and Education School Contact Information Policy No. 27

Minimum Standards 746.501 (1)

Arlington

2501 Ballpark Way
Arlington, Texas 76006
Phone: (817) 962-0550
Fax: (214) 988-5132
Email: arlington@earlycareandeducation.com
Hours: 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday – Friday

North Richland Hills

7515 Smithfield Road
North Richland Hills, Texas 76182
Phone: (817) 849-2331
Fax: (214) 988-5132
Email: nrh@earlycareandeducation.com
Hours: 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday - Friday

Coppell

103 Samuel Blvd
Coppell, Texas 75019
Phone: (972) 304-2000
Fax: (214) 988-5132
Email: coppell@earlycareandeducation.com
Hours: 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday - Frid

Southlake

8811 Davis Blvd.
Keller, Texas 76148
Phone: (817)337-1400
Fax: (214)988-5132
Email: southlake@earlycareandeducation.com
Hours: 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday - Friday

Flower Mound Early Care at Forest Vista

2550 Garden Ridge Blvd
Flower Mound, Texas 75028
Phone: (469) 630-0020
Fax: (214) 988-5132
Email: fmfv@earlycareandeducation.com
Hours: 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday - Friday

Flower Mound at Justin Road

1905 Justin Road
Flower Mound, Texas 75028
Phone: (972) 899-4131
Fax: (214) 988-5132
Email: flowermound@earlycareandeducation.com
Hours: 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday - Friday

