

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION Family Handbook

Dear Families,

Welcome! We're so excited that you and your child are part of our school community. At Early Care and Education, we believe childhood should be filled with curiosity, imagination, and joyful discovery—and we're honored to help create those moments every single day.

From our very first school in 2009 to the many campuses that now make up our school family, our mission has stayed the same: to inspire confidence, good character, and lifelong achievement. Each of our schools has its own personality and traditions, but all share one important goal—helping children feel safe, loved, and ready to explore their world.

This Family Handbook is here to give you a clear picture of how our schools operate and what you can expect throughout the year. Inside, you'll find our safety practices, communication guidelines, and policies that guide our team—all designed to create a consistent, caring, and secure environment for your child. These policies help us protect the little ones we serve and ensure that every family has a smooth, positive experience.

We believe that strong partnerships with families make our classrooms even better. If you ever have questions, ideas, or simply want to check in about your child's day, please reach out to your School Director or your child's teacher—we're always here to help.

Thank you for choosing Early Care and Education and for trusting us with such an important part of your child's story. We can't wait to learn, grow, and celebrate magical moments with you!

With warmth and excitement,
Early Care and Education Leadership Team

Mission and Values

Mission: Our mission is to deliver a high-quality early childhood education program, helping students successfully reach important developmental, emotional, and academic milestones

Values: Quality. Integrity. Service. Community

Table of Contents

Days/Hours of Operation	5
Enrollment	5
Immunization Requirements	5
Hearing & Vision Screening	6
First Day Expectations	6
Tuition & Fees	6
Tuition	7
Fees	7
Third Party Tuition	8
Curriculum	8
Physical Activities	9
Screen Time	10
Classroom Placement & Ratios	10
Guidance & Discipline	10
Positive Behavior Support	10
Individual Behavior Support Approach	12
Texas Rising Stars	12
Communication	13
Parent Code of Conduct	13
Drop off and Pick up Procedures	14
Current Information	15
Parent Participation	15
Withdrawal From Program	15
Communicable Disease and Illness	15
Procedures for Conducting Health Checks	16
Medical Emergencies	17
Medication and Special Accommodations	17
Inclusive Services Partnership	17
Insect Repellent & Sunscreen	18
Emergency Preparedness Plan	18
Gang Free Zone	19

Inclement Weather	19
Midday Closures	19
Nutrition	20
Meals and Snacks	20
Infant Meals	20
Accommodations for Breastfeeding Mothers	20
Nutrition Education and Allergies	20
Food for Celebrations and Special Events	21
Food Safety Practices	21
Transportation	21
Water Activities	21
Field Trips	22
Animals/Pets	22
Infant Safe Sleep Policy	22
Family Resources	23
Minimum Standards	23
Preventing & Responding to Abuse & Neglect of Children	23
Contacting the Local Family & Protective Services Office	24
Texas Parent Rights	24
Receipt of Handbook/Policies Acknowledgement	26
Appendix A	27

Days/Hours of Operation

Early Care and Education will be open five days a week, Monday through Friday year-round, except for designated holidays. Hours of operation vary by location, so please see school leadership for correct hours of operation. 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	Independence Day	Labor Day	Columbus Day
Thanksgiving Day	Day after Thanksgiving	Week of Christmas	

No refund or credit will be given for holiday closures. 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. Notices of closures will be posted in advance.

Tuition will be due as regularly billed. Tuition will not be pro-rated or refunded for children's absences. It is important that your child attends regularly as our curriculum builds from day to day and week to week. Consistency and structure are vital in your child's learning process.

Enrollment

Early Care and Education welcomes all children who are within the eligible age range for each school's programs. 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.

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the following: (1) completed Enrollment Application, (2) Physician's Statement, (3) Tuition Express Application, (4) Income Eligibility Form, (5) Emergency Release Form, (6) Food Program Enrollment Form, (7) signed tuition agreement, (8) registration fee, (9) current immunization records or notarized immunization exemption affidavit, and (10) signed Family Handbook receipt. Required forms are subject to change based on state licensing and facility policy updates.

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 care at any time, **for any reason.**

Immunization Requirements

Each child enrolled in/or admitted to child-care schools must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the governing health authority in the state where the school operates. Families must provide documentation of current immunizations or an approved exemption as required by state and local regulations.

This requirement applies to all children in care from birth to 17 years of age. Except as otherwise provided in this division, all immunizations required for the child's age must be completed by the date of admission.

Hearing & Vision Screening

The Special Senses and Communication Disorders Act, Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36, requires a screening or a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems for children who are enrolled in a child-care school that are first-time enrollees, who are four years of age or older and for all children enrolled in programs who are four years of age by September 1 of each year. These screenings must be completed within 120 calendar days from enrollment.

A present screening conducted within one year before enrollment is acceptable. The school must be provided with the individual vision or hearing screening or a signed statement from the parent that the screening records are on file at the school the child currently attends. The statement must be dated and include the name, address, and telephone number of the school.

First Day Expectations

A child's first day of enrollment may be difficult, and worrisome for parents and children. Our staff and teachers are prepared to make your family's day as easy as possible. A quick drop off is best to help a child struggling to detach.

To help the first day go as planned please remember to pack the following:

- Bottles with prepared formula or breastmilk. We do not allow formula to be mixed by the teacher.
- Pacifier if applicable
- Diapers or pullups
- Water bottle
- Small blanket for nap time (toddler and up) - Please note that nap/rest time is required. Children will never be forced to sleep, but will be encouraged to rest
- Change of clothes (seasonably appropriate)

Children should come to school each day dressed in weather-appropriate clothing that they can move in freely. All shoes should be close-toed – no sandals or flip-flops. Every child that is walking or learning to walk must wear shoes. Extra clothing must be provided, in case of a restroom accident or spills. Clothing that is brought or worn to Early Care and Education should be labeled to avoid confusion or inadvertently being misplaced/lost. Early Care and Education does not assume responsibility for lost or misplaced items, and will not replace or provide credit for items lost or misplaced. Children should not bring personal toys to school, other than on scheduled show-and-tell days. This can add more stress for other children who may want to play with the other child's toy, as the other child may confuse this with toys they have at their own house, or they may accidentally take it home.

Tuition & Fees

Tuition

Tuition is due regardless of attendance, following the billing cycle outlined in your Tuition Agreement.

Tuition Rates: Rates are based on your child's schedule and primary classroom. Additional charges apply for before/after school programs and for full days when elementary schools are closed or released early.

Part-Time Schedules: Part-time schedules are considered exceptions and may not be available at all locations or for all age groups. If a part-time schedule is provided, families must stick to the scheduled days. The school maintains the ability to decline any changes to part-time schedules. Any requested changes must be provided with a 30 day notice.

Late Payments: A late fee may be applied if tuition is not paid by the date specified in the Tuition Agreement. If tuition remains unpaid by the end of the week, your child's enrollment may be suspended temporarily until payment is made in full. Please note that your child's space is not guaranteed if enrollment is suspended.

Collections: Accounts with unpaid balances beyond 60 days may be referred to collections.

Fees

Registration Fee: Registration fees are charged at enrollment and annually each spring to secure your child's seat for the upcoming school year. This fee applies per child or family, including drop-in programs. Registration fees are non-refundable and do not apply toward tuition or other fees.

Waiting List: Not all locations have the option of a waiting list. If your school offers a waiting list, payment of the initial registration fee may be required to hold your child's spot on the list.

Supply Fee: Supply fees apply to select programs and are charged at enrollment for each eligible child. Depending on your location, these fees may be assessed either annually or bi-annually. Please refer to your Tuition Agreement for the specific fee amounts and billing schedule for your location.

Summer Camp Kit Fee: Required for each Stem Station student enrolling in Summer Camp.

Late Pick Up: Additional fees may be applied if your child is picked up after closing or after their scheduled program has ended.

Payment Processing: Credit card payments may incur a processing fee. Debit and ACH payments do not incur additional fees.

Failed/Returned Payments: Recurring Tuition Express payments that are returned or declined by your banking institution may incur a fee per occurrence. Bank-assessed fees (e.g., overdraft charges) are the responsibility of the parent and will not be reimbursed.

Failure to cancel scheduled school pick-up: Additional fees may be charged if a school-aged child is scheduled for pick-up from elementary school, and Early Care and Education is not notified of a cancellation.

Third Party Tuition

Families receiving tuition assistance from third-party agencies are responsible for:

- Maintaining eligibility with the agency and notifying school administration of any changes.
- Paying any co-pay or fees determined by the agency.
- Covering any portion of tuition or fees not covered by the agency, in accordance with agency rules.
- If eligibility ends, families may choose to continue enrollment under private pay tuition.

Curriculum

We use a hands-on, research-based approach to support children's growth in all areas- social, emotional, physical, and academic. Preschoolers learn best through play, exploration, and meaningful, real-world experiences. Our program is designed to meet children at their developmental level and guide them through engaging, purposeful learning activities.

Each day, children will sing songs, create art, explore science and math with real materials, play games that build early literacy and thinking skills, listen to stories, and form friendships. Through these experiences, children learn to ask questions, solve problems, express their ideas, and work cooperatively with others.

Learning is embedded in play because that is how young children make sense of the world around them. Whether building with blocks, engaging in pretend play, or observing nature, children develop key skills such as communication, collaboration, self-regulation, and curiosity. The goal is to foster confidence, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning in a safe and supportive environment.

Frog Street Curriculum

We use the **Frog Street curriculum** in our infant, toddler, preschool, and pre-kindergarten classrooms. This research-based program encourages learning through active engagement with people, objects, and real-life experiences. Through hands-on activities and guided exploration, children develop essential readiness skills in a fun and nurturing environment.

Learn more at: www.frogstreet.com

The Creative Curriculum

Select classrooms also implement **The Creative Curriculum**, a comprehensive, research-based program that fosters whole-child development through project-based learning, critical thinking, and purposeful play. More information is available at www.teachingstrategies.com

Assessment and Developmental Progress

To support the unique developmental journey of each child, we use the following tools:

- **Teaching Strategies GOLD** – A comprehensive assessment tool used from infancy through Pre-K4, completed **three times per year** (beginning, middle, and end).
- **Frog Street Developmental Checklists** – Used regularly in classrooms to monitor and document children’s developmental progress across key learning domains, aligned with the Frog Street curriculum.

These assessments guide lesson planning and individualized support to help children thrive. Parents receive progress updates during **biannual conferences**, and any developmental concerns are communicated promptly with recommendations and resources for home support.

Physical Activities

Regular physical activity and outdoor play are essential parts of each child’s day at our school. Time spent moving, exploring, and playing outdoors helps children build strong bodies, improve coordination, and develop healthy lifelong habits. Outdoor experiences also support brain development by encouraging creativity, problem-solving, and curiosity as children interact with the natural world. Physical activity promotes positive social and emotional growth by giving children opportunities to practice cooperation, manage feelings, and build confidence through safe risk-taking and open-ended play. Fresh air and active movement also support healthy routines, improve focus, and help children return to the classroom ready to learn.

Children spend time outside each day, weather permitting. Morning and afternoon playground time is part of the daily schedule and is encouraged every day. Please dress children appropriately for weather conditions. We require children to wear closed-toe shoes while at school in order to prevent injury.

In accordance with state licensing regulations, the following physical activity times will be provided for each age group. This policy is subject to change based on state licensing regulations:

- Infants will be given the opportunity for physical activity, including supervised tummy time.
- Toddlers: 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play outdoors each day. The remainder of the time would be spent indoors, with preplanned activities that encourage individual and group play, along with teacher-led lessons
- Preschool - PreK: 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play outdoors each day. The remainder of the time would be spent indoors, with preplanned activities that encourage individual and group play, along with teacher-led lessons
- School age: Children in attendance for a full day will have a minimum of 90 minutes of vigorous active play outdoors. The remainder of the time would be spent indoors, with preplanned activities that encourage individual and group play, along with teacher-led lessons
- Afterschool school-age: Children will participate in a minimum of 30 minutes of active outdoor play each day. The remainder of the time would be spent indoors, with preplanned activities that encourage individual and group play, along with teacher-led lessons

Please note that outdoor play is weather permitted. To help keep children safe outdoors, we utilize the “Child Care Weather Watch” chart to ensure we take the appropriate measures to maintain safe environments. This can be found at [Child Care Weather Watch](#). When play outdoors is impacted, teachers and caregivers will shift to indoor play, that will allow children access to large gross motor activities such as obstacle courses, “animal walks”, balancing, and ball games to name a few.

Screen Time

Screen time is limited to one hour per day and will coincide with the curriculum. Children under 2 are not permitted to have screen time while in care.

Classroom Placement and Teacher-to-Child Ratios

Classroom placement is determined based on each child’s:

- Chronological age
- Developmental readiness
- Emotional and physical growth

Transitions typically occur twice per year, though children may move earlier or later based on individual needs. Early Care and Education adheres to teacher-to-child ratios that meet or exceed Texas Childcare Regulation standards.

Guidance & Discipline

At our schools, discipline is a shared partnership with parents to support each child’s growth and well-being. We use positive guidance and age-appropriate strategies to help children learn self-control, make good choices, and develop respect for themselves and others.

We never use physical punishment, and teachers are instructed to avoid language that could make a child feel scared or ashamed. Instead, we focus on redirection and calm, clear explanations about why certain behaviors aren’t allowed. This approach follows Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing standards and helps create a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment for every child.

Positive Behavior Support

We embrace a Positive Behavior Support model that works to prevent challenging behavior in young children. Teachers proactively help children develop self-control and social skills they will need to be happy and functioning members of the community.

The true goal of positive behavior guidance is to help children acquire the skill of self-control. Children are more likely to develop self-control when they are treated with dignity and given clear, consistent, and fair limits for classroom behavior. We support positive teacher-to-child and child-to-child interactions by encouraging respectful communication, building a classroom community, and helping teachers to understand developmentally appropriate responses as children learn how to navigate classroom and behavioral expectations.

Our staff work with children to help them set their own limits. Our guidance policy is proactive rather than reactive. Our staff uses positive methods of support and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. We empower the children in our classrooms by offering choices and by encouraging them to take responsibility with classroom jobs.

When children struggle with making appropriate behavior choices, our approach is to embrace these teachable moments by helping children learn social-emotional skills, through teaching, modeling, and coaching in the moment.

Our teachers respond to children's challenging behaviors, including physical aggression, in a manner that:

- Provides for the safety of the child
- Provides for the safety of others in the classroom
- Is calm
- Is respectful to the child
- Provides the child with information on acceptable behavior

Specifically, they will:

- Use encouragement of good choices or behavior rather than focus only upon unacceptable behavior
- Remind a child of behavior expectations by using clear, positive statements, and modeling the desired behavior
- Use environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior
- Redirect behavior using positive statements
- Reinforce children when they make good choices

The following types of discipline are prohibited:

- Hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, pulling, pushing, physical force, or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment to hurt a child.
- Restricting a child's movement by binding, tying, or any other type of physical restraint or time-out, including lifting or carrying a child.
- Confining a child in any enclosed area such as a closet, locker, cubicle, office, bathroom, etc.
- Mental or emotional cruelty such as humiliating, shaming, threatening, belittling, intimidating, forcing, or frightening a child.
- Depriving a child of water, meals, snacks, rest, recreation time, or necessary toilet use, or depriving of shelter or water, etc.
- Use of food or water as a reward or punishment.
- Use or withholding of physical activity as a punishment.
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
- Leaving children unattended or unsupervised for any amount of time.
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive (time-outs).
- Any other form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect.

Individual Behavior Support Approach

For children with persistent or seriously challenging behavior, our systematic approach supports teachers, administrators, and families in working together to assist children with whom positive behavior support techniques appear to be ineffective. The Education Department is available to support teachers, administrators, and families in this process as needed. In addition, outside support professionals may be included as needed to work with the school-family team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success. The cost of these outside professionals will be the responsibility of the family.

If your child continues to exhibit inappropriate behavior over a period of time, you may be asked to participate in a parent-teacher conversation with a member of management and your child's teacher. Children may be invited to attend as well.

Failure to sign a Behavior Intervention Plan and/or to cooperate with its terms and conditions are grounds for immediate disenrollment.

Texas Rising Stars

Our schools strive to obtain accreditation through the Texas Rising Star Quality Certification. TRS is a quality rating and improvement system for Texas early childhood programs. Obtaining this certification demonstrates that our program goes above and beyond the Minimum Standards required by Licensing and indicates that we are a high-quality program.

You can find an appendix at the end of this handbook which identifies the location of TRS and Minimum Standards requirements.

Communication

Communication between staff and parents is essential for the well-being of the children in our care. Teachers will communicate directly with parents through ProCare. A monthly newsletter and calendar are emailed to parents at the beginning of each month, listing the month's activities, including holiday celebrations. Other important information will be emailed or sent home with your child.

Parents have the right to have access to the building and their children during hours of operations.

Parent Code of Conduct

As our partner in your child's care and education, we hold our community to a standard that ensures we can deliver the best possible experience to our families. We ask that parents of enrolled children behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect, by respecting our parent code of conduct.

This includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. The conflict resolution process: This process must follow:
 - The initial step involves a direct, informal discussion between the Director and the parent to address and resolve the issue.
 - If the issue remains unresolved after a reasonable amount of time, a formal resolution process will involve a meeting between the parent, teacher, and the Director.
 - If the issue still cannot be resolved, both parties agree to participate in mediation with a neutral third-party mediator before any withdrawal is initiated. Mediation will occur in the county where the school operates, and costs will be shared equally by both parties prior to resolution. Failure to comply with this process may result in forfeiture of deposits or credits and may be considered a breach of this agreement.
2. Parents/ Guardians are not permitted to cuss or swear on the premises.
3. Parents/ Guardians are prohibited from engaging in any form of harassment, intimidation, or bullying – whether verbal, physical, or digital – toward staff, children, or other families. This includes inappropriate language, threats, or negative commentary on social media.
4. Parents/Guardians should not physically or verbally punish their child or other children. Early Care and Education encourages all parents/guardians to implement the positive behavior support demonstrated by the school.
5. For the health of employees, children, and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on school property. Parents/Guardians are prohibited from smoking in buildings, on the grounds, and in the parking lot. Those who smoke in their cars must dispose of the cigarette prior to entering the parking lot.
6. Parents/Guardians must follow all safety procedures and protocols while on the premises.
7. Parents/Guardians must maintain confidentiality, and respect the confidential information of other employees, children, and parents.

8. Cell phone usage is prohibited in the facility; please end all calls before proceeding to drop off or pick up your child.
9. Parents/Guardians are prohibited from seeking babysitting or other employment services from employed staff.
10. Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing the Director with updated documentation whenever there are changes to a child's legal guardianship or the list of the individuals authorized to pick up the child. Without the appropriate legal documentation, completed and signed by the appropriate legal representative, the school cannot make changes to enrollment or pickup permissions. When updates are necessary, families will be provided with revised enrollment forms to ensure all records are current and accurate.
11. Parents/Guardians agree to not make, publish, or communicate any defamatory, disparaging, or negative statements about Early Care and Education, its staff, or other families, whether verbally, in writing, or on social media.

Please note that parents and/or guardians refusing to follow our code of conduct may result in immediate disenrollment and legal remedies as permitted by law.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

Upon arrival, please check your child in through the ProCare app, then bring your child in and leave him/her in the care of a team member within a classroom. Authorization from a parent/guardian is needed for those individuals who will be permitted to pick up your child. The names of these individuals should be provided to us at the time of enrollment. Under no circumstances will an adult be permitted to pick up a child without authorization or proper identification. In an emergency, you may call the school and give authorization over the phone, but we will request an email from a parent or guardian to verify and release children. All authorized individuals should be prepared to show photo identification at pick-up.

FOR SAFETY REASONS, CHILDREN MAY NOT BE DROPPED OFF IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING OR COME IN BY THEMSELVES.

When dropping your child off and picking them up, please keep them with you until they are left with their teacher or until they are safely outside the building with you. Parents must enter through the front doors of the building to pick up or drop off their child. We ask that you please turn your car off, lock the doors, and hide any valuables. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. Your child's safety and the safety of others is very important to us.

When children are on the playground, Parents **must** come through the front doors of the building, collect their child's belongings from their classroom and then gather children off the playground.

Current Information

For the safety of your child, we ask that we have current contact information for parents/ guardians and emergency contacts. Information may be updated by requesting your child's file and updating enrollment forms or emailing updated information.

All changes and/or additions to the emergency/alternate pick-up list must be made in writing, dated, and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

Parent Participation

We encourage parental involvement. Parents are invited to attend holiday celebrations, including class parties and parades. If we are looking for volunteers for any special event, parents will receive a form to sign up to take part in that event. If a parent wishes to be involved in any other day-to-day activities, please see the Director to obtain a form for a background check.

Withdrawal from Program

If you wish to withdraw your child from Early Care and Education, a 14-day (two-week) notice is required. A Withdrawal Form must be completed and submitted to the administrative team to begin the withdrawal process. A link to submit your formal notice of disenrollment will be emailed to you once you express your intent to withdraw from our program.

Tuition remains due during the two-week notice period, regardless of whether your child attends. If the proper 14-day notice is given, any unused prepaid tuition will be refunded within 30 days of the withdrawal date. If notice is not provided, families will be charged for an additional two weeks of tuition in lieu of notice.

Re-enrollment after withdrawal is subject to availability.

Communicable Disease and Illnesses

If your child becomes ill during the day, the parent will be contacted to come pick up the child. We ask that children be picked up within one hour of being contacted to ensure they receive timely care. Absences will not be discounted or prorated.

A child will not be admitted, and a doctor's note will be required if one or more of the following exists:

- a. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in children's activities, including outdoor play.
- b. The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a healthcare professional indicates that you can include the child in the child-care activities:
 - Tympanic (ear) or forehead temperature of 100 degrees or greater (Child should stay at home at least 24 hours after a normal temperature is achieved WITHOUT the help of fever-reducing medications. For example, if your child goes home on Monday with a

fever, they may come back to the School on Wednesday, if their temperature was normal on Tuesday)

- Two or more diarrheas within 24 hours (child may return when normal function returns)
- Two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours (child may return when they can retain a light meal)
- Persistent or congested cough with a sore throat (child may return with doctor's written permission)
- Green nasal discharge, which indicates a respiratory infection which requires treatment (child may return with doctor's written permission)
- Conjunctivitis, or pink eye (because it is highly contagious; child may return with doctor's written permission)
- Difficulty in breathing to the point where child is extremely uncomfortable or unable to sleep normally
- Persistent pain in abdomen
- Swelling, redness, or throbbing in an injured part of the body
- Undiagnosed profuse rash or blisters on parts of the body
- Behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill

If your child is allergic to any food and/or requires a special diet, please provide a doctor's or health-care professional's letter. We will request further information and ask you to partner with your physician to fill out a Food Allergy Emergency Plan, as required by individual state licensing

Procedures for Conducting Health Checks

- A Health Check is a visual or physical assessment of a child to identify potential concerns about a child's health, including signs or symptoms of illness and injury, in response to changes in the child's behavior since the last date of attendance.
- Caregivers will visually assess the child upon arrival. They will assess only areas of the body not covered by clothing unless there is cause for concern about the child's health. Due to state compliance, we require all children, including infants, to be awake so that our team members can assess the children entering the program.
- If no signs or symptoms of illness or injury are present, the assessment will not be documented.
- If signs or symptoms of illness or injury are present, the assessment will be documented on the Health Check Form.
- If signs of illness or injury are present, shirt sleeves may be pushed up to the elbow, shirts may be lifted to expose the child's back, and pant legs may be lifted to the knee for further assessment.
- If signs or symptoms of illness or injury are discovered during diaper changing, they will be documented on the Health Check Form.

Medical Emergencies

If a child is seriously injured or experiences a medical emergency, trained staff will administer CPR and/or appropriate First Aid until emergency responders arrive. Emergency Services (911) will be contacted immediately for assistance. Parents or guardians will be contacted as soon as possible. Information given in your enrollment packet will be used to facilitate communication and care. Families are responsible for keeping their child's records current to ensure timely and accurate communication.

Medications and Special Accommodations

Prescription medication will only be administered during school hours when it is prescribed to be given three times a day or more, or when a specific mid-day dose is required for the child's health.

Prescription medication can be dispensed if the following is provided:

- A parent's signed authorization form that includes time to administer the medication, according to label direction.
- Medication is in its original container and is labeled with the child's full name with the date brought to the school.
- Medication and prescription cannot be expired.

Over-the-counter medication cannot be dispensed unless it is prescribed by a physician and accompanied by the physician's written prescription. Medication will be administered by a trained member of our leadership team or another staff member who is authorized to do so. Prescribed rescue medication will be kept on-site as needed, with signed authorization required.

Inclusive Services Partnership

Parents with children who require special care as recommended by a health-care professional; or a qualified professional affiliated with the local school district or early childhood intervention programs should inform Early Care and Education prior to enrollment for accommodations to be made when the following requests are required:

- Medications prescribed for continuous, long-term use.
- Limitations or restrictions on child's activities; and
- Special care the child requires, including:
 - Any reasonable accommodation or modifications.
 - Any adaptive equipment provided for the child, and instructions for its use; and
 - Symptoms or indications of potential complications related to a physical, cognitive, or mental condition that may warrant prevention or intervention while the child is in care.
 - Early intervention services or special education services that will take place during operating hours including accurate space for therapies.

Early Care and Education is committed to ensuring that caregivers adapt equipment and utilize various procedures and methods necessary to care for a child with special needs in a natural

environment. We will do our best to collaborate with early intervention specialists, and partner with qualified service providers upon parental request and approval

Insect Repellent & Sunscreen

Parents may provide insect repellent and sunscreen to be applied to their child before going outside each day. The products must be in their original container and may not be shared with siblings or other children and will be applied in accordance with label direction. An Ointments and Creams Authorization form must be completed and returned before these products may be applied. The products you provide will be labeled with your child's first and last name and will be used only on your child.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

Evacuation, Relocation, and Sheltering/Lock-down of Children

- Our first responsibility of the staff in an emergency evacuation or relocation is to move the children to a designated safe area or alternate shelter known to all employees, caregivers, parents, and volunteers. Staff will use the safest available route based on conditions, following posted evacuation/relocation diagrams.
- For fire or gas leak events, children and caregivers will evacuate to designated outdoor safe area. If conditions require increased distance (e.g., windborne fumes), staff will relocate to the alternate shelter listed in this plan
- Children under 24 months or any child with limited mobility or other assistance needs will be evacuated using an evacuation cribs, strollers, or wagons with pre-assigned staff.
- In a sheltering/lock-down, the administration will call 911 and announce a lock-down alert phrase. If the threat is outside, teachers secure rooms and keep children inside. If the threat is inside, teachers move children to designated out-of-sight areas, lock doors, and remain quiet until cleared by law enforcement. We practice evacuation, sheltering, and lock-down drills at the CCR-required cadence and document each drill.
- An Emergency Evacuation Plan is posted in each classroom and the lobby.
- Please see the attached Alternative Shelter list for specific emergency evacuation locations.
- Communication: In the event of an emergency evacuation, the school's phone number will be forwarded to the director's cell phone so parents can call the regular school number for information. The director will communicate with local authorities, parents, and Child Care Licensing via her cell phone, and electronic messages will also be sent to parents through ProCare. During evacuation, staff will carry the classroom tablet, which contains emergency phone numbers for each child.
- Documentation and Accountability: Staff will carry the classroom tablet, which has access to ProCare. The ProCare contains emergency phone numbers and emergency care authorizations in each child's profile. The app will also be used for name-to-face checks upon departure, at the safe area/alternate shelter, and before release.

- **Child Care During Emergency:** Staff will remain with children throughout the emergency until the classroom is cleared for return or each child has been released to their parent. Emergency bags containing diapers, snacks, books, portable toys, and activities are kept in each classroom and will be carried by teachers during evacuation.
- **Reunification:** If unable to return to the school, parents will be notified to pick up their children. Reunification will occur at the alternate location, communicated to parents. Parents will be required to show identification to pick-up their child. If there is a lockdown, parents are authorized to pick up their children from their classroom once the lockdown has been lifted.

Early Care and Education reserves the right to adjust evacuation, relocation, and lockdown/shelter procedures at any time to best address the specific circumstances of an emergency

Gang -Free Zone

Our school is designated as a gang-free zone. Certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of this school is a violation of law and, therefore, subject to increased penalties under state law.

Inclement Weather

The safety of our children, families, and staff is our top priority. In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, Early Care and Education locations may delay opening, close early, or remain closed for the day. The school may close if severe weather is accompanied by significant events such as a loss of power or water. In these cases, closure decisions will be made with the safety of everyone in mind.

Families will be notified of school closures through:

- ProCare Connect messages
- The school's social media pages
- Email communication

Midday Closures:

If the school needs to close in the middle of the day, the Director will contact parents first to arrange for immediate pick-up. If a parent cannot be reached, the individuals listed on the child's emergency or alternative contact form will be called in the order provided until arrangements are secured.

If evacuation is necessary, the director will inform the parent or emergency contact of the alternate pick-up location. In such cases, parents or contacts should go directly to the specified alternate location.

Early Care and Education shall not be liable for failure to perform its obligations due to events beyond its reasonable control, including natural disasters, pandemics, or government mandates. Tuition remains due during such closures, and no refunds or credits will be issued for closures lasting fewer than five school days.

Nutrition

At Early Care and Education, we are committed to providing nutritious, well-balanced meals and snacks that support the growth and development of every child in our care. Our schools follow the USDA guidelines when planning and preparing meals.

Meals and Snacks

Meals and the types of meals offered may vary by location. Locations may serve:

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Afternoon Snack

If applicable, meals are prepared onsite in our inspected kitchen. A rotating four-week menu is posted in each classroom and in the front foyer. Children are encouraged- but never forced- to eat. Food is never used as a reward or punishment.

Infant Meals

- Parents must complete a monthly feeding schedule or update it as their child's needs change.
- Teachers complete a daily report for each infant, documenting what and how much the child ate and when.

Accommodation for Breastfeeding Mothers

Mothers have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their infant while in care. Breast milk that is left at the school will be properly stored in a refrigerator. Breast milk containers must be labeled with the child's name as well as the date the breast milk was expressed. If mothers prefer to breastfeed an infant at the school, a comfortable chair will be provided for their use in the infant room.

Nutrition Education and Allergies

- Our schools are **Nut-Free Facilities**. No food items containing nuts/tree nuts are allowed.
- Food allergy lists are maintained in each classroom, and all staff are trained to recognize and respond to food allergies.
- Parents must provide a doctor's note for any diagnosed food allergies or dietary restrictions (e.g., lactose intolerance, vegetarian diet, gluten-free).
- The school shares resources with families about child nutrition and food allergens and offers sample lunch menus for those who bring food from home. Families providing meals

from home, are required to follow our school food restrictions, and provide meals that follow the USDA meal pattern, more information can be found at <https://www.choosemyplate.gov>

Food for Celebrations and Special Events

- Outside food for birthdays or classroom parties must be **store-bought** and **prepared in a facility inspected by local health authorities**.
- All items must include an ingredient label for allergy safety.
- Candy bars, gum, soda, and candy treats (such as Skittles, Starbursts, etc.) are not permitted and should be enjoyed at home.

Food Safety Practices

- Food and drinks hotter than **110°F** are kept out of children's reach.
- Glass containers and aluminum cans are not allowed, except for baby food jars in infant classrooms.
- All meals and snacks are served in a safe, age-appropriate environment.

Transportation

At Early Care and Education, the safety and well-being of every child is our highest priority, especially when transportation services are provided. If your child is eligible for center-provided transportation for before or after care, we follow strict guidelines that meet or exceed Texas Minimum Standards to ensure every trip is safe, secure, and reliable. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services regulates transportation services provided by or for child-care centers, including rides between school and other authorized locations such as pick up schools or field trip sites if applicable. These policies exist to protect your child and provide peace of mind for families.

All drivers must hold valid, current driver's licenses, and vehicles are always maintained in safe operating conditions. Safety seats and restraints are used according to state guidelines, and caregivers participate in appropriate training to support safe transportation practices. All transportation staff are trained to follow established emergency procedures.

Families who choose to use our transportation services should ensure that the center has up-to-date emergency contact information and medical authorization forms for each child. Our goal is to offer reliable and safe transportation while always maintaining clear communication with families.

Water Activities

During the summer months, children may take part in water activities. Children must bring appropriate swim attire, including close-toed water shoes. Sandals of any kind (including those with a back strap) are not permitted. If a child does not have water attire they will not be allowed to participate in water activities. Parents are required to inform school personnel if a child can swim

without assistance. All children will be supervised during water play at all times. If you do not wish for your child to take part in water activities, please specify this on your admission information form or communicate this to front office staff or the child's teacher.

Water activities will include sprinkler play and wading pool play. No child will use the sprinkler equipment on or near a hard, slippery surface. All wading pools will be sanitized daily.

Field Trips

Field trips will be taken during the school year with children ages four to twelve. We will visit places like the zoo, library, museums, picnics in the park, and other places of interest. Field trip notices will be posted at least 48 hours in advance.

All children must have a signed permission slip to board transportation. If children do not have proper parent authorization, they will not be allowed to attend off site field trips and will be relocated to a younger classroom as a helper until the class returns to the school. From time to time our Pre-K students will attend offsite field trips to various locations, supporting overall curriculum themes. For students with parent permission to attend there will be an additional charge assessed to accounts for field trips to cover the cost of activity and transportation.

Animals/ Pets

Family pets may not be brought into the school at any time. On occasion, an animal may be brought in as part of a learning activity. Parents will be notified in writing in advance and only children with a permission slip signed by a parent will be allowed contact with the animal. Any animals brought in must have current vaccinations and must have been examined by a local veterinarian to obtain a statement of health. Documentation will accompany the animal.

Infant Safe Sleep Policy

Safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants are utilized to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome in children under the age of one year.

The staff members in our school follow these guidelines:

- Infants are always placed on their backs for sleeping unless the parent provides an Infant Sleep Exception form signed by a health care professional.
- Infants are placed on a firm mattress, with a tight-fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size and non-full-size cribs.
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs are bare except for a tight-fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed include soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep position devices. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing.
- Sleeping areas are well-ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.

- Sleep clothing, such as sleepers, sleep sacks, and wearable blankets, are encouraged as an alternative to blankets. Infant arms must be able to move freely while wearing any of the above.
- Only one infant will be placed in a crib to sleep.
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep, but the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a strangulation risk.
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing or arrives to care asleep in a car seat) the infant will be moved to a crib immediately unless the parent provides an Infant Sleep Exception form signed by a healthcare professional.
- Caregivers actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound.
- If an infant can roll back and forth from front to back, they will be placed on their back to sleep and allowed to assume a preferred sleep position.
- Additionally, babies who are awake have supervised daily "tummy time" to help them strengthen muscles and develop normally.
- Infants will not be swaddled for sleep or rest unless the parent provides an Infant Sleep Exception form signed by a healthcare professional.

Family Resources

Minimum Standards

You have the right to review a copy of the Minimum Standards for Licensed Child-Care Centers and the most recent inspection report. Please contact the Director to review these documents. The Minimum Standards for Licensed Child-Care Centers can also be accessed online at www.dfps.state.tx.us.

Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect of Children

The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as, at minimum: any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

- Caregivers are required to complete annual training regarding preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children.
- Caregivers are mandated reporters and must report suspected abuse immediately to Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline. Individuals are not required to notify anyone prior to calling intake, as they have been trained on the signs of suspected abuse yearly and are required by law to report suspected abuse to authorities.
- Warning signs that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect include extremes in behavior, lack of attachment to a parent or caregiver, frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, fear of going home, ill-fitting or filthy clothing, consistently bad hygiene, trouble walking or sitting, display of knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age. For a complete list of warning signs, visit Helpguide.org.

- Several statewide services and support programs are available, including the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (www.dfps.state.tx.us); Prevent Child Abuse Texas (www.preventchildabusetexas.org); Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas (www.cactx.org); and Court Appointed Special Advocates of Texas (www.texascasa.org).
- Local community resources include the Family Service Association of San Antonio (family.service.org), Child Advocates of San Antonio (CASA), and Child Safe (childsafesa.org). The West Dallas Multipurpose Center, (214) 670-7230 for more information.
- Parents of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should contact SAPD Children’s Services at (210) 207-2180 or Child Protective Services Child Abuse Hotline at 1 (800) 252-5400.
- Team members who report suspicion of child abuse/neglect are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason, unless it is proven that the report was intended to do harm.

Contacting The Local Family and Protective Services Offices

DFW Region Local Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) office:

208 YMCA Dr. Mail code: 3272, Waxahachie, Texas 75165
(972) 937-0892

DFPS Website: www.txchildcaresearch.org

Child Abuse Hotline: 1 (800) 252-5400

Poison Control: 1 (800) 222-1222

Additional childcare resources and assistance can be found at <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/>.

Texas Parents Rights

A parent or guardian of a child enrolled in a Texas 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.

Receipt of Handbook/Policies Acknowledgement

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received and read the Operational Policies and I agree to follow all policies and procedures outlined herein.

By signing below, I agree to the following:

1. Compliance with the Policies – I understand that failure to comply with school policies may result in termination of my child’s enrollment.
2. Financial Responsibility – I agree to pay tuition and fees as stated in the Tuition Agreement and understand that care may be terminated if payment is not kept current.
3. Limitation of Liability and Indemnification – I release Early Care and Education, its employees, and affiliates from liability for injuries, illnesses, or accidents occurring on its premises or during school activities, except where caused by gross negligence or willful misconduct. I agree to indemnify and hold harmless Early Care and Education from any claims, damages, or expenses arising from my child’s actions or failure to comply with school policies.
4. Photo and Video Release – I grant Early Care and Education permission to photograph or record my child during school activities for internal use, educational purposes, and marketing materials. I understand I may opt out by submitting a written request to the School Director.
5. Agreement to Mediation – I agree that any dispute arising out of or relating to my child’s enrollment or this agreement will first be addressed through the above stated conflict resolution process and, if unresolved, through mediation as described in the Handbook.
6. Non-Disparagement – I agree not to make, publish, or communicate any defamatory, disparaging, or negative statements about Early Care and Education, its staff, or other families, whether verbally, in writing, or on social media.
7. Acknowledgement of Updates – I understand that policies may be updated at any time with notice, and continued enrollment constitutes acceptance of such updates..

Note: If the parent or legal guardian is under age 18, a co-signer must sign this agreement, agreeing to be bound of all policies and financial terms as stated.

X

Parent/ Guardian

X

Director/Admin

Appendix for Cross Reference of Minimum Standards and TRS Requirements

Regulation	Our Policy	Located on Page:
<u>TX Administrative Code- Minimum Standards</u> <u>Division 4, Operational Policies §746.501.</u>		
(1) Hours, days, and months of operation	Days/Hours of Operation	5
(2) Procedures for the release of children	Drop off and Pickup Procedures	13
(3) Illness and exclusion criteria	Communicable Disease and Illness	14
(4) Procedures for dispensing medication or a statement that medication is not dispensed	Medication and Special Accommodations	15
(5) Procedures for handling medical emergencies	Medical Emergencies	15
(6) Procedures for parental notifications	Communication	12
(7) Discipline and guidance that is consistent with Subchapter L.	Guidance & Discipline	10
(8) Suspension and expulsion of children	Guidance & Discipline	10
(9) Safe sleep policy for infants from birth through 12 months old that is consistent with the rules in subchapter H.	Infant Safe Sleep Policy	21
(10) Meals and food service practices	Nutrition	18
(11) Immunization requirements for children, including tuberculosis screening and testing.	Immunization Requirements	5
(12) Hearing and vision screening requirements	Hearing and Vision Screening	6
(13) Enrollment procedures, including how and when parents will be notified of policy changes	Enrollment	5
(14) Transportation	Transportation	20
(15) Water activities	Water Activities	20
(16) Field trips	Field Trips	21
(17) Animals	Animals/Pets	21
(18) Promotion of indoor and outdoor physical activity that is consistent with Subchapter F	Physical Activities	8
(19) Procedures for providing and applying, as needed, insect repellent and sunscreen	Insect Repellent and Sunscreens	16
(20) Parent rights that are consistent with the rules in Division 5	Texas Parent Rights	23
(21) Procedures for parents to review and discuss with the child-care center director any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures	Parent Code of Conduct	12
(22) Procedures for parents to participate in the child-care center's operation and activities	Parent Participation	14
(23) Instructions on how a parent may access the (A) Minimum standards online; (B) Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline; and (C) HHSC website.	Minimum Standards and Contacting the Local Family and Protective Services Offices	22
(24) Your emergency preparedness plan	Emergency Preparedness Plan	17
(25) Your provisions to provide a comfortable place with an adult sized seat in your center or within a classroom that enables a mother to breastfeed her child.	Accommodations for Breastfeeding Mothers	19
(26) Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children	Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect of Children	22
(27) Procedures for conducting health checks	Procedures for Conducting Health Checks	15
(30) Procedures for supporting inclusive services to children with special care needs.	Inclusive Services Partnership	16
(b) You must also inform the parents that any area within 1,000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone	Gang-free Zone	18

Texas Rising Star Requirements		
Program philosophy and goal	Mission, Vision & Values	2
Curriculum goals	Curriculum	8
Family participation	Parent Participation	14
Drop-off and pickup procedures	Parent Participation	14
Parent conferences	Curriculum	8
Fee structure	Tuition & Fees	6-7
Late payments and refund information	Tuition & Fees	6-7
Absences	Tuition & Fees, Communicable Diseases & Illness	6-7, 14
Clothing guidelines	First Day Expectations	6
Inclement weather policy	Inclement Weather	18
Withdrawal from program procedure	Withdraw from Program	14
Physical activity	Physical Activities	8
Screen time policies	Screen Time	9
Nutrition education and procedures	Nutrition	18
Breastfeeding policies and resources	Accommodations for Breastfeeding Mothers	19
Procedure in place to allow parents to update contact information at all times	Current Information	13
Policies are reviewed annually and updated if necessary	Acknowledgement	24
Collaboration Regarding Challenging Behaviors	Guidance & Discipline and Individual Behavior Support Approach	10
The program has systems in place for communication between the facility and parents	Communication	12
P-PM-05----- Program supports the use of assessments (formal and/or informal) that measure children's developmental progress.	Curriculum	8
P-PM-01---- Policy describing how the program supports children that need additional accommodations	Medication and Special Accommodations	15