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Parent Handbook

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I. WELCOME TO THE CARING CENTER [Back](#)

The Caring Center is dedicated to the highest quality childcare and early educational experience possible. We subscribe to a developmental philosophy, based on the theory that children experience several different, sequential stages of emotional, social, physical and cognitive growth. Your child's success in passing from one stage to the next is dependent upon appropriate environmental stimuli and the encouragement of innate abilities. The Caring Center encourages the development of self-confidence, self-esteem, decision-making abilities, cooperation, respect and caring for others and the community at large. We value your input as your child progresses, because you and your child are part of a very special partnership with The Caring Center.

Children need a child-responsive environment, staffed by dedicated and qualified professionals who work together to create a nurturing atmosphere. To ensure consistency of philosophy and performance, we recruit experienced educators with excellent credentials, who must qualify by completing a rigorous in-house orientation program, and then must participate in ongoing professional development and continuing education. Our excellent staff is trained to recognize and present children with those tasks that will best support their growth and development.

The center values heterogeneity as an important aspect of the learning environment. We seek to counteract stereotyping - which limits children from using their innate abilities – and we take pride in the differences among our staff and among our children.

The center is licensed as a childcare center by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Caring Center has earned 4 stars from Keystone STARS (their highest rating). The center's curriculum is aligned with The Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards and the Keystone Stars Quality Initiative. The center admits children and hires staff without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, and age (applicable to staff only). In partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, the center enrolls a limited number of children to participate in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start programs each year.

II. MISSION STATEMENT [Back](#)

The Caring Center is an independent nonprofit organization formed by parents and professional staff to deliver exemplary early childhood education and promote family and community development.

III. PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT [Back](#)

It has been said that 60 percent of human intelligence is formed by the time a child is three years old, 90 percent by the age of five. At The Caring Center, our mission is to make the most of this time. Whatever the age group, the same creative thought and interest goes into planning everything we do. Our program is designed to cultivate each stage of a child's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth through a rich variety of daily activities, which are planned to meet the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood. Our philosophy is to work within the natural developmental process of children, understanding that the best education begins with a strong foundation and first-hand experience.

We believe that all children are unique. We encourage each child to learn, grow, and develop at their own rate, and we treat each child as an individual. We closely observe every child's progress toward established benchmarks for development, but we adapt our curriculum to fit the needs of children who may require more time to reach a milestone and/or who may need to be challenged beyond our planned curriculum. We expect that children's language skills will be at different stages, their self-help skills will vary, and their projects and



artwork will look different. At The Caring Center, we strive to meet the individual needs of all our children, and foster their continuing development within a group setting.

We believe in educating the whole child. When we plan lessons and activities, we look at their value for developing coordination, conceptual abilities, artistic and language skills, social cooperation, and independence. We encourage our children to work and play cooperatively. We strive to ensure they grow up in an atmosphere of mutual respect and caring. We challenge them to try new things, but never pressure them to do more than they're ready for - because we want our children to have positive learning experiences to build on, and we want them to develop self-esteem and confidence. We help our children develop a love of learning that lasts a lifetime.

We believe that children learn through play. Depending on what stage of development a child is at, their "play" may look very different, but we plan fun and engaging learning activities every day to stimulate their growth. We encourage children to play games, build, pretend and explore. We plan time each day for structured and unstructured play – because through play, children learn social and language skills, enhance their motor skills, build creative expression, and continue to develop their understanding and processing skills.

We believe in building literacy from birth. Literacy is an essential building block for future success, so we read with our children every day, and we encourage and support our families to read with their children every day too. We design our classrooms to be literacy-rich environments, and we infuse our curriculum with literacy-specific instruction - because we know that literacy skills unlock the doors to all sorts of future possibilities, by empowering our children to learn new things and explore new worlds.

IV. THE CARING CENTER'S CORE VALUES [Back](#)

- **Kids First:** Putting kids' needs first and doing what's best for kids
- **Caring:** Respect, kindness and empathy for others
- **High Standards:** Setting a high bar for quality
- **Teamwork:** Cooperation with parents, colleagues, community
- **Positivity:** Optimism and enthusiasm for our work

V. OUR APPROACH [Back](#)

- Provide an individualized, developmentally-appropriate program focused on nurturing the whole child
- Stimulate emotional, intellectual, physical and social growth in a safe environment
- Instill a love of learning and sense of community in a multi-cultural environment
- Foster partnership between parents and staff (for the benefit of the children) by creating an atmosphere of communication and understanding
- Support the personal and professional development of staff, and enable them to provide a unique and innovative experience for the children

VI. ENROLLMENT [Back](#)

The Caring Center relies on word-of-mouth and referrals to help maintain full enrollment. Our outreach consists of regular engagement with and referrals from our relationships with local universities, the School District of Philadelphia and other childcare centers in our neighborhood.

The Center enrolls new children on a rolling basis (all year long), based on availability. It is recommended that all potential new Caring Center families register for a tour of the facility. Tours are conducted every other



Wednesday morning at 9:30. Once the tour is completed, application packets are distributed. Applications can be completed and submitted immediately after the tour. For participation in either the Pre-K Counts or Head Start program, there is a separate application and waitlist. Income and residency verification are also required, but there are no additional application fees. Please inquire at the front desk for more information.

Children eligible for enrollment at The Caring Center must be at least six (6) weeks old, as of their first day at the center. Children eligible to enroll in one of The Caring Center's Pre-K classes must be at least three (3) years old, on or before their start date. Children eligible to enroll in either the Pre-K Counts or Head Start program must be at least three (3) years old, as of the date used as the Philadelphia School District's kindergarten age-eligibility deadline date: September 1st. Five-year-olds who are age-eligible for kindergarten are not eligible to remain in the Caring Center's preschool program if they are funded through the Pre-K Counts or Head Start programs. All applications are reviewed by the Executive Director. Slots for childcare are offered based on the center's availability and in the order that each application/application fee was submitted.

VII. YOUR FIRST DAY [Back](#)

What an exciting day this is! Upon arrival, please give your name to the receptionist. Our staff will welcome you and help you to "settle in". The sign-in/out book is at the front desk. Please locate your child's classroom in the book and look for your child's name. Sign your name and the time of drop-off next to your child's name. If needed, please feel free to ask for assistance from the office staff; they are here to help you. The teachers will have a cubby ready for your child's clothing and extra supplies. A cot or crib will be assigned to your child, as well as a space to store diapers and wipes for your infant or toddler.

Parents of all new children are expected to remain with their children on the first day, to aid their transition into the new environment. (In the case of infants, we request that parents remain the first three days). Depending on your child's adjustment, your help may be needed on subsequent days. Parents are welcome to spend time at the center in advance of the official first day. Once your child has entered into an activity, or is being cared for by our staff, you may say a casual good-bye, reminding your child that you will return at the end of the day.

Your child's teachers will have carefully read the developmental history you have provided prior to your child's arrival. We welcome any further information you would like your child's teachers to have. It is important you are comfortable while your child is at the center. Feel free to phone the center to inquire about your child's adjustment as often as you deem necessary.

VIII. DAILY SCHEDULES AND PROGRAMS [Back](#)

Our program will vary according to your child's age and developmental needs. For easy reference, daily schedules are posted in each classroom.

Infants (6 weeks – 12 months old)

Infants create their own schedules and thus the schedule is kept informal. However, all infants receive periods of stimulation through both planned and spontaneous interaction with the staff, with other infants, and with age-appropriate materials.

Young Toddlers (12 – 24 months old)



With a staff ratio of one teacher for every five young toddlers, activities are both child-initiated and teacher-directed. This fosters emerging independence, cooperation, socialization and decision-making skills.

Toddlers (24 months – 3 years old)

Older toddlers have a more structured day. A brief morning circle time is introduced, a scheduled nap time is included, and eventually, use of the toilet is mastered. A variety of activities that help foster independence, socialization, cooperation, and decision-making skills are offered throughout the day. If a child prefers not to participate in the planned activity, he or she may choose to play with other toys or books or spend time in independent play.

Transitional Pre-Kindergarten (~3 – 4 years old)

Transitional Pre-Kindergarten is designed to meet the needs of older toddlers and/or younger Pre-K students, who may not be ready for the larger child/staff ratios of the Pre-Kindergarten program. Activities tend to concentrate on practical life experiences, sensorial exploration, and receptive/expressive language skills.

Pre-Kindergarten (3 – 5 years old)

Pre-Kindergarten begins at approximately three years of age. The hallmark of this passage is the child's mastery of toileting and becoming a part of a larger group of children. While the program varies from class to class, each Pre-Kindergarten class provides a nurturing environmental and synchronized conceptual theme. Activities are presented to develop fine and gross motor skills, pre-writing, pre-reading, language, and positive social and emotional conduct. Since children develop at their own pace, individual programs are developmentally appropriate and are designed to meet their unique needs. Mixed age groups provide an alternative to a rigid curriculum found in a single age group.

Kindergarten Transition (~5 – 6 years old)

The Kindergarten Transition Classroom is designed for children who miss entering Kindergarten because of cut-off dates. Classroom instruction occurs through an active learning approach where teachers use differentiated learning strategies and focus on learning centers and play as key elements in the daily schedule.

School-age Program (5 – 10 years old)

The after-school program focuses on enhancing the variety of subjects learned during the day. Children engage in both child-directed and adult-directed activities. Cooking, arts and crafts, theater projects, music, sports, computer literacy, and creative writing are included in the program, as well as time alone for homework or completing individual projects. Most projects and activities have no time limit; therefore, the after-school children can return to projects, master activities, and finish things at their leisure.

Early Care (6 weeks – 5 years old)

For those times when parents need to drop off their children before regular program hours begin, Early Care is available from 7-8am (Monday through Friday). A light breakfast is served to Early Care attendees at 7:30. An Early Care coupon must be presented any time a child is dropped off before 8am (even if a full hour of care is not needed). Coupons for Early Care can be purchased at the front desk. So that we can appropriately plan our staffing, food supplies, etc., we ask that you please notify the front desk at least 48 hours in advance (if possible) to let them know what day(s) you will be bringing your child for Early Care.

Head Start and Pre-K Counts Programs (3 – 5 years old)

When space permits, in partnership with The School District of Philadelphia, the center will enroll a limited number of children in a Head Start Supplemental Program and/or a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program. The children enrolled in these slots receive a variety of services in addition to The Caring Center's Program for Pre-



Kindergarten children. Children eligible for enrollment in one of The Caring Center’s Head Start or Pre-K Counts slots must be three years old on or before the Philadelphia School District’s kindergarten age-eligibility deadline date: September 1st. Five-year-olds who are age-eligible for kindergarten are not eligible to remain in the preschool setting if they are funded by PA Pre-K Counts or Head Start funding.

IX. DAILY ROUTINES [Back](#)

Parking [Back](#)

Due to the limited number of parking spaces available, parking in the lot adjacent to the center is permitted for use only to drop-off and pick-up your child. Please do not block other vehicles in the parking lot! Parallel to the building on 31st Street, there is a “Loading Zone” where additional short-term parking is available. (Please note: cars parked illegally will be ticketed and are subject to towing at owner’s expense.)

Arrival [Back](#)

Children and parents adjust most quickly when they can arrive before group activities begin (i.e., snack, toileting, group time). Parents should plan to arrive with their children no later than 9:30 a.m. each day (9:00 for children in our Pre-K program). Arriving by this time gives parents and staff a chance to exchange pleasantries and share news about the child’s evening and morning events, as well as ensuring that the child is “in-time” for morning snack, circle time, and all the activities we have planned for the day. Children who enter later frequently find themselves “out of sync” with their classmates. Please be certain to call the center and let us know if your child will be absent or arriving late. We will be concerned if we do not see you and your child! Please advise us by 9:00 a.m. if there will be any exceptions to your child’s regular schedule (such as a doctor’s appointment), so we may plan accordingly.

When you arrive, please sign in at the front desk. Then, you may escort your child to his/her class. For the safety of all children, we ask that you please do not ever leave your child unattended or allow him/her to run off ahead of you. Please encourage children to always use their “walking feet” in the hallways, and escort them safely to the classroom, staying with them until they have joined their group and you have checked in with their teacher. If needed, you should always feel free to ask a Caring Center staff person for help (e.g., to stay with your child for a moment while you run back upstairs for a forgotten coat, or to hold your baby while you escort an older sibling to class) – our staff will be happy to help keep the children safe in any way we can.

Your child’s teacher will greet you warmly when you arrive. Please be sure to speak with him or her for a moment; make sure they have seen your child arrive, and that they’ve had a chance to greet you and your child. You can update them about your child’s morning, any changes to the daily routine, etc. Please be sure to let the teacher know about any changes or new developments they should be aware of that may impact your child, such as: new skills or behaviors your child has demonstrated at home, if your family will be moving soon or having another child, etc.

Departure [Back](#)

When constructively involved in an activity, few of us like to be interrupted. Even though your child may be happy to see you, your child might resist leaving his or her friends and activities when you arrive. Younger children may become disoriented and require readjustment time. Please be understanding. We recommend that you warmly greet your child, tell him/her that you will gather his/her belongings, then take a moment to read the information on the Parent Board and/or from their daily log, so that he/she has a few more minutes to play. This allows your child time to prepare to leave. This advance notice will prevent unpleasant struggles at reunion time. When reunited, please remember that you are responsible for your child even when staff



members are visible. This clarification of “who’s in charge” is necessary to prevent program disruption and potential child injury, which can occur at transition times when responsibilities get confused.

Remember that The Caring Center closes at 6pm. Please call the front desk to let us know if you anticipate being a few minutes late for pick-up, for any reason. If a child is left at the Center and has not been picked up by 6:00pm, the Center will phone other Authorized Pick-Up Persons (as defined in the Childcare Agreement) to come pick up the child. We allow a 5-minute grace period, but any time a child is picked up after 6:05, a late fee will be assessed. If necessary, up to 15 minutes will be allowed for families to transition out of the Center at the end of the day, but The Caring Center’s facilities must be completely vacated and secured by 6:15pm.

Daily Communications [Back](#)

Every classroom maintains a log where they record anecdotal observations, milestones and “special events” that occur during your child’s day. Your child has a mailbox where we will place important communications from the staff, artwork your child has completed, monthly classroom newsletters, etc. Each classroom also contains a Parent Bulletin Board where you can find class information, important reminders, and Caring Center news. We ask that parents take a few moments at the beginning and end of each day to have a brief, face-to-face conversation with their child’s teacher. We want to partner with you to foster and support your child’s development. Allowing a few minutes each day for conversation with his/her teachers will help us to develop a relationship, ensure we are all aligned on your child’s needs and goals for his/her development, and provide opportunities for us to share information with you about your child’s day, his/her progress toward goals and milestones, and reminders about center events, upcoming activities, etc.

Cubbies [Back](#)

Your child has his/her own cubby to store extra clothing and projects. Please be certain to take projects home on the day that they are placed in the cubby. Your interest in your child’s projects will reinforce his or her future efforts.

X. SPECIAL PROGRAMS [Back](#)

Cooking Classes [Back](#)

The Pre-Kindergarten classes have regular cooking classes which are led by the Food Service Staff. Children are given opportunities to follow recipes, prepare nutritionally sound snacks, learn to use kitchen tools safely, discuss nutrition, participate in food tasting, learn food origins, experiment with ingredients, and cooperate in a group. The program is developmentally-appropriate; simple tools and procedures are presented before complex ones.

Computer Awareness [Back](#)

Each of the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms has access to a personal computer. Teachers select appropriate software programs to reinforce basic concepts and classroom themes and to provide recreational games that supplement those already available in the classroom. The children have access to the equipment at least one time per week. Computer opportunities are offered in accordance with the NAEYC Standards and Environment Rating Scale Criteria.

Afternoon Programs [Back](#)

By 5:00 p.m., Pre-Kindergarten children from different classes may combine (inside or outside) so that they have time to mingle freely with one another. Special materials are provided by the center to continue the children’s constructive involvement until their parents arrive.



Trips and Excursions [Back](#)

Just as you plan special events and trips for your child, so do we! You introduce your child to his or her immediate neighborhood through frequent walks and outings; we familiarize the children with The Caring Center and its surrounding community. Excursions are planned to broaden the children's horizons; teachers visit the site prior to each trip. Written permission from the parents is required for trips using vehicular transportation. Transportation is provided by school buses with professional drivers. Trips and excursions are developmentally-appropriate to the age group. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children on any outing; teachers are delighted to have an additional chaperone. You may find it a particularly enjoyable day with your young one and his/ her classmates.

Trips are discussed with the children before they occur, to help prepare them for what they will experience. In order to help build a conceptual foundation, opportunities to play out the trip experience are encouraged through block play, sand, drawing mediums, and story writing. Outings are considered an integral part of the pre-school experience. We regret that we cannot make alternative arrangements for children whose parents, for whatever reason, are not interested in their child's participation. We will be happy to help parents consider other options.

Summer Camp [Back](#)

Another special feature of The Caring Center is our exciting Summer Camp program. Summer Camp is offered for school-aged children, who are 5 to 10 years old, as of the start of Summer Camp. This ten (10) week program features a wide variety of fun-filled activities for the whole summer, including barbecues and picnics, nature study, arts and crafts, dramatic play, story time, movement and music, and much more. Weekly field trips and visiting entertainers are scheduled throughout the summer. Themes are chosen by our staff each week, and special activities are planned based on these themes. A five-week minimum enrollment is required for participation in our summer camp program.

XI. PROVISIONS [Back](#)

The Caring Center will provide:

- Infant formula (typically Enfamil and/or Similac -- see kitchen staff for further details)
- Breakfast (Early Care Only)
- Lunch
- Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks
- Cups, dishes, utensils
- Age-appropriate toys, games, DVDs, CDs, books
- Bibs
- Rest mat/crib
- Strollers

Parents Provide:

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Two (2) extra sets of seasonally-appropriate clothing (please include a light sweater or jacket)
- A sheet for naptime – a fitted, crib-size sheet is used for all ages (Infant through Pre-K)
- A tote bag with handles (to store sheets when it's not nap time)
- A family photo



- Hairbrush or comb (optional)
- Sleeping toy (optional)

Parents *also* provide the following items, by age group:

Infants	Toddlers	Pre-K and Kindergarten Transition
Bottles, nipples	Sippy cup	Toothbrush & Toothpaste
Blanket sleeper	Blanket (child-sized)	Blanket (child-sized)
Breast milk, or preferred formula	Sleeping toy (optional)	
Pacifier (optional)		

*** PLEASE USE PERMANENT MARKER AND LABEL ALL ITEMS WITH YOUR CHILD’S NAME.**

**** WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE TO PERSONAL PROPERTY!**

XII. MEALS AND SNACKS [Back](#)

Our kitchen staff takes pride in preparing and offering nutritious meals to the children. The menu is revised throughout the year to reflect seasonal offerings. Sugar, salt, and spice levels are kept at a minimum. All food is prepared fresh daily in-house. Meals are scratch-cooked, using locally-sourced and organic ingredients. A copy of the monthly menu is available to you at the front desk and/or by request. Please let us know if your child has any allergies and/or special dietary restrictions (e.g., lactose or gluten free, allergic to eggs). As needed, we will prepare a separate, nutritionally-appropriate menu option to meet their dietary needs. Questions and suggestions are welcomed – please stop in to talk to a member of the kitchen staff!

Meal Schedules [Back](#)

- Breakfast is served to Early Care children between 7:15 and 7:45 a.m.
- Mid-morning snack is served at 9:30 a.m.
- Lunch is offered to infants and toddlers at 11:15 a.m. and to Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Transition at 12:00.
- Afternoon snack is served at 3:00 p.m.

Infant Formula & Food [Back](#)

Infants’ needs vary. We stock the following infant formulas: Similac and Enfamil. Please advise us of your choice, or you may provide your own breastmilk or preferred infant formula (must be clearly labeled). When formula is not packaged in ready-to-feed bottles, we ask that you provide two bottles, each labeled with your child’s name. Bottles and nipples must be taken home each day to be thoroughly washed; they should be returned the next day. Please make certain there is always at least one clean, labeled bottle at the center.

When the children are ready to eat purees and finger foods, these will be provided by the center each day. However, we expect parents of infants to introduce new foods at home before they are offered at the center. Before we offer any food to your child, we will need to confirm that he or she has already been introduced to that particular food at home. Please speak with your child’s teacher about new foods as you introduce them at home, and be sure to update the sheet in your child’s class to indicate which foods they have already been introduced to.



The Caring Center Menu [Back](#)

The Caring Center Food Service Department provides a nutritious, well balanced menu for lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks. A variety of food items, as well as broadly based food preferences, guide the selection of foods. Although not all children will like all foods, children are generally more willing to taste and eat new foods when surrounded by peers. The goal of the Food Service Department is to provide food that meets the children's nutritional requirements and expands their selection and acceptance of healthy foods.

Children who have allergies or special diets, or who refuse to eat certain food items, are offered appropriate alternatives. A list of children with food allergies is posted in each classroom and also in the kitchen. Alternative food substitutions consist of yogurt, cheese, rice, fresh fruit, and Sun Butter-and-jelly sandwiches.

Our afternoon snack is intentionally designed to be more substantial than the morning snack; this helps keep the children from getting hungry before dinner. When a higher fat item is served, the menu items for the rest of the day are kept lower in fat to balance out the day's total fat content. Infants and toddlers are served whole milk; Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Transition children are served 2% milk. Fresh vegetables are served weekly as a snack, usually with a low-fat dip.

We follow a nutritious meal pattern using these guidelines:

Breakfast: (The children receive 1 serving of each.)

- 1) Milk 2) Grain 3) Fruit/ Vegetable

Morning Snack: (The children receive 2 of 4 components; only 1 liquid is served.)

- 1) Milk 2) Grain 3) Fruit/ Vegetable 4) Meat or Alternative

Lunch: (The children receive 1 serving of each.)

- 1) Milk 2) Grain 3) Fruit/ Vegetable 4) Meat or Alternative

(Our weekly menu usually consists of one chicken, one beef, one fish, one cheese and one of the children's favorite items.)

Afternoon Snack: (The children receive 2 of 4 components; only 1 liquid is served.)

- 1) Milk 2) Grain 3) Fruit/ Vegetable 4) Meat or Alternative

Child and Adult Care Food Program

Example Meal Pattern for Infant Menus

Ages	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
Infants Birth through 3 months	4-6 fluid oz. of breast milk or formula	4-6 fluid oz. of breast milk or formula	4-6 fluid oz. of breast milk or formula
Infants 4 months through 7 months	4-8 fluid oz. of breast milk or formula 0-3 tbsps. infant cereal* (optional)	4-8 fluid oz. of breast milk or formula 0-3 tbsps. infant cereal* (optional) 0-3 tbsps. fruit and/or vegetables (optional)	4-8 fluid oz. of breast milk or formula



<p>Infants 8 months through 11 months</p>	<p>6-8 fluid oz. of breast milk, formula or whole milk</p> <p>2-4 tbsps. infant cereal *</p> <p>1-4 tbsps. fruit and/ or vegetables</p>	<p>6-8 fluid oz. of breast milk, formula or whole milk</p> <p>2-4 tbsps. infant cereal* and / or 1-4 tablespoons meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, or cooked dry bean or peas, or ½ - 2oz cottage cheese</p> <p>1-4 tbsps. fruit and/ or vegetables</p>	<p>2-4 fluid oz. of breast milk, formula or whole milk</p> <p>0-1/2 slice bread or 0-2 crackers** (optional)</p>
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* *Iron fortified infant formula; Iron fortified dry infant cereal*

** *Made from whole-grains or enriched meal or flour*

Sample Infant Menu – Fruits and Vegetables

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Applesauce	Apricots	Peaches	Bananas	Pears
Green Beans	Butternut Squash	Peas	Sweet Potatoes	Carrots

Cereals Served

- Rice
- Oatmeal
- Mixed

XIII. CHILD DEVELOPMENT and PARENT RESOURCES [Back](#)

Children and parents develop at different rates! Most parents will experience occasional problems in their relationships with their children. Children will be more enjoyable to their parents at some times and not at others, depending on both the child’s and the parent’s temperament. We expect such problems to occur. Based on our expectations, we offer some important resources to support your parenting. Consulting with your child’s teacher is a great advantage; he/she is educated in child development and experienced in working with children. Their years of experience have allowed them to develop successful strategies for efficiently managing different behaviors. Our teachers are more than happy to share their wisdom.

Parent Support [Back](#)

In addition to written communications, teachers are available to listen to and discuss your concerns. Please feel free to approach the teachers and ask them to identify a mutually convenient time for you to meet. You are welcome to visit the center at any time. It is suggested that you call ahead only to make certain that the group is on-site. Our center is a learning environment, not only for children, but also for parents and staff. We expect and welcome your questions.

The Caring Center Parent Information Table [Back](#)

The Center’s main parent information table and bulletin board, in the reception area, presents some of the current literature on child development, information about resources available to families, upcoming activities



and events throughout the area, legislative efforts affecting children and families, and other information that may support parenting.

Parent Resources [Back](#)

Lending Library: The classroom staff and the Executive Director have valuable books and periodicals, which they are happy to lend to parents and families, upon request.

Parenting Associations: The Executive Director and the Family Liaison routinely post newsletters from Philadelphia area parent resource associations, and information about resources, programs, activities and events for families. They are available to discuss the resources and information shared.

Developmental Specialist: Occasionally, teachers' assessments of children will identify an area of concern about a particular aspect of development. The Director is always informed about this; this process insures there is a "second opinion". As appropriate, parents are then informed and resources are gathered. Parents are referred to a third-party agency which completes a professional observation of the child. The agency recommends additional resources / support, as needed to enhance the child's growth and development. They also may recommend a carefully selected resource person, such as a speech and language therapist, child psychologist, and/or audiologist. The teacher will plan with the parents and any support staff or resource persons to monitor and report the child's progress and ensure that proper intervention occurs.

Parent Resource Table: Flyers, bulletins and information about upcoming events, benefits and available resources are placed on the Parent Resource Table in the lobby of each building. Please help yourself.

Assessments [Back](#)

Your child's developmental progress is formally assessed within 45 days of entry into the center and at least every six months thereafter. The assessment will be based on an age-appropriate developmental checklist and daily and weekly anecdotal recordings made by the classroom teachers. From this information, the staff will set goals for your child and individualize when planning classroom activities. Your participation in this process is valued and appreciated.

Conferences [Back](#)

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice per year (typically in November and May). The purpose of these meetings is to discuss your child's developmental progress, set mutually-agreeable and realistic goals, get feedback from parents, and cement the relationship between parents and staff. The Head Teacher initiates the scheduling of these conferences. While these conferences are typically held at specific times during the year, you may request a conference at any time during the year.

Transitional Conference [Back](#)

Before a child moves to the next developmental age group/leaves for Kindergarten, a parent/teacher conference is scheduled. Typically, children will not be considered for "Move-up" unless they have been in the same classroom for approximately six months or more (a minimum of 6 to 9 months for infants).

Move-ups and Transition [Back](#)

Development occurs at different rates for each child. Moving a child from one program to the next (e.g. Infant to Toddler, Toddler to Pre-K) is determined by the individual child's signs of readiness. These signs are observed and assessed by the Head Teacher and the Administrative team. When a child exhibits behaviors



common to the next developmental stage, such as when a toddler has mastered toileting and can tolerate being part of a larger group of children, a new classroom setting may be appropriate. Other factors such as seniority, chronological age and availability of space also influence “Move-ups”.

Please recognize that a great deal of time is allocated to proper classroom placement. A mixture of ages, genders, races and cultures, familiar and unfamiliar persons is most desirable. We are mandated to pay close attention to group size and adult/child ratios. The center reserves the right to change classroom assignments when deemed necessary by the center, for whatever reason, including attrition or demographic shifts within the center.

The Executive Director will notify parents in-writing when their child is identified as ready to “Move-up”. To ensure a smooth transition, we typically move children to a new class over a period of three to four weeks. During the transition period, your child will visit the new classroom with a familiar staff member and classmates, spending an increasing amount of time in the new class, and getting comfortable in the new setting.

From a parent perspective, the Move-Up process consists of three main components: completion of an updated Developmental History for your child, an exit conference with the current Head Teacher, and an introductory meeting with the new teacher / observation of the new classroom.

XIV. CONFIDENTIALITY [Back](#)

Parent’s/Guardian’s rights regarding the confidentiality of children’s records are ensured. Parents/Guardians have the right to inspect their children’s records upon request. Copies of these records will not be shared with anyone outside of The Caring Center without the parent’s express prior permission. Individual children’s records / information will only be shared with Caring Center employees on an as-needed basis, with authorized government officials (as in the case of our annual state inspection), or with special consultants (with prior written approval from the child’s parents).

XV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS [Back](#)

Formerly known as The ISI Caring Center for Children and Parents (established 1982), The Caring Center was re-formed as a non-profit organization in 1991 by parents and staff who were committed to continuing the tradition of quality childcare established at The ISI Caring Center. The high quality of The Caring Center’s programs is overseen by a Board of Directors, comprised of parents, staff and members of the community. Officer positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary of the corporation are elected by the Board annually.

XVI. HEALTH POLICIES [Back](#)

Young children are prone to frequent colds and other illnesses. It is not always possible for providers or parents to know when these issues are communicable. Classroom staff, in consultation with the Executive Director and/or Center Director, must consider whether the child’s physical and emotional symptoms require temporary exclusion from the program. This decision involves careful evaluation of the comfort and health of the individual child, the classroom routine, and the needs of the other children in the group. Your child might be temporarily excluded from The Caring Center for any of the following reasons:

- Increasing the chances of other children and staff becoming ill



- Sick children are more comfortable when they are not in group care
- Inadequate attention paid to well children by staff preoccupied with sick child
- The child will not get well as quickly as he/she would in a more isolated, quiet, home atmosphere

If we call you to pick-up your child, please plan to arrive within an hour. For supervision reasons, the child will remain in the classroom and be made comfortable until he or she is picked up. Illnesses requiring a doctor's note for readmission include, but are not limited to: hepatitis, scabies, pinworm, scarlet fever and strep throat. Should your child become ill while at home, please inform the classroom teacher/receptionist as soon as possible. This will enable us to alert other parents to watch for similar symptoms.

If your child is hospitalized, it is essential that the center be notified. Our policies have been developed in consultation with medical staff at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Temple University; they are based on identified industry best practices and a thorough review of the most recent literature on childhood illness. In an effort to protect all of our children, we rely on our consultant's assistance when reports of contagious diseases are received. The following criteria will help you determine whether your child is well enough to attend the program.

Physical Examinations and Immunizations [Back](#)

Depending on the age of your child, within certain timeframes, the Department of Public Welfare requires regular medical examinations for your child. We will remind parents when an updated health appraisal is required. **Please Note: Noncompliance with this policy can result in termination of enrollment.** It is imperative that your child receive regular physical examinations and all necessary immunizations. However, no child shall be required to have any such immunization if parents object thereto, in writing, on the grounds that it conflicts with their sincere religious beliefs or if the child's physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant submits documentation that such a procedure is contraindicated.

For any child who is under-immunized, either because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health care professional) or the family's religious beliefs, the Center will exclude that child from care if a vaccine-preventable disease to which the child is susceptible (due to their own under-immunization) occurs within the program. Parents of any under-immunized child agree, for the safety of their child, to adhere to any exclusion plan developed by the center's staff, including the timeline for exclusion from care and/or the terms for being allowed to return to school.

Medications [Back](#)

Prescription medication can be administered at the center only if:

- It is provided in its **original** container, with a prescription indicating the appropriate use, dosage and frequency (number of times per day) and the child's name.
- It is not expired
- It is accompanied by a "Permission to Administer Medication" form, dated and signed by the parent.

Non-prescription medication must be unexpired and it must be accompanied by a "Permission to Administer Medication" form, dated and signed by the parent. Upon arrival to the center, please request the appropriate form from the receptionist. Medication and forms are collected at the front desk. In order to be certain that medications are not accessible to the children, they are stored at the front desk or in the medication refrigerator.



*** Important Note

Many cough/cold medicines should never be administered to infants and only rarely to young children. The center requires a note from a pediatrician to administer any over-the-counter cough/ cold medication to children less than two years of age. If parents provide multiple medicines/treatments to be administered by Caring Center staff, please note that the center's staff will only administer one over-the-counter cough/cold preparation in addition to Tylenol/Motrin. Caring Center staff will not administer medications to children if the medication has expired. Caring Center staff will review the prescription and instructions listed on all medications before administering them to children, and Caring Center staff will only administer (unexpired) medications in accordance with the instructions listed on the medication.

XVII. MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND EXCLUSION OF CARE [Back](#)

The Caring Center's Exclusion Policy [Back](#)

Children should be excluded from care when they have an illness that may be transmitted to other children (i.e., are contagious) and/or when their own health would be improved by spending time away from a group care setting. Children should be excluded from care from whenever they have a rectal or oral temperature greater than or equal to 101. Children who have had a fever may not return to the center until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours. **Please see below for a list of common childhood illnesses and center policies specific to those illnesses. PLEASE NOTE: This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.**

Since every situation is different, the final decision to exclude a child from care for any type of illness will be made at the discretion of the Executive Director and/or Center Director. Parents may be called and asked to pick up a sick child at the sole discretion of the Executive Director and/or Center Director. Also at the sole discretion of the Executive Director and/or Center Director, a doctor's note may be required before a sick child is allowed to return to school.

Chickenpox [Back](#)

- Characterized by blister-like pimples over entire body
- Transmitted through direct contact with rash and airborne particles
- Period between exposure and onset of rash is usually two weeks
- Children are contagious for 1-2 days before rash appears and for 5 days afterwards

Exclusion Policy: Children with chicken pox should be excluded for 6 days after rash appears, or when lesions are crusted or dry. Pregnant personnel should have serologic determination of immune status and receive VZIG if indicated.

Colds [Back](#)

Persistent cough and runny nose

Exclusion Policy: Child may need to be examined by a doctor and is likely to need to rest at home before returning to the center.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) [Back](#)

- Inflammation of eyes
- Infectious while child has purulent eyes
- Frequently viral

Exclusion Policy: The child must see a doctor and remain at home during the first 24 hours of treatment.



Diarrhea (Non-contagious) [Back](#)

- Loose, watery stools occurring twice the normal daily frequency
- May be caused by medication, teething and/or dietary changes

Exclusion Policy: If the child has no other symptoms, we may allow him/her to enter/stay in the center.

Diarrhea (Contagious) When accompanied by any of the following, diarrhea is likely to be a symptom of a contagious gastrointestinal infection:

- Negative change in behavior
- Red, watery eyes
- Sporadic listlessness
- Fever of 101 or higher

Exclusion Policy: Children with diarrhea caused by infection cannot enter the center until their stools are normal for at least 24 hours.

Ear Infections [Back](#)

- Usually occurs as a complication of a cold

Exclusion Policy: Child should be at home and on antibiotics for at least 24 hours. If the child is without fever, he/she may return to the center with the infection but should continue using the medication. Since every situation is different; the decision to exclude a child for any type of illness is at the discretion of the executive director. Parents may also be called and asked to pick up a sick child at the discretion of the executive director. A doctor's note may be required for a child to return to school at the discretion of the executive director.

Fever [Back](#)

- A rectal or oral temperature of greater than or equal to 101 degrees Fahrenheit

Exclusion Policy:

Infant less than 4 months:

- Parent to pick up immediately
- Center staff should administer Tylenol/Motrin or other antipyretic as soon as possible

Infant of 4 months through child of 3 years old:

- Parent contacted by phone
- Tylenol/Motrin given with consent of parents (15 mg/2 pounds)
- Child must be picked up by parent/guardian within one hour
- **Child's temperature must be normal for 24 hours to be considered well enough to return to school**

Children over 3 years old:

- Parent contacted by phone
- Tylenol/Motrin given with consent of parent
- If temperature is 101 or less, and child appears well, he/ she may be observed by staff OR picked up by parent
- If temperature is greater than 101, and/or child does not appear well (e.g., is lethargic or pale) child must be picked up by parent/guardian within one hour
- **Child must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school**

Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease [Back](#)

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is common among young children and is typically caused by a cocksackie virus. It may cause all of the following signs and symptoms, or just some of them:

- Fever
- Sore throat



- Feeling of being unwell (malaise)
- Painful, red, blister-like lesions on the tongue, gums and inside of the cheeks
- A red rash, without itching but sometimes with blistering, on the palms, soles and sometimes the buttocks
- Loss of appetite
- Irritability in infants and toddlers

Exclusion Policy: Children should be kept at home until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours. Children should also be kept at home if they have open blisters/sores on their hands and/or in their mouths, because these open sores could contribute to the continued spread of the infection to other children.

Head Lice (Pediculosis) [Back](#)

- Common among school children
- Transmitted through direct contact with infested person or their personal belongings, especially clothing and headgear
- Treatment is very time consuming: we urge every family to institute their own schedule of head checks at home

Exclusion Policy: After treatment has been provided, we must be certain that the child is free of nits before allowing him/her to return to the center. We will definitely be checking! The center will provide a booklet to aid in your prevention program.

Impetigo [Back](#)

- Characterized by red, cracking oozing blisters; looks like pimples
- Usually itchy; scratching causes it to spread from site to site

Exclusion Policy: Upon identification of rash, child should be kept at home for 24 hours after the beginning of treatment.

Measles [Back](#)

- Caused by a virus
- Transmitted through airborne particles and infectious droplets
- Once child is exposed, there is a period of 8 –12 days before onset of symptoms
- Child is contagious 3-5 days before rash and 4 days after rash
- Symptoms include:
 - bad cough
 - nasal congestion
 - pink eye
 - white patches in mouth
 - red blotchy rash on body

Exclusion Policy: Child should be excluded for at least 6 days after onset of rash. Once a case of measles is confirmed, all children in the center ranging in ages 6 months and older should be vaccinated or revaccinated; siblings should be vaccinated as well. All personnel born after 1957 who do not have proof of immunity should be revaccinated.

Mouth Cold Sore [Back](#)

- Infectious in beginning stages while they are draining.

Exclusion Policy: Child must stay at home until sores are dried.



Rashes [Back](#)

Exclusion Policy: A child with a rash but no fever and no other symptoms will be monitored closely at the center. If the rash is persistent (i.e., lasts for more than a few days), the child may be excluded from care until a doctor's note is provided indicating that the child has been seen, the rash has been diagnosed and the child may safely return to school. A child with a rash accompanied by a temperature of 101 or more will be sent home (see fever). In general, the child may return to class with a doctor's note, once he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours.

Ringworm [Back](#)

- Caused by a fungus
- Characterized by a round, scaly flat rash with a raised border

Exclusion Policy: Parent of child with suspected ringworm will be contacted by phone and given option of picking up the child on same day and beginning therapy or allowing child to remain that day with the understanding that child will not attend the center the following day. Child will be readmitted to the center with a note from the doctor or proof of appropriate therapy (Clotrimazole cream).

Roseola [Back](#)

- Most common in children ages 6-24 months
- Characterized by high fever for 3 days followed by red raised rash over entire body
- Most contagious periods precedes onset of rash

Exclusion Policy: No exclusion if child is without fever.

Scarlet Fever [Back](#)

- Caused by bacteria
- Characterized by sandpaper-like fine red rash on face, trunk and extremities
- Many children complain of sore throat, itching, abdominal pain and fever

Exclusion Policy: Child will be excluded for 24 hours after beginning of treatment. A doctor's note is required when returning to the center.

Vomiting [Back](#)

Exclusion Policy: Exclude until no vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours

XVIII. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES [Back](#)

Emergency Plan [Back](#)

Your child's safety is always our main concern. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the well-being and protection of all our children, at all times. A copy of The Caring Center's Emergency Plan / Procedures is kept at the front desk. The Emergency Plan / Procedures is shared with all new staff at orientation, and then reviewed annually with all Caring Center staff. All staff receive regular training in First Aid, CPR and Fire Safety.

Fire Drills [Back](#)

Fire drills are conducted every 30-60 days, in accordance with state regulations. Drills are recorded on a log sheet for review.

Natural Disaster [Back](#)

During a natural disaster (e.g. hurricane, tornado) appropriate action will be taken to ensure the safety of children and staff. In the event of an occurrence, children will be taken to the closet neighborhood fall-out shelter.



Terrorism [Back](#)

In the event of a terroristic threat or action, every effort will be made to contact parents as soon as possible. Cooperative decision making and common sense between center staff and parents will predicate the response to the situation. Parents must be sure to provide the Center with up-to-date, accurate emergency contact information, including cell phone numbers, so they can be contacted in the event of an emergency.

Evacuation [Back](#)

In the event that we need to evacuate the center, we will walk or transport the children to the West Philadelphia Childcare Center (at 35th Street and Haverford Ave.). In the event that an alternate evacuation site is required, we would evacuate to Powel Elementary School, or if needed, to the Metropolitan Community Church. Parents will be notified via phone and email as soon as possible if an evacuation of the center is required. A message will be recorded on the Center's answering machine with updated information, so that anyone calling the center's main phone line (215-386-8245), will receive updated information.

Shelter-in-Place [Back](#)

The Shelter-In-Place plan will be immediately implemented if necessary. The center is prepared with a 3-day supply of water and non-perishable food in case of such emergencies. Each classroom has blankets, flashlights and battery-operated emergency radios. We remain committed to maintaining the safety and well-being of our children and staff at all times.

Shelter-In-Place may be implemented if any of the following occur:

- Unusual odors
- Skin or eye irritations
- Visible smoke, fire, or vapor clouds (outside the building)
- Gunfire
- Airway or breathing difficulties
- Outside safety hazards reported by the police

The main objective is to move children and staff to designated safe locations that will protect them until the disaster is over. In the event the Shelter-in-Place plan must be implemented, the following are general practices:

- If the children are outside, bring them inside
- Shut all windows, blinds, and doors
- Turn off heating and cooling ventilation systems
- Stay calm
- Director or designee will call 9-1-1
- Listen very carefully to designated staff directions
- Move away from windows and doors
- Take a battery-operated radio to each designated shelter room; have the radio set to KYW 1060 (local news station)
- Take a flashlight to each designated shelter room
- No one is to enter the building
- If you smell gas, get away from the smell

All staff participate in annual emergency preparedness training. (Please refer to the Emergency Plan/Procedures binder located at the front desk)



XIX. THE CARING CENTER'S POLICIES & PROTOCOLS [Back](#)

Participation in Group Childcare [Back](#)

Children's potential for growth and development is maximized through participation in a high-quality early education program. The development of relationships with teachers and peers, along with consistent learning experiences that build on each other from day-to-day, come from regular attendance in an early learning setting.

The Caring Center is designed to serve children who are able to function in a group setting. Parents must disclose any special needs or problems which the Child may have, in order to determine the Child's ability to successfully participate in the center's programs. If the Center determines, at its own discretion, that either the Child and/or the Center is unable to satisfy legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for the safe operation of the Center and/or for the child's own safety, the Center may decline enrollment, or the center may require the withdrawal of an enrolled Child from the Center at any time. In the event that a child is required to withdraw, the Center will continue the Child's enrollment for four (4) weeks from the date of notification, and the center will work with the Parent to attempt to find an alternative care option.

Attendance [Back](#)

Children enrolled at The Caring Center are expected to adhere to The Caring Center's attendance policy. When a child is absent, the following procedure must be followed: 1) Parent/guardian must telephone the office to report a child's absence by 9:00am each morning that the child will be absent. 2) In the case of an extended, unplanned absence of three (3) or more consecutive days, or an accumulation of ten (10) or more days of unplanned absences during the school year, parents will be asked to provide a written excuse from a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner.

Late drop-offs can present a significant disruption to the daily routines of the child and his/her class, and they may result in the child missing planned activities, meals, and/or special events. As a result, except when there is a specific and necessary purpose for a later arrival (e.g., a doctor's appointment), children will be expected to arrive by no later than 9:30 each morning. Children in our Pre-K classes will be expected to arrive no later than 9:00 each morning, since they are preparing to follow a kindergarten schedule. Parents are expected to telephone the office before 9:00am to report if their child will be arriving late for some reason.

If a child has not arrived to school within one hour of his/her scheduled start time for the day, and the parent or guardian has not already contacted the program, Caring Center staff may contact the parent or guardian, in order to ensure the child's well-being and confirm the child's absence. If a child has multiple unexplained absences (e.g., two consecutive unexplained absences), Caring Center staff may make efforts to directly contact the parent or guardian and/or to conduct a home visit, to ensure the child's well-being.

Consistently late arrivals, late pickups, and/or unplanned and unexcused absences that total more than 10 days over the course of the school year could be grounds for dropping a child from participation in our program. Excuses for extended, unplanned absences (such as a prolonged illness) must be provided in writing and signed by a parent. Acceptable excused absences include illness, religious holidays, health care appointments that cannot be made during other hours, and/or family emergencies. Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to: non-educational vacations; unplanned trips and visits, or routine appointments that could be scheduled during non-school hours.

At enrollment, each family is given a copy of the Parent Handbook, and the Enrollment Manager and/or the child's teacher reviews key policies / protocols as part of an initial conference. A meeting is also scheduled,



prior to the start of each school year, when new families are invited to meet with the Family Liaison, the Executive Director and the child's teachers. At this meeting, key policies / procedures are reviewed with parents and guardians, and there is an opportunity for Q&A with both teachers and school administrators. Additionally, during the first 4-6 weeks of the school year (in late September to early October), each class will schedule a Back-to-School night when families are invited to come in and meet their child's new teachers, spend time in the classroom, ask questions, and get to know the families of other children in the class. We hope every family can join us at Back-to-School night for their child's class!

The Family Liaison is a Caring Center employee who works closely with all our Caring Center families, to provide them support where it may be needed, and to help ensure their successful participation in our programs - including adherence to all Caring Center policies (e.g., attendance). In the event that a family is having difficulty adhering to The Caring Center's policies (i.e., inconsistent attendance, late drop-offs, not following pick-up time policies, etc.), the Family Liaison will meet with the family to review policies, discuss options and alternatives, outline a plan for improvement, and support the family in implementing that plan.

Schedule / Schedule Changes [Back](#)

The Caring Center's regular program hours are 8:00am-6:00pm, Monday through Friday. We offer options for two (2), three (3), or five (5) full days per week of care (dependent upon availability). Parents of enrolled children may request to change the number and/or the scheduled days of their child's enrollment by submitting a Schedule Change Request form (at the front desk). Schedule change requests must be for a period of at least four (4) weeks or more (i.e., day-by-day or week-by-week schedule change requests cannot be considered). Availability is not guaranteed, and it shall be within the Executive Director's sole discretion to approve or deny any request for a schedule change.

Tuition and Fees [Back](#)

Tuition is charged on a weekly basis. Invoices are sent to parents via email, on a regular schedule of their choosing: either bi-weekly, monthly or quarterly. Please ensure that we have a current, valid email address on file, and be sure to alert the front office any time your email address changes. Parents are responsible for payment of tuition throughout the time of their Child's enrollment at The Caring Center, even if an invoice is not received. Parents may choose to submit tuition payments via automatic bank draft, or by check, money order, or credit card. No cash payments will be accepted. If payment is made by credit card, the payment must be submitted at the front desk, and a 3% processing fee will be added to the transaction.

We are a year-round program, so children must maintain their enrollment continuously throughout the year in order to maintain their spot (i.e., there are no 'weeks off'). Parents are obligated to pay tuition regardless of whether the Child is present at the Center. This obligation to pay tuition includes, but is not limited to: dates when the Child may be on vacation, days the child is excluded from care due to illness, travel-related or other absences, holidays and the center's professional development days, and days on which the Center is closed for weather-related or other emergencies.

If the Child is enrolled in a Pre-K or Kindergarten Transition class, in addition to regular tuition, parent will be billed for a Summer Activity Fee and a Fall Activity Fee each year. This fee helps to cover the cost of admissions for field trips, performers' fees and other expenses related to the many field trips and special activities we plan for the children throughout the year.



Security Deposit [Back](#)

A down payment, in the amount of 4 weeks' worth of tuition, is due immediately upon enrollment for every child who enrolls at The Caring Center. Half of this amount (2 weeks' worth of tuition) is pre-paid tuition, which pays for the first two weeks of your child's enrollment. The other half (2 weeks' worth of tuition) is a security deposit, which is held by The Caring Center in an escrow account until your child leaves the center.

When your child's enrollment at The Caring Center ends, your security deposit can be refunded to you if all of the following requirements have been met: the child's account is in good standing (e.g., no outstanding balance due), Parent has submitted a written Departure Notice at least eight (8) weeks' prior to the child's last day, Parent has submitted a signed Request for Refund, AND Parent has provided the Center with a correct and current mailing address to which the refund check and any subsequent communications can be sent. All of these requirements must be met in order for us to refund the security deposit. After six (6) months from the child's departure date, The Caring Center will consider any unclaimed and/or ineligible security deposit funds to be forfeited.

Alternatively, upon the child's departure, Parents may choose to make a 100% tax-deductible donation of their eligible security deposit funds back to The Caring Center. Unless otherwise requested, donated security deposit funds are used to support our children's literacy initiative. Please indicate on your Departure Notice if you would like to donate your security deposit back to The Caring Center.

Emergency Medical Care [Back](#)

In case of an emergency, The Caring Center will contact emergency services to transport your child to Children's Hospital. We will call you immediately so you can meet your child and a staff member at the hospital to authorize emergency care. **It is your responsibility to keep your home, business and emergency contact numbers up-to-date and current, so we can reach you in case of an emergency.**

Nutrition [Back](#)

Because we want all our children to grow up healthy and strong, The Caring Center is committed to providing healthy, nutritious meals and snacks, and to fostering positive mealtime experiences, including trying new foods and socializing with friends. Our teachers and staff regularly incorporate nutrition education in their weekly lesson plans and use "teachable moments" to discuss and encourage healthy eating.

Physical Activity [Back](#)

The Caring Center understands that children need regular physical activity to develop healthy bodies, motor skills and social skills. Teachers and caregivers promote and implement developmentally appropriate physical activity to help children develop and practice healthy, lifelong habits. Our program is committed to providing children with opportunities to move throughout the day. Because of this, students are expected to come to school each day wearing shoes and clothing that allow for their active participation in indoor and/or outdoor play with other children.

Daily Active Play [Back](#)

All children from infancy to 6 years of age are continuously developing and practicing motor and movement skills that are developmentally appropriate for their setting. The Caring Center has developed a schedule for daily active play, based on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Caring Center does NOT take away physical activity or remove children from long periods of physically active playtime in response to challenging behaviors.



Weather-Permitting Guidelines for Outdoor Play [Back](#)

The Caring Center follows the Department of Human Services regulations. All children are to go outdoors every day, weather permitting. Please dress your child accordingly for the daily weather conditions. NO open-toe shoes should be worn, as these are not safe for active / outdoor play.

Recommended attire:

1. Winter: Heavy coat, mittens, winter hat, scarf, boots, sneakers
2. Spring: Light jacket/hoodie, raincoat/boots
3. Summer: Sunscreen, t-shirt, shorts, bug spray, sneakers, sunhat
4. Fall: Hoodie/light jacket, raincoats/boots

Water consumption [Back](#)

Water is available and accessible to children at all times.

Parent/Guardian Participation [Back](#)

The center welcomes Parents/Guardians to attend excursions, to visit during class time, to share talents with the center, and/or to help with various projects that benefit their child's classroom or the center's overall programming.

Non-English-Speaking Families [Back](#)

The Caring Center typically provides information to families in English; however, we can provide information in the family's native language. A request for a translator should be made during the Intake Meeting.

Parent Ambassadors [Back](#)

Your support and involvement are crucial to your child's development and well-being. Satisfied parents with thriving children are our best referrals. We count on your support by telling others about The Caring Center. We all benefit by working together to help the center's program achieve multiple short and long term goals.

In addition to your on-going communications with staff, we invite your active participation as a Parent Ambassador. The Parent Ambassador is a direct assistant to the teaching team. He/she maintains on-going contact with the Head Teacher to support the children's program. Such help may include:

- Contacting parents to:
 - Go on field trips
 - Help organize a special program (celebration or educational event)
 - Donate or make specific materials or equipment
- Being a "buddy" to new families entering the room
 - Be available to chat about the program
- Joining a larger group of parents and staff to help organize and present activities

Toys from Home and Candy [Back](#)

Toys brought from home, other than those needed to make rest time more pleasant or those requested by staff, can be disruptive to the child and program. It is best if toys are left at home, as these items can get lost, broken, or cause confrontation between the children. **Candy and toy guns / weapons are not permitted in the center at any time.**



Jewelry / Accessories [Back](#)

Hair beads, barrettes, jewelry, etc. should not be worn by children. These accessories are considered to be a safety hazard. When choosing accessories for your child, please be mindful of the potential safety issues they present, not only for your child, but other children as well. If center staff determines that a child's jewelry or accessories may present a safety issue, the items will be removed to keep the children safe, and then these items will be given back to the parent at pick up time.

Birthdays [Back](#)

Birthdays are happy and important occasions for our children to celebrate. Each child deserves to be recognized in a special way on his/her birthday. We are concerned, however, that some birthday celebrations can become too elaborate and sometimes competitive in nature. In an attempt to promote special, controlled, uniform, and simple birthday celebrations, we request that all parents adhere to the following guidelines:

- All birthday celebrations should be arranged with the Head Teacher in your child's class at least two weeks before the celebration. Teachers will work with parents to resolve conflicts over multiple birthdays, or those that may fall on a holiday or weekend.
- Parents may bring in store-bought cupcakes or snacks, provided they bring one serving for each child and teacher in the class, and provided that all the ingredients are listed on the label. Please be mindful and try to minimize the amount of sugar and/or chocolate in any snacks you may bring. Any outside foods must be brought to the kitchen first, for inspection, before they can be taken to the classroom (to avoid the risk of allergic reactions). Kitchen staff will deliver any/all food to the classrooms.
- Alternatively, The Caring Center's kitchen staff are able to provide cupcakes at a competitive cost. Request forms for cupcakes are available at the front desk. Request forms must be submitted with payment at least (2) weeks in advance of the party. The center will provide a nutritious alternative (e.g., fruit cup) for any children who may have allergies and/or special dietary needs.
- Teachers can make a special birthday hat with, or for, the birthday child. No balloons, hats, party favors, or candy should be brought in to the center or provided to classmates.
- Outside personalities such as clowns, gorilla-grams, balloon bouquets, etc., will not be permitted. This can be stressful for young children.

In lieu of party favors or guest personalities, we encourage the tradition of the birthday child donating a "Birthday Book" to his/her classroom. This tradition promotes the importance of reading and sharing, while enhancing the number of classroom books available to the children. The book can be unwrapped and inscribed by the birthday child and donated ceremoniously to the class. The birthday celebration can then focus on sharing and reading the birthday book. (Head Teachers should be consulted about books that are appropriate for the class). Birthdays will always be a special occasion for our children, and a meaningful, yet simple, celebration in a loving and caring environment that will best serve everyone.

Holidays [Back](#)

Holidays reflect important facets of each family's life. Given the vast diversity of backgrounds represented within The Caring Center family, we celebrate the fact that many different cultures are represented here. In presenting special days, we recognize that children can best appreciate the obvious concrete aspects of the holiday (e.g. changes in their environment), rather than the more subtle abstractions (e.g. the religious significance). Thus our observances of holidays will include discussions, display and use of symbols, and activities associated with each day (when national) or each holiday season (where religious). Holidays include, but are not limited to: New Year's Day, Presidents' Day, Martin Luther King Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Lunar New Year and Halloween. Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa are observed with special



winter activities; Easter and Passover are recognized with spring celebrations. Please feel free to share information and/or any concerns you may have with the staff.

Special Events [Back](#)

The Caring Center Staff, Parents, and Board schedule special events and activities throughout the year to bridge the relationships between home and school. These events are a wonderful way to share family customs. They may include but are not limited to:

- Back to School Night (each classroom has its own event)
- Social Hour (monthly center-wide event for families and children)
- Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon (for families and friends of The Caring Center)
- Winter Book Fair and Read-a-Loud (literacy event)
- Guest Readers and special events for Week of the Young Child
- Grandparent/Special Friend Day
- End of the School Year Barbecue
- Family Night at a local Museum or Play Area

Limited Screen Time [Back](#)

- Infant to 2 years: No screen time. Screen time is not recommended for children under two years old.
- Two years of age and older: No more than 30 minutes of screen time, once a week maximum - only for educational or physical activity purposes.
- Meals and snacks: The Caring Center does not have any screen time during meals or snacks.
- Personal Computer Time: Personal Computer Time is only for 15 minutes at a time, except for school-age children who may need additional time for homework assistance.
- Content: Any screen media must be developmentally appropriate, pre-viewed by teaching staff and approved in advance by administrators

Television [Back](#)

Television is a passive and indirect teaching medium; therefore, it is not used on a regular basis. On occasion, staff may choose to show an age-appropriate video which aligns with our curriculum. The video is no more than 30 minutes long, is previewed by the teacher in advance, and is intended to support the children's learning and/or understanding of a concept(s) currently being taught.

Problem Resolution [Back](#)

The center is committed to resolving problems with parents as quickly as possible. If a parent encounters any problems, the chain of command should be followed. Please discuss the issue with your child's teacher. If you are not satisfied, the Executive Director should be notified. As a last resort, the Board of Directors should be notified.

Email Use [Back](#)

Parents acknowledge and agree that the center's email list is proprietary and is intended solely for use by the center to conduct center business. Parents also agree that they will not use the email list for their own benefit unless the center consents in writing.



Research and Observers [Back](#)

The Caring Center receives frequent requests from students and researchers to observe our exemplary program. We recognize and appreciate the importance of contributing to the body of knowledge regarding early childhood development. We also respect and protect the routines and privacy of our children and their teachers and families. With prior approval from the Executive Director, and only if observations will not be intrusive or disruptive to the activities of the day, we may permit student observers and/or researchers to conduct observations. No photos or videos will be taken, and no child will ever be directly involved (other than in an anonymous observation) without written permission from his/her parent or guardian.

Visitors / Tours [Back](#)

The Caring Center hosts bi-weekly group tours to enable prospective clients, educators, and/or grantors to become more informed about our unique center and approach. Occasionally, individual visits are also accommodated. Visitors will remain in the presence of a Caring Center staff person at all times. A staff member is always available to escort visitors.

Staff Code of Conduct [Back](#)

The Caring Center follows both the NAEYC and School District of Philadelphia codes of conduct. Upon hire and whenever deemed necessary thereafter, both the NAEYC and School District of Philadelphia codes of conduct are reviewed and given to all employees who may come into contact with child(ren) at the center. Our priority is to uphold our ethical responsibilities to children, families, personnel, community, and all other sponsoring agencies at all times. We are committed to maintaining the safety of all our children, as well as the confidentiality of all our families and personnel. Any staff person who is not compliant with the code of conduct will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with The Caring Center's progressive discipline policy, as outlined in The Caring Center's Employee Handbook.

Any / all persons involved in The Caring Center's early childhood programs are to use the code of conduct as the basis for their actions when working with children, parents, other staff members, volunteers, consultants, and/or members of the community. Any employee who is not compliant with The Caring Center's active supervision policy will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, in accordance with The Caring Center's discipline policy. Volunteers, consultants and/or others who are not compliant with the center's policy may be asked to leave the center and/or to stop their work with The Caring Center. Any person working as a staff member, subcontractor, volunteer (including parents), therapist, one-on-one child support, intern, consultant, or anyone else working with children in our program will indicate (by signature) that they have reviewed, understand, and agree to abide by all the terms of the NAEYC and School District of Philadelphia codes of conduct. As such, they agree that:

- They will never leave a child alone or unattended.
- They will use active supervision strategies to ensure that all children stay safe while in their care. Active supervision strategies include:
 - Set up environment
 - Position staff
 - Scan and Count
 - Listen
 - Anticipate Children's Behavior
 - Engage and Redirect
- They will not allow any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, intimidating, psychologically destructive, or physically harmful to children.



- They will be familiar with the signs of child abuse and neglect, and they will immediately report any symptoms of child abuse as required by law.
- They will be aware of and follow all program safety and emergency procedures.

Supervision of Children [Back](#)

Ensuring the safety and well-being of all our children is the Caring Center's top priority. In order to ensure the continued health and safety of all children, The Caring Center staff follow a detailed active supervision plan, based on the fundamental understanding that active supervision requires focused attention and intentional observation of children at all times.

The active supervision plan is reviewed and shared with all employees at the beginning of each school year and/or upon hire for new employees. Caring Center employees understand and utilize all safety systems in place, which include but are not limited to: bells, mirrors, timers, scanning and counting, supervisory lists, and face-to-name tools. The active supervision policy is followed at all times by all employees, student teachers, therapists, caseworkers, volunteers, and/or any other adults who may come into contact with children at the center. The active supervision plan, as well as any potential concerns, is reviewed at staff meetings at least once per month.

Appropriate ratios of children-to-adults must be maintained at all times. Employees may not leave their assigned group of children at any time, unless appropriate staffing ratios are able to be strictly maintained. Employees must inform a supervisor immediately if their group becomes out of ratio at any time. Volunteers and/or student teachers may work with children only under the direct supervision of a Caring Center employee. At no time will any volunteer or student teacher be left alone with any children.

Non-Violence [Back](#)

The Caring Center promotes nonviolence at all times. Our staff work with the children to foster appropriate pro-social behaviors. Children are encouraged to use conflict resolution and these methods are modeled for the children.

Redirection [Back](#)

The ultimate goal of redirection is to teach the child self-control. With a clear understanding of a child's developmental stage, staff members set realistic behavioral limits and expectations. We strive to resolve conflicts in peaceful and logical ways. Children must be given many opportunities to practice appropriate behavior and not be admonished for inappropriate behavior. We view conflict resolution as a teaching opportunity.

Biting [Back](#)

Biting can occur during normal child development. When a child is bitten, the nearest staff person shall immediately clean the affected area with soap and water. The staff person will determine whether the skin has been broken. The parent of the bitten child will then be contacted and the appropriate information given. The name of the biter will not be disclosed without his/her parent's agreement.

Preventive strategies to decrease the number of biting incidents are used in the classroom. Some of the techniques we use are:

1. Having more than one of the popular items



2. Designing play area and centers with boundaries that are easily viewed by the teacher and understood by the children
3. Having materials that are organized and in good working order
4. Having activities that provide many ways to respond
5. Having a clear and consistent schedule, and
6. Supporting the children's participation in play by being nearby and available.

Many children with challenging behaviors will benefit from clear directions and clear acknowledgement of their efforts. Visual assistance in the form of photos and picture symbols that help children understand the schedule and the expectations are also useful. Even when preventative measures are taken, a child may need an individualized modification.

Inappropriate Behavior [Back](#)

In order to ensure a safe, healthy and positive classroom experience for all students and teachers, The Caring Center has adopted a behavior policy and protocols. In the event that a child's behavior is deemed by The Caring Center's staff to be inappropriate, disruptive, destructive and/or aggressive toward others, the following steps will be taken to address the behavioral concerns:

PHASE 1: *Additional* parent/teacher conferences will be held. **Meet with parents**, teacher and administrator (if applicable).

- a. At the classroom teacher's discretion, a conference will be called to discuss any concerns that may arise, including but not limited to: multiple classroom disruptions, continual and inappropriate behavior and/or language, or physical violence such as hitting, pinching, scratching, biting or kicking students and/or staff.
- b. There will be written documentation from the teacher(s) and Caring Center staff regarding inappropriate behavior they have observed and the positive discipline techniques used when the concerning behavior and/or language were displayed.
- c. Behavioral goals will be discussed and agreed to by both parents and teachers. Reinforcing consistency between home and school is *highly recommended* for effective positive behavior modification.

PHASE 2: Meet with parents, teacher and school administrator(s) to **establish a behavior plan**.

- a. Revisit behavioral goals with parents, teacher, school administrator and others involved in the child's care
- b. Schedule adjustments may be examined. Teachers and administrators may determine that an adjusted schedule (i.e. shortened hours or different arrival time) is in the best interest of the child and/or class.
- c. Discussion with all parties about resources and goals for obtaining outside help for child (if applicable). Professional evaluation and/or support may be sought. The Caring Center administrative staff will help facilitate the referral process, working with parents, staff and specialists to help address the child's needs.

PHASE 3: Discussion with parents, teacher and administrative staff to discuss progress toward goals and **determine appropriate action / next steps** for addressing child's behavior.

- a. Revisit action plan with parents, teachers, center administrator and specialist (if applicable).



**** Phases 1,2,3 may be revisited for subsequent incidents, as Administrators deem appropriate**

FINAL PHASE: The Caring Center is committed to seeking solutions for difficult situations with children and families. However, **we take aggressive, physical behavior toward children, staff and/or parents very seriously. We will respond accordingly with an acceleration of the three phases outlined above, as we deem necessary.**

If the Center determines that the Child poses a direct threat to others (i.e., a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures, and/or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services), or the Center determines at its own discretion that the Child poses a direct threat to him or herself, the Center may require the Child to withdraw immediately. If behavioral goals, action plans and/or coordinated efforts between staff and family do not resolve the concerning behavior(s), the child's enrollment in the program may be ended, at the sole discretion of the center director or executive director. In the event that a child is dismissed from the program due to inappropriate and/or aggressive behavior, no refunds will be given. The Caring Center recognizes that children are active, and roughhouse with each other; this policy is not intended to affect children engaging in age-appropriate childhood activities.

Behavioral Health Crisis [Back](#)

When a child expresses - verbally, in writing, or through their behavior - the desire or intention to inflict serious or potentially life-threatening injury to themselves or other people, the following steps will be taken / protocols implemented:

Step One: Maintain a safe environment for all surrounding children and staff.

- a. Assigned staff provide immediate and continuous active supervision

Step Two: Assess for risk

- a. Gather information (e.g., why the child made the statement and/or if the child has a plan). Identify potential threat to self or others.
- b. Understand and give attention to verbal and non-verbal body language.
- c. Demonstrate empathy and provide calming assurance to counter the child's aggressive behavior.

Step Three: Notify available administrator/s immediately

- a. Behavior Specialist should be first point of contact to assist in identifying the behavior and attempting to calm the child.
- b. If Behavior Specialist is not available, contact another program administrator.

Step Four: Teacher (or administrator) notifies parents

- a. Explain the situation that occurred to parent or guardian and the steps teacher/administrators have taken to support the child.
- b. At the discretion of center administrators, parent(s) may be asked to come pick up the child immediately.
- c. Advise parent or guardian to closely monitor child's behavior at home to ensure safety.
- d. Parents are given information on community crisis intervention resources
(*Crisis intervention Hotline: 215-685-6440, service available 24/7, 7 days a week*)



Step Five: Exclusion / Reinstatement

- e. At the sole discretion of the center's administration, the child may be excluded from care until appropriate protocols and supports can be established for the child's safe future attendance
- f. Parent, designated personnel and/or center administrators will meet to discuss concerns, reinstatement plan (if appropriate), next steps, and any future goals / milestones

Weapons Prohibited [Back](#)

No guns, knives or other potentially lethal or non-lethal weapons are allowed in the center at any time.

Smoking and Prohibited Substances [Back](#)

Please note that all indoor and outdoor spaces at The Caring Center, and any vehicles that may be used by the program, have been designated as non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form, alcohol, or illegal drugs is prohibited on the facility premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized, potentially toxic or harmful substances is prohibited.

All childcare providers and staff will maintain sobriety while providing childcare. Caregivers, staff or other adults who are inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances will be required to leave the premises immediately.

Pick-Up by an Adult Who Appears Intoxicated or Impaired [Back](#)

To ensure that no child is allowed to leave the care of the center in the custody of a person who is in a physical condition which may prevent him from assuring the child's welfare, The Caring Center adheres strictly to the following policy:

1. If a parent or other person who is authorized to pick up a child enrolled at The Caring Center comes to the center intoxicated or in an impaired physical condition which may prevent him from ensuring the child's welfare, he/she will be required to meet with the Center Director and/or Executive Director before he/she may pick up the child.
2. Under no circumstances will a child be released to a parent or other authorized adult who appears intoxicated/impaired without the adult having first been interviewed by the Center Director and/or Executive Director. The Center Director and/or Executive Director will meet with the parent or other authorized adult, and it will be the responsibility of the Center Director and/or Executive Director to determine if, in their opinion, the person appears intoxicated / impaired.
3. In the event that a parent or other person authorized to pick-up a child is determined to be intoxicated or in an impaired condition, The Caring Center staff will:
 - a. Notify the Executive Director (if he/she has not already been notified)
 - b. Make alternative arrangements for child pick-up, including, attempting to contact another person on the Authorized Child Pick-up List
 - c. Notify the parent(s) of the child (if they are not the ones who are intoxicated or impaired)
 - d. Notify Parents of other children the person has been authorized to pick-up
4. For any parent or other authorized person who arrives at the center to pick up an enrolled child, and is determined to be in an intoxicated or physically impaired condition, the following will occur:
 - a. One written warning
 - b. Removal from the list of individuals authorized to pick up a child after the second occurrence
 - c. Repeated occurrences will be reported to the appropriate authorities
5. The Center Director and/or Executive Director are authorized to carry out the directives of this policy.



Child Abuse and Neglect [Back](#)

The Caring Center staff and parents understand that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires that all child care center employees are mandated reporters. Caring Center staff participate in annual trainings, and they are aware that they must legally report any and all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. In cases of suspected child abuse and/or neglect, the Executive Director and/or Center Director is immediately notified. He/she informs Child Line (1-800-932-0313) and the appropriate forms are completed (CY47).

Elwyn, Inc. Non-Public School Program Crisis Intervention Response Team (215-895-5545) is available to provide Consultation and Support Services for:

- Suspected Child Abuse/ Sexual Abuse
- Mental Health Issues

