

ACORN CHILD CARE CENTER PARENT HANDBOOK 2020-21

Thank you for choosing Acorn Child Care Center to provide care for your child while you are away. It is our goal to provide your child with a happy, healthy and safe environment while assuring that they receive a high quality early education to best prepare them to enter their grammar school years.

At Acorn Child Care we believe that the parents and family are also a very important part of the team that assure that each child maximizes their potential to be best prepared for later success in their educational life.

We welcome parent and family input on our services and would like you to feel free to provide input on our program. We look forward to assisting make your child's early learning a great success!

This handbook is intended to provide parents with the policies, and daily routines of Acorn Child Care Center. It is possible that this handbook cannot anticipate every situation or answer every question that may arise and thus may be changed or amended as needed. Families shall be provided advance notice of any changes going forward. The Director of the program shall be available to answer any questions or concerns regarding the information in this handbook.

Our Mission Statement

The Acorn Child Care Center exists to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for preschool and school age children. Our focus is to provide a stimulating early care and education experience which promotes each child's social/emotional, physical and cognitive development. Our goal is to support children's desire to be life-long learners.

Our Philosophy & Goals

Our philosophy is based on respect for all people, especially the children. We strive to create an environment where we recognize the uniqueness of each individual and value each person's gift to life.

We are committed to providing a quality child development program where the children feel safe and loved. Children learn best and develop their fullest potential through active participation in a wide variety of activities which take place in a safe, secure, nurturing environment. We promote a program to meet the needs of the total child—socially, emotionally, creatively, physically and intellectually. We want to instill in each child, a feeling of competence, autonomy and a positive self-concept.

Allow the children to do as much for themselves as possible. This includes meal time, bathroom, outdoors, free play time and especially art and table activity time. Children develop confidence and independence from feelings of success. They cannot have this success if adults do too much for

Our Philosophy & Goals: continued

them. Parents, teachers and staff work together to make child care a positive learning experience for each child.

We are committed to supporting the family unit and recognize the uniqueness of each family's lifestyle and cultural heritage. We strive to support parents and encourage their involvement with open and honest communication.

Our long-term program goals include helping children:

Our Program Goals

1. To provide a warm and nurturing atmosphere in a safe setting where self-concept is enhanced, independence and choices are encouraged, and self-discipline is gained in an environment where the child knows limits and expectations.
2. To provide an atmosphere in which children have a sense of personal dignity.
3. To establish respect for people, equipment and materials.
4. To provide a wide variety of activities within a routine, where cooperative play is encouraged. These activities are drawn from the areas of: art, science, cooking, music and movement, social studies, practical life, dramatic play, language arts, manipulative activities and field trips. The activities are designed to meet the interest, abilities, and needs of the children.
5. To develop in each child an active curiosity about the world in which the child lives and an enthusiasm for learning which stimulates exploratory behavior and creativity.
6. To develop in each child an appreciation for nature.
7. To provide ample opportunity to develop large motor skills and coordination through physically active play in either indoor or outdoor activities.
8. To provide an opportunity for the child to become independent and responsible through self directed and individualized activities.
9. To provide the child with appropriate alternatives to angry and aggressive behavior.
10. To help each child learn to participate and function well in a group.
11. To offer open communication with parents and family members, providing a positive atmosphere.

These policies have been adopted to ensure the health, safety and positive growth of the children in our care. All families who enroll their child are requested to observe the policies as outlined in this handbook.

Admission Policy:

There are several forms that make up the Acorn Child Care Center's enrollment packet. This enrollment packet must be completed and in our possession 24 hours in advance before we can assume the responsibility of caring for your child. This is to ensure that your child will get the very best care possible and satisfies the record keeping requirement of state licensing guidelines. All forms will be reviewed annually. If there are changes to any of the forms in the enrollment packet, please notify your director to update your records. If you have any questions regarding the completion of these forms, please feel free to ask your director.

The Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) requires that we have a certified copy of each child's birth certificate on file and the person placing the child at the Center must also have a photo ID such as a State ID or Driver's License on file at the Center.

Termination Policy:

We reserve the right to terminate a child for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Routinely late picking up your child.
- Failure to complete the required forms.
- Failure to pay.
- Lack of parental cooperation.
- Failure of child to adjust to the center after a reasonable amount of time.
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property.
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations.
- After reasonable attempts are made, a decision may have to be made that we may not be able to meet the child's needs.
- A child who threatens or causes physical or emotional harm to another child or a staff member at the Center, or who deliberately causes damage to the facility or equipment. Parents will be held liable for all damages caused by a willful act of their child.
- Family members who cause physical or emotional harm to a child or staff member, or
- Family members who willfully damage Center property. They shall be liable for all damages.

Parents who have enrolled a child at Acorn Child Care Center should be comfortable and happy with the care their child receives. If you question our services and an understanding regarding changes cannot be reached, your child may be discharged without further notice.

We appreciate as much advance notice as possible when terminating, and will give the same courtesy in return. Parents are required to give two weeks written notice when they decide to terminate child care. The two weeks will be paid in full, regardless of whether or not the child is in attendance.

We will give two weeks' notice of termination for which full tuition is due, whether or not the child is in attendance. The provider reserves the right to give written notice of immediate termination where there are extreme circumstances that affect the well-being of the provider or other children in attendance.

Anyone who terminates daycare and has a balance that is outstanding will need to have the account settled within 30 days. All accounts not settled within 30 days will be turned over to a collections

Termination Policy: continued

agency regardless of amount owed. All accounts turned over to collections will have a \$20 per week late fee plus 35% collections fee added to amount due.

Confidentiality Policy:

All information in your child's file, including health, screenings, academic progress, discharge as well as custodial/guardianship is confidential. Information may be shared only after written permission from the parent / guardian is secured. DCFS personnel and your child's Teacher at the Center have limited access to your child's file.

Attendance Policy:

In order to keep the proper child / staff ratio we ask that you adhere to the hours of care that you requested. Please call the Center when your child will be late or absent. Parents of school-age children should notify the office when their child will not be coming to the Center after school.

Daily Arrivals and Dismissals Policies:

Every child must be signed in and out every day. The daily sign-in / sign-out sheet is an attendance record used as a legal document attendance and the party responsible for picking up the child each day, as well as others approved for pick-up.

Acorn Child Care Center opens weekdays at 6:00 AM. Children may not be brought in prior to 6:00 AM. The Center closes promptly at 6:00 PM. A \$3.00 late fee will be charged beginning at 6:01 PM and an additional \$10.00 charge will be added every 10 minutes. The late fee is to be paid in cash directly to the staff member caring for your child.

Children must be accompanied by an adult when entering or leaving the Center. Any changes for the day should be noted in writing at the time of drop-off.

We do not accept children into the Center for care between the hours of 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM so not to interrupt the program for the children already present. Children may be picked up during these times but we ask that you please be aware to not interrupt the services for the other children.

Allow time to assist your child in the coatroom and to say a proper good-bye to your child. At the end of the day, please check your child's cubby for items and notes to take home. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's program this is an appropriate time to address them with your child's Teacher or the Director.

The office must be notified in writing if there is a change in the designated pick-up person. We shall not release a child to any person without prior notice to the office, even if we are familiar with the person. In addition to your written permission we will also require a Driver's License, State ID or other photo ID card. We shall not release your child from our care to anyone under the age of 16 without your written permission.

Holiday Closings: Acorn Child Care is closed on the following days. These are not tuition-free days.

Good Friday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Annual Staff In-Service (date to be determined well in advance); Thanksgiving & the day after; December 24th & 25th; December 31st & January 1st

We reserve the right to change or schedule closings consistent with those of the general work force.

Financial Policies:

The financial status of our business depends on the timely payment of fees for our services. Tuition fees pay for staff salaries, rent, utilities, maintenance, food, insurance, taxes and educational supplies. These operating costs are fixed; therefore, there is no reduction in tuition for holidays, periodic closings or absences. The financial agreement must be signed to verify that the parent has read and agrees to comply with all policies regarding the stated financial responsibilities.

- Registration Fee: There is a \$100.00 Non-Refundable registration fee for one child and \$50.00 for each additional child due at the time of registration and annually after that, in the first week of March. If you terminate childcare services and are gone more than 90 days and wish to return to Acorn Child Care, you must pay a re-application fee as established above.
- A Tuition fee schedule shall be provided for each family as part of their opening packet detailing costs associated with our programs.
- Tuition (and any incurred late charges) is due on the first day of attendance each week. If tuition and any incurred late charges are not paid by the end of the week, care will no longer be provided and the child will be considered discharged.
- There is a minimum \$10.00 with \$3.00 each day afterward, late charge added to all late payments.
- Arrangements can be made to pay on a different schedule if a security deposit of one week's tuition is received in addition to the 1st tuition payment.
- If action is taken to collect the money owed by other agencies, all fees, including legal fees, will be the responsibility of the parent.
- The full, established amount of tuition is due even when your child does not attend all the scheduled days.
- Regularly scheduled days of attendance may not be switched. Additional days of attendance may be requested and your child may attend if the space is available. Additional tuition will be due on the extra day(s).
- Full tuition is due when the Center is closed for a holiday, unexpected or weather-related emergencies.
- When your child is absent, without notice, for more than a week, it will be considered a withdrawal from the program and their spot may be lost. To return, all fees must be paid on the day your child returns.
- There is a service fee of \$30.00 for all returned and re-presented checks.
- After receiving two (2) NSF checks, only a cash, certified check or money order will be accepted for payment for services.
- A holding fee may be placed when a prolonged absence from the Center is expected.
- The tuition rate for children 3 years and older, who are not toilet-trained will be the same as the 2 year olds. The rate will change for 3/4/5 year olds when training is complete.

Financial Policies: continued

Tuition for school-age children is determined by the hours and / or the number of days they are in our care.

- The weekly, fulltime school year rate for the school age child covers before and after care, half days and school days.
- During holiday breaks and summer vacation, the rate increases to accommodate care for the full day or the full week.
- The hourly rate is only available for the school age children. The hourly rate begins when your child is accepted into our care and the amount is NOT prorated when care is less than one hour.
- The full day rate is paid for occasional full day attendance when needed.
- Families with a set hourly tuition for each week.

Guidelines for Subsidized Care Funding:

In addition to the general financial policies, children whose families receive Child Care subsidies are also responsible for the following:

- We accept payments from subsidized care sources, i.e. Illinois Action for Children, IDHS, DCFS
- All paperwork must be submitted and approved by the funding agency before your child begins attending the Center.
- The only verification of approval we will accept is the notice sent directly from the funding agency.
- The registration fee, the annual re-registration fee and all incidental program fees, i.e. the cost of breakfast, lunch for a school age child, transportation fees, field trips and all late charges are the parent / guardian's financial responsibility.
- The co-pay is due the 1st of each month. There is a \$10.00 per day charge added for a late payment.
- Co-pays are not prorated and are non-refundable.
- Bi-weekly or end of the month payments may only be made if a security deposit, in the amount of one co-pay, is paid with the 1st payment.
- When your child attends more than the number of eligible days or exceeds the eligible hours of care, the parent / guardian are responsible for the additional tuition.
- We DO NOT receive payment for the approved days if your child does not attend, even though a space is kept open. Your child must minimally attend 80% of their scheduled days in a month or you must pay for the missed days.
- A child may start before we receive approval for subsidy funding if the parent / guardian pay for the regular weekly tuition. When we are reimbursed for this time by the funding source your payments will be applied to future co-pays.
- **A parent who has previously been approved for subsidy funding must pay 90% of the regular weekly tuition when waiting for re-approval. Once re-approval occurs and we are able to be reimbursed for this time by the funding source your payments will be applied to future co-pays. Tuition is due on the 1st day of attendance for the week. To receive this consideration, parents must provide a copy of the completed subsidy application to the Center Director prior to submission for review to assure accuracy.**

Guidelines for Subsidized Care Funding: continued

- All information for redetermination of eligibility **MUST** be sent to the funding agency in a timely manner to avoid stoppage of payments to the Center.
- If your child does not attend the Center during the period of delayed approval, you can pay a holding fee, a re-registration fee or half the regular tuition each week to hold the space. This amount **WILL NOT** be applied to future co-pays.

Guidelines for the Care of Injuries:

The emergency card in the registration pack must be notarized and returned before attendance begins. This card should be up-dated every September and then, as needed, to keep numbers and contacts current.

The basic care for most *minor* mishaps includes: washing the area with soap and water, applying an ice pack, or giving a freeze pop for lip and mouth bumps, putting on a band aid, and giving hugs and attention. We do not use ointments, lotions or sprays as these are not recommended and may cause allergic reactions. The staff has been trained in basic sanitation precautions; good hand washing procedures, the use of gloves and the handling and disposal of body fluids. There will always be a staff member trained in basic first aid, CPR and the Heimlich maneuver at the Center during regular hours.

Minor injuries and accidents include, but are not limited to: bumps, bruises, scrapes, bites, minor falls from tripping, falling from the lower playground equipment or a bloody nose that stops within several minutes. These are the usual mishaps that can occur as your child is at play. When we see your child have a mishap, we check for injuries, give first aid, call you if requested and write a report.

If we have not witnessed a mishap, but see a mark later, we will state that on the report. When there is a mark and you did not receive a report, ask what happened.

Parents will be notified immediately of any potentially serious injury that may require further treatment. The staff is trained to recognize serious injuries/illnesses and to follow the proper procedures to secure care. We will call 911 for all emergencies and contact the parents / guardians immediately.

Health:

Everyone entering the Center and remaining with the children is required to wash hands using the posted hand washing procedure.

All medications coming into the Center must be stored away from the children. Please do not send any medicine, i.e. inhalers, in your child's backpack or place it in your child's cubby or mix any medicine in your child's bottle.

Medications: When your child is required to take medicine prescribed by a physician, he/she may not return to the Center for 24 to 48 hours after taking the first dose, whichever is recommended by the physician in writing.

Health: continued

Each medicine must be signed in each day and all necessary information written on the form by the parent. A staff member will be available to be sure the medicine is properly signed in and stored. A form will be kept on the board for a child taking medicine for a chronic condition. For medicines that are to be given "as needed", we are required to call the parent before we dispense it.

The medicine locker is cleared monthly. A personal-size bottle of hand sanitizer can be kept in your child's cubby to sanitize hands when leaving the Center. If your child needs a moisturizer after hand washing, please supply a bottle for your child's personal use.

Your child will be given a brief check-over each morning. If your child has any marks when coming into the center, tell the teacher. Anything noted is entered into the "Bumps and

Bruises" book. Always check your child at pick up time and notify the office regarding unexplained marks.

Physicals: DCFS requires each child to have a physical examination that is no older than 6 months prior to enrollment; subsequently a new physical is required every 2 years, on the standard State of Illinois medical form upon entry to a child care facility. The initial physical must show the following:

- proof of a lead assessment/screening;
- immunizations in compliance with the most recent immunization schedule set by the Illinois Dept. of Public Health;
- the results of a tuberculin test by the Mantoux method; and
- the health history completed and signed by the parent

Additionally:

- physicals must be updated to follow the recommended immunization schedule; and
- **a new medical form is required every two years;**
- physicals for school-age children will follow the requirements set by the Illinois School Code;
- no child may attend Acorn if his/her physical is incomplete or out of date;
- forms will not be accepted if dated more than 6 months prior to enrollment.

When your child is not feeling well, please be considerate of others when making your decision regarding attendance. If your child is brought to the Center with any of the following signs or symptoms of illness, we will not accept your child for care.

- Vomiting
- diarrhea
- rash
- severe cough
- fever of more than 100 degrees or
- thick nasal discharge

You will be notified if your child becomes ill at the Center. If you are unable to come for your child, contact someone who can pick up your child within a reasonable time. Notify the office of the arrangement. If you can't be reached we will contact the numbers on the emergency card in given order.

Health: continued

Your child must be fever/symptom-free for no less than 24 hours, without medication, before returning.

Please call the office if your child is diagnosed with anything contagious. We post a notice to parents when we have been alerted to health concerns.

Please tell the director **immediately** if your child or someone in the household has lice. Lice do not pose a serious health risk, but they are a common nuisance. For this reason, we have procedures to follow. We will check your child's hair when we see any excessive scratching and your child will be sent home immediately if we find nits or lice. **Check your child thoroughly before returning. We have a "no nit" policy. All the nits must be removed before the child returns. We will check for nits before allowing the child back in the classroom and we will send a child home if nits are still present.** We will continue to check your child daily for 2 weeks.

Biting is a natural behavior for **young** children, a behavior that is sometimes difficult to control. Children bite because they are teething, exploring a sensory path, seeking attention, have inadequately developed verbal skills, are mimicking a behavior or are just not ready to share spaces and toys. Most children who bite outgrow the habit within a reasonable length of time. When a child continues to bite, it may be necessary to discharge that child. We monitor the child that bites others by having that child as close to a staff member as often as possible. Our strategy is to intervene and redirect when we see a situation in which biting may happen. We know it can be distressing for both sets of parents and we will make every effort to do what is in the best interest of each child. When an older child bites, this is a different matter, with different consequences. In these situations, each instance will be handled according to the circumstances.

Toileting and Toilet Training:

Before training begins, parents should discuss our policy with the staff member who will be helping their child.

Children at the age of two have many emerging skills to practice and master. Not all children of that age are ready to take on the challenge of toilet training. Children coming into the 2 year olds group need time to adjust to the teachers and the routine. We do not begin toilet training until a child has shown interest in using the bathroom and is able to communicate, in some way, his/her toileting needs to the staff. Training should be started at home before we begin at the Center. It is also important to maintain consistency between home and the Center. The staff will record your child's daily progress and send home a note each day. At Acorn, no child is punished or humiliated in any way for toileting accidents. We applaud the success and encourage the effort of each child.

As matter of sanitation, we have a step-up policy for children progressing from pull-ups to regular underwear. Parents are asked to accept this policy if they would like the staff to help toilet train their child. A child may begin wearing pull-ups when the decision to toilet train has been made and implemented at home. The next step comes when a child has consistently and successfully used the bathroom and has been "accident free" for two weeks. The child can then wear thick, cotton training pants. These pants are more absorbent than regular underwear and do a better job of containing accidents. Then after being "accident free" for two more weeks, the child steps up to regular

Toileting and Toilet Training: continued

underwear. **Children who have reached the preschool age of three years and are not trained will not move to preschool and will continue to pay the tuition rate for the 2 year old child.**

Parents supply diapers, wipes and creams for their child and reminders will be sent when supplies are needed. All supplies must be labeled with the child's initials. If the supplies are not brought in and we need supply the diapers and wipes, there will be a \$3.00 charge per diaper and wipe. This charge must be paid at pick-up time.

We require a written permission for the staff to assist a child in the bathroom, unless it is an emergency. This permission is given as part of the registration packet. Talk with your child's teacher about the need for extra assistance.

All children, from the toddlers to the preschoolers, should wear clothing that makes it easy for them to master the self help skills needed for using the bathroom. Note that:

- pants should have elastic waistbands that encourage a child to perform the task on his own
- tights, dresses, skirts and clothing with buttons, zippers, snaps and belts are not good choices
- leotards and "onesies" should not be worn because children cannot manage them on their own and they are time-consuming for teachers who diaper many children during the day.

Sanitation:

Cleaning is done on a regular schedule in each room. We wash items that come in contact with the children in soap and water, rinse and use a light spray of bleach and water as a sanitizing agent. Frequently touched surfaces, such as door knobs, faucets, bathroom fixtures, windows, tables and chairs are cleaned several times during the day. Floors and carpets are also cleaned on a regular schedule.

Our **Integrated Pest Management program** requires monthly visits from a licensed pest management company. They do not use sprays or open bait for controls and visits are regularly scheduled when the center is closed. If treatments are needed beyond the normal visits, families will be notified, in writing, as to the date, time and treatment used.

Safety:

The office personnel should be notified immediately, in writing, if there is a change in custody or the custodial arrangement.

With the well-being and safety of the child in mind, we will not release a child to any person who we feel may be "under the influence". Every effort will be made to find alternate transportation.

Please do not allow your child to bring toys and personal items to the Center. Marbles, coins, balloons, candy, and jewelry are potentially hazardous to younger children. Toys that represent weapons or items that can be used as weapons are not allowed for show and tell.

In the event of an emergency closing you will be notified before the regular 6 AM opening time. If the Center closes during the day due to an emergency, the children will be taken to a safe shelter and you will be notified as to where you will pick up your child. In this event, an immediate pick up is required.

Safety: continued

Reduce your speed when entering and leaving the parking lot. Do not leave your car running when you come into the building to drop off or pick up your child. Your child must be supervised at all times. Never allow your child to remain alone in a vehicle. When leaving the Center, do not allow your child to leave the building until you are ready to leave. All children should be placed in an age-appropriate restraint, e.g. car seat, booster seat, seat belt.

Food Service:

A staff member certified in food service and sanitation is always in the Center when food is being prepared and served. This is a state requirement.

Food is provided by the Center for children 13 months through age five. Do not send any food or drink to the Center with your child.

Treats may be brought in for special occasions. They must be commercially prepared and purchased from the grocery or bakery and should be in the original container.

We serve a morning snack, a hot lunch and an afternoon snack. Snacks are prepared in our kitchen. Lunch is prepared by a catering company and delivered daily. A monthly lunch menu is posted on the main bulletin board.

Acorn has a breakfast service from 6:30 to 7:30. The fee can be paid daily or weekly. Pre-registration is not necessary.

Food allergies are on the rise. If your child has food allergies and requires a special menu, please make arrangements with the director. This also applies to foods that cause gastric distress. The director will assist you if more information is needed regarding the food service. A list of children with allergies is posted for the staff. All known food allergies should be listed on the emergency card at registration and up-dated as needed.

Guidance and Discipline:

Through the use of these guidance and discipline methods, our goal is to strengthen each child's sense of responsibility for his/her actions. Each child will develop an understanding of making choices and of the consequences that follow.

The teachers are aware of the capabilities of the children in their care and will

1. Have age-appropriate expectations for behavior;
2. Set rules that are stated at the child's developmental level;
3. Give frequent reminders of the rules;
4. Allow children time to practice obeying the rules. Teachers and staff understand that remembering and following the rules may take practice;

Guidance and Discipline: continued

5. Explain to the child why his/her actions were not acceptable and then redirect the child to another activity or area;
6. Use time out for the toddlers and twos in a limited capacity. Time outs are not given to infants.
7. Give a time-out to an older child as a consequence for making repeated and/or excessively poor choices. The time out will move the child away from friends and activities for a short time. This usually gives the child a chance to calm down and to start over. For the older children, the rule of thumb is one minute of time out per year of age; Help the child understand that appropriate behavior brings positive attention. **“Catch the child being good”**;

Children are more apt to respond to guidance and discipline when the adults involved are consistent in using the same or similar techniques. Guidance and discipline at the Center is the responsibility of the staff member who has an ongoing relationship with the child;

No child will be subjected, under any circumstances, to verbal abuse or corporal punishment inflicted in any way. No child will be deprived of snacks or meals or any part of those meals as punishment for inappropriate behavior.

A copy of the Guidance and Discipline policy is given to each family at enrollment. That copy is to be signed by the parent/guardian and returned with the enrollment papers. DCFS requires the signed copy be placed in the child’s file.

General information:

Family involvement in the Center’s program is welcomed and appreciated. We hope family members feel comfortable enough to come and share time with us. Come sing songs or play games, help with art or read a story. Let your child’s teacher know that you would like to visit and what you would like to do.

Acorn Child Care Center provides year round care for all children enrolled in the program. In March, we send out a request for information to determine each family’s need for summer care and also for the coming school year. The information we receive helps us plan the summer and fall activities and determines the staffing needs to keep the proper ratios in all the classrooms.

We welcome donations of all items. This is a great help to our budget! We can always use scrap paper for art, used toys and games in good condition, playground equipment and rolls of paper towels and boxes of Kleenex. Any time is a good time to make a donation and remember “One man’s junk is another man’s treasure”.

It is the policy of Acorn Child Care Center’s administration that if an employee of the Center intends to care for children on his/her own time, it is a private matter. Parents may not approach staff members in this regard during working hours. Such arrangements must be made off the Center’s premises and on the employee’s own time.

General information: continued

All children, from the toddlers to the preschoolers, should wear clothing that makes it easy for them to master the self help skills needed for using the bathroom. Note that:

- pants should have elastic waistbands that encourage a child to perform the task on his own
- tights, dresses, skirts and clothing with buttons, zippers, snaps and belts are not good choices
- leotards and “onesies” should not be worn at any age, because children cannot manage them on their own and they are time-consuming for teachers who diaper many children during the day.

The Early Learning Environment:

A solid curriculum is important to the success of an early education program. We believe a play-based program, using thematic units, relevant to the children, along with developmentally appropriate practices, provides many opportunities for the children to practice and master emerging skills.

We have chosen “**The Creative Curriculum®**” as the framework for our program, as it best fits our philosophy of care. “**The Creative Curriculum®**” is our guide for planning activities, creating an inviting environment and selecting materials to support the implementation of the curriculum. The concept of developmentally appropriate practices simply means teaching in ways that match the way

Early Learning Environment: continued

children develop and learn. “**The Creative Curriculum®**” has separate programs for infants, toddlers and twos, and for the preschool age children. Throughout the year, as the children grow, their needs and interests change. Teachers observe the children at play and use the observations to develop plans that meet each child’s individual needs, as well as the needs of the group.

The “**Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers®**” begins building a foundation for learning with the youngest children.

This program outlines

- what and how children learn in the first three years of life;
- the experiences/activities that will help them meet the learning goals;
- what staff and parents can do to help children reach these goals;
- and the materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Activities are planned to meet the needs of the infants, toddlers and the two year olds. Daily routines of eating, diapering and toilet training provide learning experiences. Included in each child’s day will be active playtime, stories and music, work on self-help skills, interaction with children and adults and time for individual choices while under the supervision of the teacher.

The “**Creative Curriculum for Preschool®**” is a guideline for the preparation of the curriculum and assessments of the children. Activities encourage and stimulate positive growth in the domains of school readiness and encompass character development, strengthening of the body and the mind, learning about our civil responsibilities and academic readiness.

The morning program for the 3 to 5 year olds is pre-school/pre-kindergarten time. When a child attends a full day, the preschool time is included. Children can also be enrolled for pre-school only, two to five days a week. The hours for the morning program are 8:00AM to 11:00AM, but the entire

Early Learning Environment: continued

preschool day is seen as learning time for the children. The routine times for arrivals and departures, hand washing, using the bathroom, transitions, eating and even rest time provide “teachable moments”.

Using the” **Creative Curriculum®**” as a framework, the teachers plan activities to meet the developmental needs and interests of the children. The preschool sessions include circle time, outside play, story time, music, art and time for activities in language arts, math and science, creative dramatics and social studies. Physical activities provide for developing large and small muscles. Themes and concepts relevant to the preschool child are presented within the play environment to help children learn about themselves, their family, friends and community, and to develop an awareness of personal, civic and global responsibilities.

The **Illinois Early Learning Standards**, developed by the Illinois State Board of Education, are also used in the development of the program. The standards designate eight areas for learning that include math, language, science, social studies, physical health and development, fine arts, social/emotional development and foreign languages. Each area has benchmark indicators for the skills and core knowledge that children should be able to demonstrate upon entry to kindergarten.

Teachers are always available to discuss a child’s progress. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year.

Parents are encouraged to attend the informational session given for each age level in September. This is a good time to meet all the staff members who will be with your child and to receive an overview of the year’s activities and lessons.

Disability Policy:

It is the policy of Acorn Child Care Center not to discriminate against otherwise qualified students seeking enrollment, on the basis of physical or intellectual disability. The Center will provide reasonable accommodation to permit a student with special needs to participate in the Center’s program. The Center recognizes that meeting the needs of a student with special needs requires an interactive process, including staff, parents, community groups and medical providers, and welcomes a constructive dialogue. Because the Center’s assets and staffing are limited, students with special needs will be enrolled, or retained in enrollment, only where the center is reasonably able to provide the student a safe and beneficial environment without incurring any financial burden.

We reserve the right to not enroll a child when a parent misrepresents any of the circumstances.

Action Steps:

1. If a prospective student is a child with special needs, the parent(s) should advise the Center’s Director of the condition at the initial contact and of any reasonable accommodation necessary to meet the student’s needs.

If the Center determines a student is possibly a child with special needs, a conference will be held with the parent(s), director and teacher to determine if there is a special need and whether the center can meet the student’s needs with or without reasonable accommodation.

Disability Policy: continued

2. Findings will be confirmed in writing, noting the presenting issues and requesting that the parent(s) engage in an interactive process.
3. At the Parent/Center conference, the following points should be covered:
 - a. The conduct or situation that led the staff to believe the student has special needs.
 - b. The parent(s) experience with the child as it relates to the possible special needs.
 - c. Has the student been medically evaluated to determine if there is a disability or special need and, if so, to what extent.
 - d. The parent(s) suggestions to possible reasonable accommodations to permit the student to participate in the center's program.
 - e. Staff suggestions to possible reasonable accommodations to permit the student to participate in the center's program.
4. Request the parent(s) provide a **written** medical opinion as to the student's potentially concerns and the medical provider's suggested, reasonable accommodations. The Center may elect to send a letter directly to the medical provider explaining the circumstances that have led to the conclusion the student may have special needs, the nature of the services, provided by the Center, and a request that the medical provider give specific information as to what would be considered necessary, appropriate care and reasonable accommodations. The parent(s)' refusal or failure to provide a written medical opinion within a reasonable period of time may require denying the student's enrollment and the parent(s) should be so advised.
5. Identify community groups that offer support for children with special needs and that could provide assistance in evaluating the circumstances and recommending reasonable accommodations. Also determine if community groups provide resources and supports to assist in offering reasonable accommodations.
6. After receipt of the medical opinion and recommendations from community groups, there is to be a follow-up meeting between Center management and parent(s) to evaluate reasonable accommodations, potential costs, and suggestions for dealing with the situation.
7. If it is possible to continue to provide services to the student, with or without reasonable accommodations, such that the student may safely participate in the Center's programs then services should continue. A "trial period" in which reasonable accommodations are attempted may be appropriate. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the Center cannot provide a safe environment for the special needs student, that is consistent with providing a care/educational environment to other students, the parent(s) should be advised that the student may be removed from the Center or denied enrollment.
8. Any parent(s) dissatisfied with the Center's determination as to reasonable accommodation or decision as to enrollment may appeal that decision to the administration in writing. The appeal shall be presented to the company's Administration and promptly answered, in writing. A

Disability Policy: continued

further meeting between the appeal authority, center management, and parent(s) may be appropriate.

9. In determining the scope of reasonable accommodations, factors to take into consideration include the financial resources of the center, the financial resources of the center's corporate organization, available resources from community groups, the parent(s)' financial resources, the needs of the student, the available number and skills of staff, and the services requested by the parent(s).

If you have questions regarding information in the handbook, please see the director.

We welcome constructive comments regarding all policies and procedures.

Thank you for choosing Acorn Child Care Center for your child care and early educational needs.

FINANCIAL AGREEMENT

The financial status of our business depends on the timely payment of fees for our services. Tuition fees pay for staff salaries, rent, utilities, maintenance, food, insurance, taxes and educational supplies. These operating costs are fixed; therefore, there is no reduction in tuition for holidays, periodic closings or absences.

The financial agreement must be signed to verify that the parent has read and agrees to comply with all policies regarding the stated financial responsibilities.

- Registration Fee: There is a \$100.00 for one child and \$50.00 for each additional child, Non-Refundable registration fee per family at time of enrollment and the annual re-registration fee due the first week of February. If you terminate childcare services and are gone more than 90 days and wish to return to Acorn Child Care, you must pay a re-application fee as established above.
- Transportation fee: There is a \$5.00 per child, per week or \$10.00 fee for multiple child families if Acorn Child Care provides transportation to or from schools.
- A Tuition fee schedule shall be provided for each family as part of their opening packet detailing costs associated with our programs.
- Tuition (and any incurred late charges) is due on the first day of attendance each week. If tuition and any incurred late charges are not paid by the end of the week, care will no longer be provided and the child will be considered discharged.
- There is a minimum \$10.00 with \$3.00 each day afterward, late charge added to all late payments.
- Arrangements can be made to pay on a different schedule if a security deposit of one week's tuition is received in addition to the 1st tuition payment.
- If action is taken to collect the money owed by other agencies, all fees, including legal fees, will be the responsibility of the parent.
- The full, established amount of tuition is due even when your child does not attend all the scheduled days.
- Several **fundraisers** are held during the year. Profits are used to purchase items for the classrooms and for special projects that will directly benefit the children. This is an important part of our budget and all families are expected to:
 - a. sell at least the minimum items requested; or
 - b. pay the flat fee instead of participating in the direct sales.This is not intended to create a hardship for any family, but to help keep tuition costs at a reasonable rate while continuing to improve the Center.
- Regularly scheduled days of attendance may not be switched. Additional days of attendance may be requested and your child may attend if the space is available. Additional tuition will be due on the extra day(s).
- It is not our policy to allow switching days of attendance. An additional day of attendance may be requested and your child may attend if the space is available. Additional tuition must be paid for that day.
- Full tuition is due when the Center is closed for a holiday, unexpected or weather-related emergencies.
- When your child is absent for the entire week due to illness or vacation and the Center has been notified of the absence, the tuition charge is one-half (½) of the established weekly tuition.

SUBSIDIZED PAYMENT AGREEMENT

In addition to the general financial policies listed in the policy book, clients receiving subsidies should be aware that:

- We accept payments from subsidized care sources, i.e. Action for Children, IDHS, and DCFS.
- All paperwork must be submitted and approved by the funding agency before your child begins attending the Center.
- The only verification of approval we will accept is the notice sent directly from the funding agency.
- The registration fee, the annual re-registration fee, due each February, and all incidental program fees, i.e. the cost of breakfast, lunch for school-age children, transportation fees, field trips and all late charges are your financial responsibility.
- The co-pay is due the first of each month. There is a \$10.00 per day charge added for a late payment.
- Co-pays are not prorated and are non-refundable
- Bi-weekly or end of the month payments may be made only if a security deposit, in the amount of one co-pay, is paid with the first payment.
- When your child attends more than the number of eligible days or exceeds the eligible hours of care, the parent / guardian is responsible for the additional tuition.
- **We DO NOT receive payment for the approved days your child does not attend, even though a space is kept open. Your child must minimally attend 80% of their scheduled days in a month or you must pay for the missed days.**
- If your child starts before we receive approval, you must pay the regular weekly tuition. When we are reimbursed for this time by the CCAP, your payments will be applied to future co-pays.
- All information for re-determination of eligibility must be sent to the funding agency in a timely manner to avoid a stoppage of payments to the Center.
- When re-determination is delayed and your child will continue to attend daycare, you must pay the regular tuition until the case is re-approved. Tuition will be due on the first day of attendance for the week.
- If your child doesn't attend the Center during the period of delayed approval, you can pay a holding fee, a re-registration fee or half of the regular tuition each week to hold the space. This amount will not be applied to future co-pays.

I have read and understand the financial policies regarding subsidized payments for Acorn Child Care Center as listed above. I agree to the terms as stated.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN

DATE

This policy is included in the policy booklet. The Department of Children and Family Services requires the person placing a child at the Center to read and sign this policy. This copy will be placed in the child's file.

Guidance and Discipline:

Through the use of these guidance and discipline methods, our goal is to strengthen each child's sense of responsibility for his/her actions. Each child will develop an understanding of making choices and of the consequences that follow.

The teachers are aware of the capabilities of the children in their care and will

1. Have age-appropriate expectations for behavior;
2. Set rules that are stated at the child's developmental level;
3. Give frequent reminders of the rules;
4. Allow children time to practice obeying the rules. Teachers and staff understand that remembering and following the rules may take practice;
5. Explain to the child why his/her actions were not acceptable and then redirect the child to another activity or area;
6. Use time out for the toddlers and twos in a limited capacity. Time outs are not given to infants.
7. Give a time-out to an older child as a consequence for making repeated and/or excessively poor choices. The time out will move the child away from friends and activities for a short time. This usually gives the child a chance to calm down and to start over. For the older children, the rule of thumb is one minute of time out per year of age; Help the child understand that appropriate behavior brings positive attention. **"Catch the child being good"**;

Children are more apt to respond to guidance and discipline when the adults involved are consistent in using the same or similar techniques. Guidance and discipline at the Center is the responsibility of the staff member who has an ongoing relationship with the child;

No child will be subjected, under any circumstances, to verbal abuse or corporal punishment inflicted in any way. No child will be deprived of snacks or meals or any part of those meals as punishment for inappropriate behavior.

I have read and had the opportunity to discuss the guidance and discipline methods with the teacher or the Director at Acorn Child Care Center.

PARENT SIGNATURE

DATE

PARENT SIGNATURE

DATE