



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

American University Child Development Center

Parent Handbook
2023-2024

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WELCOME

Welcome to the American University Child Development Center (The Center). We are glad you are a part of the Center family and hope this will be an exciting and rewarding experience for you and your child.

We are here to provide high-quality education and care for your children. The Center staff provides a warm, supportive environment and responds to the needs and interests of each child. The Center offers rich experiences for growth and development through total involvement in play. In this environment, children begin to develop to their fullest potential and learn to seek and enjoy the process of learning. We encourage your participation as our partners in your child's growth and learning experience at the Center. Parents are always welcome at the Center to share or present an activity to a group or simply to visit.

Please make yourself familiar with this handbook. It will provide information about the Center's philosophy, goals, programs, and operating policies and procedures. If you have questions, ask a teacher or the administrator for clarification. We believe that communication between parents and staff is essential for the well-being of our children and the smooth operation of the Center.

THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

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Mailing Address: 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
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2023 – 2024 CALENDAR

Holidays

Labor Day: Monday, September 4

Thanksgiving Break: Thursday, November 23 – Friday, November 24

Winter Break: Friday, December 23 – Monday, January 1, 2024

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: Monday, January 15

Memorial Day: Monday, May 27

Juneteenth: Wednesday, June 19

Independence Day: Thursday, July 4

Parent-Child Orientation

Visit Classroom and Meet Teachers: Friday, August 25, 2023, 10:00-12:00

Parent/Teacher Conferences (Center Closed and Parents Only)

(Child Care is only available during your scheduled meeting time as pre-arranged)

Fall In Person, Friday, November 10

Spring In Person, Friday, May 17

In addition, parents or teachers may request a conference at any time should one be deemed necessary.

Family Events

Fall Potluck (both classes), Evening, Friday, October 27, 2023

Spring Potluck (both classes), Evening, Friday, April 26, 2024

Green Room Preschool Graduation, Mid-Day, May 24, 2024

Staff Development Days (Center Closed)

Cleaning, staff training, and orientation for new children: Monday-Friday, August 21-25, 2023

Staff Professional Workdays, ~ 3 days:

November 3, 2023

May 10, 2024

TBA – parents will receive one-month advance notice.

Spring and Summer at the Center

School pictures: May 9, 2024

Summer program (no enrollment necessary; operating hours remain the same. Programming changes to include summer activities): June 17, 2024

Tuition

Monthly tuition is due on the first business day of each month.

SECTION I: PROGRAM CONTENT

History

The Child Development Center opened on September 25, 1978. The program began with nine children under the prerogative of the Student Confederation, which served as the prime funding source. The hours of operation were 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., eight months yearly. The Center has grown to include 30 full-time children served from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for twelve months a year. In 1979, the Center became a department in the Division of Student Life, and in 1993, it moved to the Office of Human Resources.

Mission

The Child Development Center's mission is:

- to offer a developmentally appropriate educational program for children ages 2½ to 6 years;
- to support the family unit through on-campus childcare for the university community of students, faculty, and staff;
- to support the university's undergraduate and graduate programs by providing on-campus observation and laboratory supplements to classroom participation;
- to provide an educational experience for university students interested in young children and parenting; and,
- to facilitate continued and increased enrollment of adult students in the university's graduate, undergraduate, and Continuing Education programs.

Philosophy

The American University Child Development Center is dedicated to providing an exemplary early childhood program. We believe in fostering the growth and development of the whole child in the interrelated areas of development: cognitive, physical, social, and emotional.

The Center provides a learning environment rich in active engagement and exploration opportunities. It is warmly supportive, safe, and stimulating. The professional staff interacts with each child to help them build relationships, extend play, and support problem-solving. Teachers at the Center understand and respect the uniqueness of each child in terms of their needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles.

Goals

The Center is an educational program at an institution of higher learning. The general goals for the children are:

- **Self-Esteem and Independence** – encouraging each child's pride in individual characteristics, families, experiences, and accomplishments and each child's responsibility for personal care, actions, and words.
- **Discovery and Exploration** – fostering a positive attitude toward learning through questioning, observing, creating, manipulating, and experimenting with varied materials related to diverse themes.
- **Physical Capabilities** – providing children opportunities to develop small and large motor skills, locomotion, and coordination through various materials and activities.
- **Artistic Expression and Appreciation** – cultivating each child's ability to express ideas and emotions through language, art, music, movement, and drama.

- **Social Interaction and Cooperation** – promoting children’s social skills for diverse adult and peer relations, including listening, expressive language, turn-taking, following directions, rules and routines, group participation, care for shared materials, and conflict resolution.
- **Emotions** – cultivating the development of positive affective states and dispositions, fostering an increased self-awareness and acceptance of each child’s emotional states, and encouraging appropriate expression of these emotions.

Curriculum

At the Center, we implement the [Creative Curriculum®](#) developed by Teaching Strategies, Inc. This curriculum program identifies goals in all areas of development:

- **Social:** To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are a part of the group.
- **Emotional:** To help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- **Cognitive:** To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their ideas and experience success and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their thoughts, observations, and feelings.
- **Physical:** To help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

This curriculum identifies the knowledge, skills, and concepts important for preschool children to acquire in each content area: literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology.

Each classroom is organized into ten interest areas, offering children opportunities to explore, discover, and learn. The interest areas provide a setting for children to learn academics and apply skills.

- Blocks
- Dramatic Play
- Toys and games
- Art
- Library
- Discovery
- Sand and Water
- Music and Movement
- Cooking
- Computers

The outdoor learning environment is an equally important interest area in our program.

At the Center, play is regarded as a primary process through which learning occurs. Therefore, it is considered a central component of the Center’s program and is reflected in a classroom environment that promotes active play. The Center’s classrooms are arranged by activity or interest areas. Each area is designed with specific materials to encourage active exploration, self-expression, and collaboration. In addition, the teachers interact with children during center time to promote learning and work individually with children throughout the day.

All staff members are responsible for being thoroughly familiar with the Center’s philosophy and goals. Full-time classroom staff are responsible for collaborating with their teams to use these goals as a flexible framework for planning learning experiences and interacting with children. The staff develop plans to provide

children with a variety of learning opportunities and to encourage broad exploration. They support children in doing as much for themselves as possible. In addition, they strive to support a variety of social experiences by engaging children in conversation throughout the day and organizing classroom time and space to balance individual, small group, and large group activities. All staff members serve as coaches as children practice social skills involved in peer interaction, friendship formation, and conflict resolution.

Assessment

We use Teaching Strategies Gold®, an online assessment system, to evaluate children's development and progress. All teaching staff are trained in using and implementing this assessment tool. Teachers follow specific guidelines and expectations for each age group in physical, social/emotional, language, and cognitive development. Assessment results are shared and discussed with parents during parent-teacher conferences. All information collected is kept in total confidentiality.

Enrichment Classes

We incorporate music, yoga, and soccer classes into our curriculum. These extra-curricular activities enhance children's learning and development and are engaging and fun. Music and yoga are held during regular school hours, from September to June, and are mandatory. Soccer is optional and offered during the fall and spring seasons.

Parents are responsible for these additional fees, which are paid directly to the instructors.

Hours of Operation

The Center operates year-round from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please check the Center's annual calendar for the current school year holiday and closing schedule.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule of the Child Development Center includes:

- a sequenced time structure allowing for active and quiet experiences, large group and small group activities, free choice time to play alone or with friends, as well as indoor and outdoor playtimes
- learning in ten areas, including library, dramatic play, science, blocks, carpentry, art, math and table games, cooking, sand and water, and outdoor play

Each day, the program includes both teacher-led and child-initiated activities, a balance of quiet and active experiences, and group and individual experiences. The choice of activities and materials varies according to the child's interests and monthly themes. In general, free choice time (in the daily schedules below) consists of blocks of time for children to pursue play in the classroom activity areas. Special projects are noted on the monthly calendar posted in each classroom.

The Orange Room children are 2½ to 4 years old, and the Green Room children are 3½ to 5½. In the Green Room, children are divided into two separate groups for small group time – a teacher-directed activity period that expands on theme concepts and includes informal discussions, group games, and small group projects such as cooking, science, and cooperative art projects.

The day is carefully structured, although the schedule is flexible to meet the needs of the group and individual children. The standard structure of the day is as follows:

Orange Room

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Arrival of Children
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Free Play / Interest Areas
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Snack
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Clean-up / Toileting
10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Circle Time
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Small Group Activities
11:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.	Outdoor Play
11:50 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Bathroom, Music & Movement
12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	Lunch / Clean-up / Toileting
1:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.	Nap / Rest Time
3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Wake Up / Story Time
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Snack
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Outdoor Play
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Free Choice Time in Green Room / Departure

Green Room

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Arrival of Children/Free Play in Orange Room
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Free Choice / Interest Areas
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Snack
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Outdoor Play
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Small Group Time
11:15 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.	Projects and Free Play
11:50 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Clean-up / Toileting
12:00 p.m.– 12:15 p.m.	Circle / Story Time
12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.	Lunch / Clean-up
12:45 p.m.– 1:15 p.m.	Bathroom, Books
1:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.	Nap / Quiet Time
3:15 p.m.– 3:30 p.m.	Wake up / Group Time
3:30 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.	Snack
4:00 p.m.– 5:00 p.m.	Outdoor Play
5:00 p.m.– 6:00 p.m.	Free Choice Time in Green Room / Departure

Nap/Rest Time

After an active and engaging morning, most children sleep for 1½ to 2 hours. Children nap on sheet-covered cots with a warm blanket. Children who wake up early remain on their cots and read books or engage in quiet activities. Non-sleepers rest for one hour and are then given quiet activities. Children may bring a “cuddly” from home for a nap.

Outdoor Policy

Children go outside twice daily, an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon, as weather permits. Children need fresh air and movement for their general well-being and healthy development. We believe that when children are well enough to attend school, they are also well enough to play outdoors.

In extremely cold weather, children will remain inside when the wind chill (air temperature + wind speed) is 20°F or below. In extremely hot weather during the summer months, the Center will follow the recommendations of the National Weather Service during “code orange” and “code red” air quality situations. The children will remain inside if the heat index (air temperature + relative humidity) reaches 100°F or above.

When outside play is not possible, children have ample opportunities for large motor activities in our extra room, the “Large Muscle Room.”

Field Trips

Classes will occasionally take walks around campus to explore the many educational and engaging activities and events American University offers. Parents are always welcome to join the children on their walks. Center emergency backpacks are brought on every walk. Backpacks contain each child's emergency contact information and a first aid kit.

SECTION II: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Enrollment

Admission

Children between 2½ and 6 years of age are enrolled based on the availability of space, the submission of a completed application, and the payment of a non-refundable application fee. The Center offers enrollment based on prioritized application categories. These categories are based on affiliation or non-affiliation with American University. The prioritized categories are as follows:

Category 1: AU Students or Siblings of Currently Enrolled Center Students

- Full-time undergraduates enrolled in degree programs
- Full-time graduates enrolled in degree programs
- The Center strives to promote family togetherness. Therefore, siblings of currently enrolled Center students are given priority. If a child becomes eligible after their sibling has left the Center, they will be moved to the appropriate category based on parent affiliation.

Category 2: AU Faculty and Staff

- Full-time staff (minimum of 28 hours of employment per week) or faculty status
- Part-time staff (27 or fewer hours of employment per week) or adjunct faculty status

Category 3: AU Alumni

- Graduates of undergraduate and graduate programs

Category 4: Wesley Seminary Affiliates

- Full-time faculty, students, and staff of Wesley Seminary

Category 5: On-Campus Organizations Serving AU

- Full-time employees of on-campus organizations

Category 6: Community

- Members of the community surrounding AU

The Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sexual orientation, or national origin.

Security Deposit and Required Enrollment Documentation

1. *To finalize the formal admission of their child at the Center*, parents/guardians need to:
 - 1.1. Submit a payroll deduction form OR a security deposit equal to one month's tuition (checks should be made payable to: American University Child Development Center). This deposit will be credited toward the last calendar month of the child's tenure at the Center, with a written notice of withdrawal submitted to the Center Administrator at least 30 days prior to the child's withdrawal date.
 - 1.2. Complete the District of Columbia form entitled "Registration Record for Child Receiving Care Away From Home."

2. **To complete the enrollment of their child**, parents/guardians are required to complete and return the following forms to the Center by their child's start date:
 - 2.1. **Documents Required by the DC Child Care Licensing Division:**
 - 2.1.1. [District of Columbia Child Health Certificate](#)
 - 2.1.2. [District of Columbia Oral Health Assessment Form](#) (for children 3 and up)
 - 2.1.3. [District of Columbia Travel and Activity Authorization](#)
 - 2.1.4. [District of Columbia Authorization for Child's Emergency Medical Treatment](#)
 - 2.2. **Documents Required by the Center** (documents will be provided to parents after child is accepted for enrollment)
 - 2.2.1. Tuition Agreement
 - 2.2.2. Payroll Deduction Form (for current AU faculty and staff parents)
 - 2.2.3. Developmental Questionnaire
 - 2.2.4. Cultural Questionnaire
 - 2.2.5. Use of Likeness and Research Release
 - 2.2.6. Non-Prescription Sun-Protectant Application Release

Child/Family Orientation

Before their start date, children and parents are invited to the Center for an hour Orientation to visit their classroom, meet their teachers, and interact with classmates.

All children entering the Orange Room for the first time will participate in the following transition schedule:

Day One (9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.): Parents are to remain in the classroom

Day Two (9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.): Bring a lunch, pick-up before nap

Day Three (9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.): Bring a lunch, pick-up after nap

Day Four (9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.): Full day

Historically, this has proven to be a successful transition schedule, allowing the children to adjust gradually to their new environment. If you have questions, please speak with the office or full-time teaching staff. Since all children and parents cope differently with the separation process, individual adjustments can be made as needed.

Attendance

The Center's licensed operating hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We cannot accept children before 8:00 a.m. **Parents must sign children in and out of the Center in the books located by the main entrance of each classroom.** The sign-in/sign-out books become our official record of attendance in case of an emergency evacuation. Children must be accompanied into and out of the Center by an adult. It is of the utmost importance that an adult let a staff member know that a child has arrived or is leaving. **Please sign your full name, no initials. Children or siblings are not allowed to sign in or out.**

Children must arrive at the Center by 9:30 a.m. so that they can fully participate in the morning program. If there are special situations, such as doctor visits, please let us know by 9:00 a.m. when to expect your child. We ask that a late drop-off be no later than noon. Most children have a hard time transitioning while the class is engaged in group time, a project, or an already established informal playgroup. Children develop a sense of security dependent upon a consistent daily routine, and parents can help by bringing the child to school each day at the same time.

In addition, we understand that there is an occasional need to take a child out of the program for a short time during the day and then return. The timing of this pull-out should be discussed in detail with the teachers. We cannot accept children back during the nap period of 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

If a child is consistently dropped off late, a meeting will be held with the parents. Continued tardiness could jeopardize the child's enrollment at the Center.

Please share with us any plans for your child to be away from school for vacations or other special events. The more the teachers know about what the child is experiencing outside of school, the better they can plan for the child while they're at school.

Billing and Fee Collection

Tuition

Parents sign tuition agreements at the beginning of each academic year. **Monthly tuition is due on the first business day of each month.** American University employee parents are encouraged to meet their financial commitments to the Center by enrolling in payroll deduction. Non-employee parents may make tuition payments by either check or money order. If either of the latter two forms of payment are used, they must be made payable to the "American University Child Development Center" and may be presented at the Center's office. A written reminder will be given if the tuition payment is more than one week late. If the tuition payment is more than seven days in arrears, a late payment fee of \$35 will be charged. If payments continue to be delinquent, the child will be suspended until the balance is paid in full. Returned checks will result in a penalty fee of \$35.

Tuition is due each month for as long as your child is enrolled at the Center, including periods in which they may not be in attendance or on leave (e.g., vacations, holidays, illnesses, inclement weather). Tuition is based on 50 operating weeks each year. There is no refund or reduction of fees for planned or unplanned absences or during the Center's planned closing weeks (winter break and August cleaning and transition week).

Late Pick-Up Policy

The Center closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. If a child has not been picked up by this time, parents will incur the following fees:

- 1 to 5 minutes - \$10
- 5 to 10 minutes - \$20
- 10+ minutes - \$20 plus \$2 per minute over 10 minutes

A "late pick up" form will be completed for all children picked up after 6:00 p.m. Your arrival time and the total charge will be noted on this form. This form will be placed on your parent board hook, and a copy will be kept in a Late Charge Log in the office. Late fees are due within 48 hours after receipt of the notice.

Late pick-ups exceeding three times in a given contracted period may result in other penalties or actions, including suspension or termination of services. Closing staff members have their own schedules to adhere to, so your cooperation is appreciated.

If a child is not picked up by 6:00 p.m., the child's parents/guardians will be called. If the parents/guardians cannot be reached, the emergency contact listed on the child's DC Registration Record will be called.

Additional Fees

Parents are responsible for enrichment classes during the school year.

Child Safety and Security

The Center's licensed closing time is 6:00 p.m. Parents and authorized pick-up persons should arrive at the Center at least 10 minutes before this time to allow for a smooth departure.

All authorized pick-up persons must be at least 18 years of age or older. No child will be released to a person not on the parents' emergency pick-up list without a written note authorizing the pick-up and signed by a parent or guardian. In addition, the parent must inform a teacher or the administrator of any alternative pick-up plans. In an emergency, a parent may call the Center and arrange for a pick-up by someone not previously approved. If possible, a permission note should be emailed or faxed. The parent should describe the person and their relationship to the child. This person will be asked for picture identification at pick-up time. Please let any authorized person(s) know that we will ask for identification until the staff becomes familiar with them. It is also advised that the child be made aware that someone other than their parent or guardian will pick them up.

The staff will not release a child to anyone who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or in an altered mental state which may pose a threat to the safety and well-being of the child. If a parent or approved pick-up person in an altered state or condition attempts to remove a child from the Center, AU Campus Police will be notified.

Parental Issues

In difficult situations such as separation, divorce, or child abuse, the Center must have copies of any applicable court documents. Please keep the Center staff well-informed of any changes to custody agreements or living situations. We encourage divorced and separated parents to establish routines for the reliable exchange and sharing of school information while your child is here at the Center.

All Center staff members are required by law to report suspected evidence of child abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services.

Car Seats

DC Law requires that children under 8 years of age must be properly seated in an installed infant, convertible (toddler), or booster child seat, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Booster seats must be used with both lap and shoulder belts. All children leaving the Center in a vehicle must be properly restrained in an age/weight-appropriate restraint system.

Access Cards

All Center families must use access cards to enter the Center building. This policy is a security measure that must be followed at all times. Parents with an American University-issued ID card may use their card to enter the building. Unaffiliated parents will be issued a guest access card. Please keep your card readily accessible when dropping off or picking up your child. We issue a limited number of guest access cards, so keeping track of the cards you are given is essential.

Security Cameras

To enhance the safety of our children and provide a more secure environment for the Center community at large, the Center has installed security cameras inside and outside the facility. These cameras provide 24/7, video-only monitoring of the Center's premises. As part of the university-wide security system, this service is managed and maintained by AU's Police.

Parking

Parents may park their cars in the area in front of the Center for drop-off and pick-up. Since the parking space is limited, we ask that you limit the drop-off and pick-up time to 15 minutes. If you plan to stay in the

Center longer than 15 minutes, please check with the Center staff for advice on parking on or around campus. Parking permits are distributed to all families at the beginning of each year. Please remember to display your pass, which identifies you as having the right to short-term parking in the Center loading zone. The University Police enforce University parking regulations. Please always observe the University traffic and parking regulations to avoid traffic and parking tickets.

Outdoor Safety

Safety is very important when taking children outside of the Center. Precautions must be taken, and procedures established and followed. Routine procedures include:

- Counting the number of children before going outside, counting again when they arrive on the playground. The same is true before returning to the Center; children must be counted before leaving the playground and after returning to the classroom.
- Ensuring the gate on the fence is closed and locked during the hours when children are not outside.
- Ensuring minimum licensing ratios between children and teachers are maintained at all times.

Accidents

The staff makes every effort to ensure the safety of the children in our care, but accidents do inevitably occur. All accidents and injuries must be reported immediately to the director. The staff member witness to or involved in the incident is required to complete and sign an accident/incident report on the day of the occurrence. The director must sign the report and place it on the child's parent board hook to be signed by a parent/guardian and returned to the office. Two copies of the signed report will be made: one kept in the office and one sent home. Parents will be notified immediately to come to the Center to assess their child and determine if advanced medical attention is required in case of a serious injury.

All permanent Center staff members are trained in CPR/First Aid and emergency procedures. The Center staff will provide first aid for minor scrapes and bruises (i.e., apply ice, wash with soap and water, and apply a bandage). In cases of a more serious injury, the parents or emergency contact will be called to the Center to make a decision about medical treatment. The Center staff will call Public Safety and 911 for assistance if a child needs emergency treatment. Parents will be notified immediately. If parents cannot be reached, the person(s) listed and approved as Emergency Contact(s) will be called. The child's doctor may also be notified. A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain with them until parents or emergency contacts arrive.

If parents have religious beliefs that may affect medical treatment, the Center must have written instructions at the time of enrollment.

Child Neglect/Abuse

The District of Columbia mandates the Center's professional staff to report evidence or suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the Child and Family Services Agency.

SECTION III: HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Licensing

The Child Development Center is licensed by the government of the District of Columbia, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). This license is renewed through inspection each year.

Health Insurance

Children cannot be enrolled if they are not covered under a family health insurance policy.

The Center is covered under the University's liability/accident insurance policy. The policy only covers accidents in the case of staff negligence.

Health Certificates

All children must have fully completed District of Columbia Child Health Certificates on file in order to be accepted into the program. After enrollment, children must complete a yearly physical examination and immunization updates. You are responsible for regularly updating your child's health files to reflect new immunizations and keep your child's records current.

The results of this yearly doctor's examination must be recorded on a new Child Health Certificate each year. The Child Health Certificate can be obtained from the office or the Center's website.

Annual oral health assessments are also required for all children 3 years old or older.

Immunization

Prior to enrollment, your child must obtain all age-appropriate immunizations and tests as required by the District of Columbia. After admission to the Center, you are responsible for regularly updating your child's health files to reflect new immunizations and to keep the records current. If parents are not in compliance, the child will be suspended until complete health/immunization documentation is provided. The DC Department of Health (DC/DOH) determines and strictly enforces the requirement of an up-to-date immunization record for each child through its database system. Any missing immunization will cause the rejection of the Center's annual DC license renewal.

If there is no proper documentation from your child's physician excusing your child from any required vaccination/immunization, your child will be suspended until updated records are provided.

Illness

We understand that children occasionally get sick and that your child's illness is understandably a matter of great concern. If your child exhibits the symptoms stated below before scheduled attendance at the Center, your child should be kept at home until the symptoms of illness have been absent for 24 hours.

A child should be kept at home if any of the following conditions exist:

- fever of 100° or higher (oral temperature within the last 24 hours) or nausea or vomiting within 24 hours
- persistent cough
- sore throat or swollen glands
- eyes inflamed or swollen

- body rash
- diarrhea within 24 hours
- bad cold (runny nose with greenish nasal discharge)
- head lice
- a contagious illness (such as streptococcus, conjunctivitis, coxsackievirus, etc.)
- other symptoms of communicable disease (i.e., whooping cough, covid)
- not well enough to participate in Center activities, including outdoor activities

If a child develops any of these symptoms at the Center, a parent will be called to pick up their child immediately. **The child needs to be picked up within an hour of notification.** The sick child will be isolated and provided a comfortable space in the director's office while waiting for a family member to arrive. **The child may not be re-admitted to the Center until 24 hours after symptoms dissipate without the aid of medication.**

If your child has been exposed to a communicable or contagious disease, please notify Center staff immediately. This allows us to take the appropriate steps to limit the risk of infection in other children and promptly notify parents. **If your child has been infected with a highly contagious disease, they may not return to the Center unless a doctor's note is provided stating that the child is free from communicable illness.**

Every morning the children will be casually but thoroughly checked by a staff member as they arrive. If the staff member determines that the child is too ill to remain at the Center, the situation will be discussed with the parent, who might be asked not to leave the child at the Center.

Please call the Center by 9:30 a.m. if your child will not be in attendance due to illness.

Medication Administration

Only medication prescribed by the child's doctor can be administered by Center staff. This includes "over the counter" medications. All medication must be in its original container and labeled by the pharmacy with complete identification and administration information. A doctor's complete written orders must accompany "over the counter" medications. This documentation can be in the form of either a signed note on letterhead from the doctor giving full instructions for administration OR a Center Medication Administration Permission form completed and signed by the doctor and parent. This information can be faxed if necessary. Each medication must be labeled with the child's name, drug name, dosage schedule, and expiration date. Medicine will not be administered if it is beyond the expiration date or if it has been prescribed to an individual other than the child. A first dosage of medicine will never be given at school because of the possibility of an allergic reaction.

In addition to the doctor's orders, parents must complete and sign a Medical Administration Form that includes the child's name, the date and time of administration, and the required dosage. Forms are available in each classroom. The medication will be administered by the professional staff and documentation of administration will be kept in a Medication Log.

Allergies

It is very important that parents and Center staff work together on all health issues, especially allergies, which might impact a child's participation and well-being at school. We ask that you give us complete, specific information about your child's allergies so we can respond appropriately and be full partners in helping manage health issues, ensuring your child's school experience is as typical as possible. This information is requested during the enrollment process and is placed in our emergency book.

Due to an unusual increase in the number of children nationwide and at the Center, who are allergic to peanut products, we have removed peanut butter from our snack menu. Until further notice, we have asked parents to avoid sending peanut products for lunches. If you are concerned about potential or diagnosed peanut or tree nut allergies, please speak with the teachers, so we can make an appropriate plan to ensure that your child does not come into contact with these products in any way.

Snacks and Lunch

Snacks

The Center provides two nutritious snacks each day. Snacks are served at 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The snack menu includes fresh fruits and vegetables, crackers and cheese, whole wheat breads and cereals, bagels and cream cheese, English muffins, and waffles or pancakes. We do not serve peanut butter or peanut products. Our snack menu is posted on the teacher's board and the refrigerator. Because cooking is a special part of our curriculum, the children often make their snacks. Milk and water are served with every snack.

Lunch

Parents provide all lunches for their children. A nutritious lunch is essential for growing children. We encourage you to pack a lunch that includes good, nutritious foods from at least three food groups. We refer to these foods as "growing foods" or "vitamin foods." If you choose to pack a lunch with commercially prepared items, we suggest that you read the labels carefully to assess how nutritious the food is. We can warm up food in the microwave if you choose to send cooked foods; however, we cannot prepare lunch foods. We discourage frozen entrees because they must be heated to a high temperature and then cooled before eating. This usually requires too much time, and the child can often be too frustrated to wait. We cannot serve multiple lunches from large cans or large portions of cooked foods. Please send one day's portion each day.

We include good nutrition and eating habits as part of our curriculum. At lunchtime, each child will be encouraged to eat the most nutritious food in their lunch first.

If you would like some ideas for lunches, the teachers or administrator can offer suggestions or provide other resources.

Since we do not have refrigerator space for lunch boxes, please include a frozen cold pack in your child's lunch box daily. Lunch items need to be kept cold.

Please refer to the section on allergies for information about peanut products.

Diapering and Toilet Training

We follow a diapering procedure that allows the child to feel safe, respected and cared for. All health and safety guidelines and procedures recommended by the DC Health Department and the NAEYC are followed during the changing process. The full diapering procedure is posted near the changing area. Parents must provide disposable diapers and wipes for a child in diapers or in the process of toilet learning. Diaper creams may also be brought in the event of rash or irritation. Make sure you have a Diaper Cream and Ointment Release form on file and up to date (they are good for one year). Please check your child's supplies often. Most children need a good supply of extra underpants and clothing, especially while they are being toilet trained. Please refrain from dressing your child in overalls, T-shirts with snaps (onesies), belts, tights, etc. Parents and staff should decide together when the child is ready to begin toilet training. Consult with the staff to develop a plan that will be both consistent and manageable.

Sunscreen

We ask that you apply sunscreen for your child before they come to school in the morning. We can apply sunscreen products **ONLY** with a signed permission form on record (good for one year). If you have a signed permission on record and provided your child's preferred sunscreen product, we will re-apply in the afternoon as needed. Sunscreen will only be applied during the summer and swimming season (June-September).

SECTION IV: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A special aspect of the Center is the fact that we are located near the parent's work/study site. We have an open-door policy and encourage parents to join us for lunch, stop by and say hello, or to play a while during the day. A phone call during the day is always welcome.

Parent Orientation

A Parent Orientation or Back to School Night is scheduled early in the fall semester. Discussion topics include the curriculum, the classroom routine, the role of teachers, the home-to-center transition, and parent obligations. It is essential that parents attend this orientation to gain an understanding of specific Center and classroom operations.

Daily Parent Updates

Each family has a labeled hook on a bulletin board in each classroom. Important notices are given to parents individually on the parent "hooks" in the classroom (e.g., monthly classroom calendar, accident/incident report, office communications). Parents are asked to check their hooks every day. Sometimes quick, last-minute information or reminders will be attached to the page opposite the daily sign-in sheet and/or posted at the entrance of each classroom. Classroom weekly plans, snack menus, and emergency plans are posted on the teacher's board.

We also communicate with parents via a weekly email newsletter – "This Week @ The Center." It includes information regarding specific events, reminders from the office or teachers, and weekly classroom happenings. Parents are encouraged to read the newsletter to stay up-to-date on what's going on each week at the Center.

Specific information about the day's program is posted in each classroom to let parents know some of what has happened at school. Group Time details will be posted in the Green Room, where individual children are quoted on special subjects that are part of the curriculum. Informal communication between parents and staff is always available at pick-up, drop-off, telephone, or email.

We strive to provide parents with all pertinent information about their child's day at the Center. In case you need any additional detailed information about your child's daily activities, please let the teachers know.

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are held twice a year (November and May) and at the request of either parents or staff. Conferences are informal sharing times designed to provide parents with information on their child's progress and to discuss the best ways to meet the child's needs in the classroom.

The Center is closed for each of the formal conferences. Federal Work Study Students are available at the Center for childcare during the scheduled conference time ONLY. Virtual meetings over Zoom may be scheduled when necessary.

If something unusual is happening at home (i.e., a parent's business trip, an illness, or visiting relatives), please inform the teachers or the administrator. This can affect the child's routine, and their behavior may change. We want to be especially sensitive to each child's needs at such times.

Parent Survey

We conduct an annual review of our program in the spring of each year. Parents are given a questionnaire to complete. This annual review provides the Center with important feedback from parents about our program. Parent input is essential to help us maintain a high-quality program that meets the needs of our families.

Family Potlucks

Family potluck suppers are held twice a year, early fall and early summer, and have become a special tradition and an opportunity for the Center's families to socialize and, at times, for alums to meet with old friends.

Family Sharing

Young children need to share their world with their significant adults. We set aside a special time during the month of December for "Family Sharing," when a child and their family can share activities, traditions, and cultural identities unique to them in the classroom. This kind of involvement sets a home and school connection pattern that research has shown to be among the most critical factors in a child's long-term educational success.

We welcome parents to share special family traditions with their child's class to expand children's awareness and appreciation of others' cultural backgrounds.

Negotiating Staff-Parent Differences

The Center is a department within the university's Office of Human Resources. We encourage all parents to work with us in a collaborative setting to resolve any conflict that might arise with the Center staff. Parents and teachers are encouraged to keep an open line of communication. In case of differences between staff and parents, the following procedures may be used, as appropriate:

- Meet with teacher(s) to discuss the issue(s)
- Meet with the director to discuss the issue(s)
- As the issue(s) at hand may require, meet with Center staff/director and a member of the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program of the Office of Human Resources
- Meet with PAG chair(s) and the director
- After the options above have been utilized with no resolution, meet with the director and the Executive Director, Total Rewards & Service Delivery in the Office of Human Resources.

Discipline and Pro-Social Behavior

Our philosophy dictates that our first step is to focus on preventing negative behavior through verbal limit-setting, room arrangement, program planning, providing sufficient and appropriate materials, etc. Children are encouraged to approach problems by talking, rather than hitting, biting, pushing, or grabbing toys. In addition, we help children deal with the underlying reason(s) for any negative behavior.

When a child becomes very upset, a teacher will help the child to calm down before discussing the situation. The teacher will let the child know that they want to help. The child might be asked to take a calming deep breath. On occasion, a child might be asked to sit in a quiet place in the classroom to calm down for a brief time. Generally, the child lets the teacher know when they are ready to rejoin the group or to discuss the incident. This is NOT presented as a "time out" to think about the incident or as a form of punishment. It is presented as a time to calm oneself so they can take part in a discussion about the incident and the ensuing feelings before rejoining the group.

The teachers always focus on what children can learn from a situation, not merely on what has happened. We do not give the child solutions, but coach and encourage them in an age-appropriate process of working out solutions together. These situations present opportunities to teach empathy, respect, responsibility, and negotiating skills. These are important elements in the development of inner control. In some cases, the teacher and parents might decide to work together on a specific behavior management strategy.

During this process, the child is supervised at all times, and their reactions and needs are monitored. At no time will physical, threatening, disrespectful, or humiliating discipline be used. Dangerous or hurtful behavior will always be stopped before other action is taken.

The Center teachers serve as role models for the development of pro-social behavior by working cooperatively and offering support and empathy for other adults as well as children. Many activities conducive to social interaction are provided. The children receive positive reinforcement (verbal praise and hugs) for playing and solving problems cooperatively, and for acts of kindness and empathy. Teachers help children develop strategies for achieving social goals such as asking for a turn and negotiating how long before the turn comes. Cooperative play skills are encouraged as teachers take part in play. We do not provide the “quick solution” to a child conflict or play problem. Instead, we support or model the problem-solving process that children can then learn to use independently.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

1. The behaviors of children are guided by an approach including positive responses for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. Staff observe all children and use appropriate forms for documenting any atypical behavior to help ascertain any patterns regarding events, activities, interactions, and any precipitating contextual factors.
2. When a child exhibits inappropriate behaviors on a continual basis that is not resolved through appropriate behavior management strategies, the teachers will plan a meeting with the director to discuss the behaviors and ask for further guidance.
3. If the behavior problem is still not resolved, the staff shall request a meeting with the child's parent(s). At the meeting, staff and parent(s) will collaboratively develop individualized strategies to resolve the problem behavior. During this process, teachers will keep the director, and parents informed of the progress in resolving the behavior problem. If a child's behavior results in an injury to another child or staff member, the child's parents will be notified as soon as possible, and written documentation of the incident will be provided to the parents and placed in the child's file.
4. If the teachers and administrator believe that they need further assistance in resolving the behavior problem, the director may, with parental permission, request the assistance of an outside resource. If teachers and the administrator believe that the problem may be the result of a special need, they may request that the parents arrange for a professional evaluation of the child. The goal of this behavior management process is to support the child's inclusion and success. If, however, the parents do not pursue an evaluation within a reasonable time frame and the problem behavior continues, then the child's continued enrollment will be reconsidered in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6 below.
5. If the results of an outside evaluation suggest the need for accommodations for special needs, the Center will provide these or other appropriate accommodations as long as they are not an undue hardship on the Center as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act.
6. If all the above steps fail to resolve the behavior problem, the Center may ask the parents to find an alternative educational placement for their child. The Center will provide the parents with a four-week notice, except where such notice is not reasonable because of safety concerns and will try to assist the parents with alternative placement.
7. Written documentation of all the above steps will be provided to the parents and placed in the child's file.

Children Requiring Special Services

For children requiring special services, we try to accommodate children who can be served in a group setting as much as possible, to the best of our abilities. However, there are some children with special needs that require more one-on-one care than we can provide in our group setting. In this situation, the Center may not be the best educational setting to provide for the needs of the individual child.

Children's rights regarding enrollment and termination are protected in accordance with the policies outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or religion.

Consultation Services

As needed, the Center's professional staff consults with an AU clinical psychologist who offers support and guidance in the areas of child development and managing children's behavior. If the staff and the psychologist feel that some specialized services might be helpful to a child, the director will meet with the teacher and parent(s) to discuss a referral. The administrator and staff will assist in arranging vision, speech, hearing, or psychological screening for a child if needed. In extreme circumstances, or if the results of an outside evaluation suggest that a more appropriate setting is necessary, the child may need to be withdrawn from the program.

Staff Development

The Center's professional staff regularly participate in workshops, take courses, and attend conferences as part of their continual learning process and is also a yearly requirement for DC Licensing renewal. Staff members are responsible for leading training or review sessions for colleagues as well as student helpers. Occasionally, the Center closes for a special conference or training. We will note the general timing of these closed days in the annual calendar. As soon as a date becomes certain, parents will be notified. We will always provide at least a 30-day notice of these scheduled closings.

Student Helpers

The professional staff are assisted by university students who have Federal Work Study (FWS) grants for employment on campus. In addition, the director will supervise interns completing course requirements in education or psychology. These students are trained by the administrator and the Center teachers. The students assist teachers and help implement the daily routine. Their participation in the Center complements their formal classroom work and creates a close relationship between the children and students. Background checks are completed by the university Office of Human Resources for all FWS students and interns before they are allowed to join the Center.

Cooperation with University Departments

Since we are a university-based program, we cooperate with other American University departments to provide a resource for student study, observation, projects, and research. The administrator supervises interns from the School of Education and the Department of Psychology. These interns are actively involved in classroom activities and function much like teaching assistants or supervised student teachers.

Students often come to the Center to do research projects. These can range from observations to one-on-one work with individual children or small groups. All observations must be approved by the administrator and are done according to specific and clear guidelines to ensure that observers do not interfere with classroom work and regular daily routines. A visiting student is never left alone with children.

Parents of Center children are asked to sign a general release for participation in student observation and projects. Parents will be notified of specific plans for projects as they occur with a description of the project. If the project requires one-on-one interaction, parent approval is required, and the signature of a specific release will be requested.

SECTION V: OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

Center Closing

In general, the Center follows the American University administrative calendar for holiday closings throughout the year. In addition to these closings, the Center will be closed on the following days:

- one week near the end of August for planning, cleaning, staff training, and new children orientation (the exact dates of this week will be posted on the Center calendar); and,
- up to 3 additional days throughout the year for required staff development activities (parents will be given ample notice - at least 30 days - of these closings).

These closing days are listed on the Center calendar that is distributed and posted at the beginning of each academic year. We suggest that you post this calendar prominently in your home for quick reference.

Emergency Closing Policy

When American University is closed due to inclement weather or any other emergency conditions, the Center will be closed. Center parents who are AU faculty, staff, or students are automatically enrolled in the RAVE Alert System and notified via emails and text messages. Center parents who are non-AU employees can register at <https://getrave.com/login/auguest>.

You may also consult the American University Emergency Information Line, 202-885-1100, or the local news via radio, television, or internet for more information on closings and hours of operation. Whenever the university decides to close early, parents may be called mid-day to pick up their children.

In case of severe storms such as tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes, the Center and American University will follow specific emergency plans for each emergency condition.

Emergency Evacuation

The Center conducts monthly fire drills. Emergency evacuation maps are posted near each exit area throughout the Center.

In the event of any emergency requiring evacuation, Center staff and children will be relocated to Letts Hall. If the AU campus must be evacuated, the Center staff and children will be relocated to the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church on Nebraska Avenue.

A full copy of the Center emergency plans is available in the office and each classroom. You may consult these plans for more detailed information.

Completion of the Center Program

A child completes the Center program when they are old enough to start kindergarten in their home community. Parents are required to confirm, as far in advance as possible, the final date of attendance when their child is ready to leave. This will allow a smooth and happy transition for everyone involved. A minimum of one-month written notice is required from all parents prior to their child's withdrawal. In the unlikely event that it becomes necessary to consider termination because of special circumstances, the administrator, staff, and parents will work together to resolve the situation in a manner that is best for the child and meets all requirements and guidelines of the DC Department of Health, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education Licensing regulations.

Withdrawal of Child

When you need to withdraw your child from the Center, for any reason, a 30-day written notice is required. If a 30-day written notice is not given, you will continue to be billed for one month from the time your written notice is received at the Center, regardless of your child's actual attendance. The Center does not allow temporary withdrawal for any period of time (including summer months).

Temporary Suspension

Should any of the following conditions arise, the Center reserves the right to suspend a child's attendance, until the specified condition is resolved satisfactorily:

- If the child's monthly tuition remains delinquent beyond the 15th of the month, the child will be suspended until the balance is paid in full;
- If the child is picked up late more than 3 times during a contracted period; until a satisfactory pick-up arrangement is made;
- If a child's health/immunization records are not fully updated; until said records are in full compliance with the DC Department of Health requirements.

Termination of Enrollment

The Center reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment in the Center if any of the following conditions arises:

- The Center staff believes that your child's behavior threatens their physical or mental health and/or that of other children in the Center;
- The Center is unable to meet the developmental or special needs of a child;
- Parents fail to abide by the written policies and guidelines of the Center in the Parent Handbook and the policy-related written material.

Personal Belongings

All children must have at least one full change of clothing kept at all times in their clothing bin. This includes undergarments, a shirt, pants or skirt, socks, shoes, and a sweater or sweatshirt. Parents are notified in writing when children have changed clothes during the day. Please remember when wet, soiled clothes are sent home and this supply needs to be replenished. We encourage you to check the extra clothes bin regularly to make sure the clothes are seasonally appropriate.

Please label all articles of clothing. Things can get lost easily, and clothing can go to the wrong child.

The Center is required to keep a supply of clothing for general use. If we must use this clothing for your child, please remember to launder it and send it back. The Center clothing is marked as such.

Children enrolled in the summer session need to have a bathing suit and towel. During the summer session, we have water play days.

Except in extreme inclement weather, children go outside, including cold, snowy days. Please keep this in mind when dressing your children to keep them warm and dry.

Toys and Other Items from Home

Children may bring a "transition" item to school to help them settle at school and at nap time. These are usually a stuffed animal or other soft toy, or a favorite blanket. The children put these items in their cubby

shortly after arrival and then have them on their cots at nap time. These cuddles are sometimes needed to comfort a child who gets a bump or has hurt feelings.

Children may bring appropriate books and music to school to share with the class.

Please do not bring other toys from home. Children want to show their toys to their friends. However, they rarely can happily have other children hold the toy or have a turn playing with it. If the toy is not intended for group play, it often breaks, or pieces are lost. This results in hurt feelings, anger, crying, and in general, a lot of unhappiness and disruption of productive play. Our experience has shown that children accept this rule with little difficulty. They understand that they play with school toys at school and home toys at home. If they find their way into backpacks and become a safety problem, we will put them in a labeled envelope and put it on your “hook” for safekeeping.

Birthdays

If your child has a birthday while they are in the Center, we would love to help celebrate this very special occasion. However, we request the celebration be kept very simple. We suggest a special snack for the afternoon snack time. Many children want cupcakes, cookies, or a cake. Another standard has been pizza lunch for the class. Other suggestions would be muffins or other low sugar treats like frozen fruit bars. We encourage parents and other family members to attend this celebration. Parents must discuss details with the child’s teachers prior to their special day. More elaborate celebrations, including party favors, should be reserved for at-home birthdays.

At-home birthday party invitations may be distributed at the Center only if ALL the children in the classroom are invited to the child’s home or party site.

Book Donations

When a new child is enrolled in our Center, we ask that this time be remembered by the donation of a picture book. In addition, some parents want to help their child say goodbye by donating an inscribed book. There is a special feeling for each child associated with the sharing of a book. These donations also supplement the Center’s children’s library.