



PARENT HANDBOOK

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PROGRAM ORIENTATION

WELCOME!

We would like to thank you for enrolling your child in Starting Point Children's Center. We are delighted that you have chosen our Center to provide for the needs of your child. It is our goal to offer your child a total learning experience in a safe, loving and caring environment. We strive to inspire children to learn and grow through an educational curriculum that is challenging, fun and developmentally appropriate. Our program is designed to help your child develop creatively, socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.

The Parent Handbook has been written to describe our program, philosophy and policies. Please carefully read this handbook and keep it for future reference. The management staff at Starting Point Children's Center would be glad to address any of your questions or concerns.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that...

- Children are precious and must receive care from adults who are loving, capable and caring - whose values enable them to be excellent role models for the children.
- Children should experience numerous positive learning milestones, leading to an increased sense of competence, knowledge and independence.
- Children's play is extremely vital to healthy physical development, acceptable social skills and cognitive growth.
- Teachers, drawing upon their training and experience, must create an appropriate educational environment which carefully guides children from one developmental and cognitive level to another.
- Parents contribute to and enhance the quality of care and education offered at Starting Point Children's Center.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Research shows that children "learn by doing" and they need many opportunities to explore and grow. Preschool activities that align with best practices can foster creativity, as well as promote emotional, cognitive, social and physical development. Developmentally appropriate activities can also build self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning. The adult's role is to support children's interests and learning needs. Our curriculum is based on this philosophy, which is backed by current research findings and grounded in a century's worth of work by researchers such as Maslow, Vygotsky, Piaget and Erickson. We utilize Conscious Discipline for our classroom management to provide a transformational, whole-school solution for social-emotional learning, discipline and self-regulation.

At Starting Point Children's Center,

- **We** provide warm, nurturing interactions at each child's level.
- **We** foster innovation.
- **We** embrace team work.
- **We** strive for excellence.
- **We** respect and support families.
- **We** commit to service at all levels.
- **We** respect and appreciate diversity.
- **We** actively listen and seek to understand.
- **We** communicate openly and productively.
- **We** use resources creatively and responsibly.

STAFFING

Starting Point Children's Center employs professionals with varying degrees of education and experience. All staff receive training prior to employment, as well as, on-going training to develop and strengthen their skills. Our staff members are certified in CPR, First Aid and Food Handling.

LICENSING

Childcare Centers in the State of Texas are regulated and inspected periodically by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to ensure compliance with rules and procedures as outlined in the Departments Minimum Standard Rules for License Child-Care Centers. These Standards, as well as the Centers last inspection report, are available at the Center for your review and reference. Please notify the Director or Assistant Director if you would like more information or would like to review the Minimum Standards or last inspection report. If you need more information you may contact the local Childcare Licensing office at (713) 940-3009, the Texas Department of Family Protective Services Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or website at <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us>

Starting Point Children's Center welcomes those of diverse faiths, ethnic origins, and race.

GENERAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

POLICY CHANGES

From time to time it may be necessary to modify the policies and procedures of Starting Point Children's Center. When changes are necessary, parents will be notified in writing via email at least 14 days prior to the effective date of those changes. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the policies and procedures of the Center you may contact the Director in person or by phone to review and discuss any of the policies and procedures of the Center.

PERSONAL ITEMS

We ask that your child NOT bring toys from home. We ask this for several reasons:

- First, most toys are not built to take the wear and tear of so many children; consequently, we do not want your child to be disappointed should damage occur.
- Second, our rules for sharing cannot be applied to toys from home; therefore, hard feelings may develop among children.
- Security objects such as a favorite stuffed animal are an exception and are welcome. Please mark these items with your child's name.
- At times, children will have the opportunity to bring items from home on "show and tell" days or other special occasions. Children in older age groups may have designated days to bring items from home to share with their class.
- Starting Point will not be responsible for any items brought into the school.

Items that should never be brought to school:

- Chewing gum
- Toy guns and other weapons
- Expensive, easily broken items or family keepsakes

CELL PHONES

As with the Cy Fair ISD policy, our policy is that cell phones must remain turned off and in your child's backpack always. Any student not adhering to this policy will have their phone taken away and given to the front office for parent pick up.

For the safety and privacy of all children, we request that parents refrain from using their cell phone while inside the school and refrain from taking photographs or videos of other students.

BOTTLES, BLANKETS, AND PACIFIERS

You may send extra bottles, a small security blanket and/or a pacifier for your child. All items must be labeled with the child's first and last name. Staff will make every effort to keep track of these items but will not be held responsible if lost. When you are ready to wean your child, please communicate with your child's teacher so a consistent strategy between home and our Center may be established.

CLOTHING AND SHOES

At Starting Point Children's Center, we encourage children to participate in a wide variety of both indoor and outdoor activities. We ask that you dress your child in suitable play-clothes; clothes which are washable, roomy to allow freedom of movement and easy for the child to handle. Especially important are your child's shoes. Shoes must be appropriate for running, jumping, climbing and other outdoor activities. Flip flops, open backed sandals and other loose fitting shoes can cause or contribute to injuries and should not be worn. At times accidents and spills do happen. *Two changes of clothing should be kept at the Center in your child's cubby for instances such as this. All items belonging to your child must be "labeled" with the child's first and last name.*

POTTY TRAINING

The staff of Starting Point Children's Center will work in cooperation with parents during the important period of potty training. It is important for children to have a consistent potty training routine both at home and at the Center. During this period, we ask that you provide us with at least 3-4 sets of "labeled" clothing and an adequate supply of disposable diapers and/or training pants. In some cases, it may also be necessary to bring an extra change of socks and shoes so that your child can continue to participate in daily activities

REST PERIODS

A regular rest time contributes to your child's health and enjoyment derived from full participation in the activities of the Center. For the benefit of your child, a rest period is scheduled each day. Depending on the age of your child, the Center will supply a rest cot.

We follow the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers State Guidelines regarding safe sleep for infants 12 months old or younger that relate to sleep requirements and restrictions: sleep positioning, crib requirements and restrictions, including mattresses, bedding, blankets, toys and restrictive devices.

WATER ACTIVITIES

During the summer breaks, children will engage in water play and have opportunities to participate in "splash days" which includes both sprinkler activities on the playground (students ages 5 and under) and trips to the neighborhood pool (School Age students). A schedule will be posted on the bulletin board at each classroom with additional information when water activities will occur.

DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE

The discipline of children is responsibility of the parent. However, when discipline is necessary, the staff and the Director will work in conjunction with the parents and child to correct any inappropriate or disruptive behavior. The discipline policy of Starting Point Children's Center consists of positive reinforcement and redirection. Positive discipline is used to encourage and influence children through encouragement and reflection. If your child is experiencing a change in the home environment that may result in changes in behavior, it is important to let his or her teacher know. The Director will keep you informed as to any behavioral problems which may occur with your child at the Center. Should you have any specific concerns regarding discipline techniques, we urge you to discuss them with your child's teacher and Center Director. The use of physical punishment is never permitted.

MEALS

Starting Point Children's Center provides nutritious meals and snacks for children enrolled at the Center full time. Breakfast and Lunch are served daily as well as an afternoon snack. Menus for the month are posted in the lobby. Meals and snacks are provided at no additional charge.

When a child has a food allergy or intolerance, it is the parent's responsibility to provide an appropriate food substitute. If your child would prefer, you may bring a sack lunch from home. Please do not include any items that require preparation, as our kitchen staff is busy making the scheduled lunch for the whole Center now. *SPCC is a nut-free facility due to children having severe allergic reactions. Please make sure that any food that is brought into the school does not contain nuts.*

Parents of infants will be asked to bring their own food and formula/breast milk in unbreakable containers labeled with the child's full name and date. Parents will need to provide adequate food for each day and premix any formula. To prevent allergic reaction to new foods for infants, we ask that parents provide the Center with baby food that has already been tried by the child at home.

BREAST FEEDING

Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care. Starting Point Children's Center will provide mothers who breast feed with a comfortable, adult sized chair in the classroom or staff lounge. Should you require any additional support, please let us know.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Parents are always welcome to bring cookies, cupcakes, or cakes to share with their child's classmates on birthdays or special occasions. If you would like to provide a snack for your child's class for a birthday party or other special event, please follow these few guidelines:

- Approval must be obtained from the Director - some children have strict dietary or allergy guidelines.
- Please do not bring homemade goods to share with others - state regulation prohibits this. Items must be store bought and the packaging must clearly show the list of ingredients.
- Please do not bring in any treats that contain peanuts or peanut products - we are a nut-free facility.

If a birthday is to be celebrated away from school and the entire class is not invited, please mail the invitations to each child's home. If the entire class is invited, you may distribute the invitations into the cubbies. Our Center will not distribute mailing lists or phone numbers.

AUDIO & VIDEO

Starting Point Children's Center is equipped with an audio and video monitoring system as a means of security and supervision. SPCC will not share or release video for the privacy of staff and children depicted in the videos. Any audio or video material is for internal use only. SPCC reserves the right to show and/or share any video or audio material as the situation dictates.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PUBLICITY

Photographs of the children participating in our programs may be taken from time to time and may appear in newspapers, magazines, brochures or other publicity materials. Your permission for photographs including your child, will be used without compensation, is part of this agreement.

PARKING

Starting Point Children's Center is equipped with a drive-through portico for ease in drop off and pick up during inclement weather. In addition, there is a drive-through lane to provide a convenient entrance and exit from the parking lot. If you wish to visit with a teacher or the Director, please do not park in these areas. We ask that you use the other parking spaces provided. Upon your arrival at Starting Point Children's Center, please drive carefully and be sure to lock and secure your vehicle before entering the Center.

BUILDING ACCESS CODE

Starting Point Children's Center facility is equipped with an electronically controlled front door entry system to assist us in limiting access to the building. **Children are not permitted to enter codes for the front door or sign-in sign-out system.** The access code will be changed frequently for the safety and security purposes. Parents and staff will need to obtain the access code to the building. Friends and relatives or anyone who occasionally drops off or picks up, must stop at the door to be "buzzed in." Do not give your code to someone else who is picking up your child. We need to check the identification of anyone who is picking up who may be unfamiliar to us.

There is no way for the code system to guarantee 100% security for the Center. It is possible for people to "tail gate" in (follow someone in) and we cannot monitor the door every time someone enters. For this reason, please do not hold the door for them. If you think someone is not a parent here, please advise them to remain outside and notify our administrative staff.

STUDENT SIGN IN & OUT

Each day, children must be signed in and out of the Center at the time clock at the front desk located in the lobby. The system is used not only for recording your child's arrival and departure as required by the State, but is also used for relaying short notes and messages to parents.

ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE AND PARENTAL SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Parents are responsible for the safety and well-being of their children anytime in which they are together at the Center (Parent Programs, drop-off, and pick-up times), but staff will step in if we feel a child is exhibiting an unsafe practice.

There are many potential dangers throughout the Center, playground, and parking lot. So, it is imperative that children are always supervised. Your cooperation in following the below rules will help ensure the safety of all our children:

- Always accompany your child when entering and exiting the building.
- Upon arrival, children should not run ahead to their classroom without a parent.
- Upon arrival, children must be left in the presence of a staff member.
- Please do not allow your child to wander or run inside or outside of the building without an adult.
- Upon departure, children should not to exit the front door unsupervised because it gives them quick and easy access to a busy parking lot.
- Upon departure, remember to "look before you leave" and maintain control of your child until you safely enter your vehicle.

LATE PICK-UPS

The Center closes promptly at 6:30 p.m. Please keep in mind that you must pick up your child and plan to leave the building by this time. If a child has not been picked up by 6:30 p.m., a late fee will be assessed. If a child remains at the Center past this time, one staff member will remain until all children are picked up. Parents and emergency contacts will be called. If a child is still at the Center at 7:00 p.m., the Director or her designee will be called. At 7:15 p.m., the police and DFPS may be contacted if all attempts to reach family and other contacts have failed. Remember that your child anticipates your arrival. A child can become worried and anxious if his classmates have all been picked up and his parent has not yet arrived. In addition, staff who have put in a full day of work are also inconvenienced as they are ready to be with their families and/or carry out their personal plans for the evening. We, therefore, strongly advise parents to abide by the closing schedule – not doing so may result in termination of child care services.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Parents will provide Starting Point Children's Center with the names of all persons authorized to pick up their children. It is important that the Director be notified, in writing, whenever there is a change in persons authorized to pick up a child. Parents must provide written permission for children to leave the Center with persons not listed on the enrollment record. Anyone picking up your child should be prepared to show proper identification.

CUSTODY SITUATIONS

Until custody has been established by a court action, one parent may not limit the other from picking-up a child in our care. The Center must be notified immediately of any changes in custody orders. Certified custody orders must be given to the Center's Director. If a custody document is provided to the Center, we will notify the custodial parent of any contact made by the unauthorized parent and we will notify the authorities. Sometimes, our staff is placed in a difficult situation regarding custody disputes. Staff members are instructed to refrain from putting themselves or other children in danger to mediate a family dispute or enforce a court order. If a parent chooses to leave a child in our care with a court order in force, the custodial parent will be required to sign an acknowledgement stating the Center's inability to physically obstruct a hostile effort to take the child from the Center.

TRANSPORTATION

Starting Point Children's Center provides transportation to and from nearby elementary schools. Transportation is provided via Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District buses or by the Center's own vehicles. **If your child is regularly transported to or from elementary school and will not be riding the bus or van either to or from school, it is important that you notify the Center at least two hours in advance.**

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Parents are welcome to visit the child-care center at any time during normal hours of operation to observe their child, the child-care center's program activities, the building, the premises and the equipment without having to secure prior approval. The Center is designed with windows and doors that provide a unique observation opportunity that does not disrupt the children's activities. Parents may schedule an observation time with the Center Director or observe informally any time their child is present at the Center. For the safety of all children, we do request you make your presence known to the person in charge and take precautions to not disrupt our program.

ENROLLMENT AND FINANCIAL POLICIES

ENROLLMENT PROCESS

On or before your child's first day of attendance, we ask that you return the following:

- Completed Enrollment Packet.
- Applicable Medical documentation.
- Registration fee and the first week's regular tuition.
- Infants – please provide the "Infant Information" form.
- School Age – please provide the "Transportation Permission Form".
- If your child has any allergy, please provide a physician's statement and detailed allergy action plan.
- If your child has a restricted dietary need due to religion or culture, please provide a written statement from a parent.

ENROLLMENT FEES AND ANNUAL FEES

An enrollment fee will be due at the time of admission. Also, each Fall, the Center will charge an Annual "Back to School" fee, subject to pro-ration depending on the enrollment date. These fees are non-refundable. Fees are subject to change as conditions may require.

TUITION, LATE PAYMENTS & RETURNED CHECK FEES

Tuition fees are charged on a weekly basis and are due and payable, in advance, on Friday preceding the attendance week. Tuition fees are considered late if not paid by 12:00 noon on Monday of each week and will be assessed a \$20.00 late fee, unless specifically waived by SPCC in writing. Families whose account balance is not paid by Monday of each week will not be allowed to drop their child(ren) off at SPCC until the account balance is paid in full. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at SPCC. Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate withdrawal or dismissal from the program; however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Center Director immediately. Exceptions may be allowed depending on the circumstances and at the sole discretion of SPCC. If alternative arrangements for payment are approved you will be notified, in writing, by the Center Director. A \$35.00 bookkeeping fee will be assessed for each payment returned by the bank for any reason. **All communications regarding past-due tuition and fees should be conducted in the office and not in the classroom or common areas of the school for the respect and privacy of the parent/staff/children.*

All tuition rates and late fees are subject to change with reasonable notice. The school follows state specific required time frames on tuition and modifications notices. Any unpaid tuition fees may be sent to a collection agency

HOURS OF OPERATION & HOLIDAYS

Starting Point Children's Center is open from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday through Friday year around. We will be closed in observance of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Day before Thanksgiving (early dismissal) Thanksgiving Day, Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If the holiday falls on a weekend we will observe the holiday on the preceding Friday or following Monday. We will have early release on the day before Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

STUDENT PICK-UP LATE FEES

Starting Point Children's Center is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For each child remaining at the Center after 6:30 p.m. there will be a late charge of \$15 for each 15-minute increment due to payroll overtime and other associated costs. This fee must be paid in cash upon pickup.

AGENCY REIMBURSEMENT

Parents are responsible for:

- Any tuition payment and late fees in excess of any agency or third-party reimbursement in accordance with the applicable contract.
- Promptly communicating any changes in their status that would affect the agency reimbursement.
- Payment of any tuition in excess of any agency or third-party reimbursement resulting from failure to promptly communicate status changes.
- Properly enter or swipe attendance for any day their child is in attendance.
- Payment of family co-pays are due in advance on the first Monday of each month and late after the 5th of each month.
- Payment of any late fees due to unpaid family fees.

SCHOOL AGE ADDITIONAL TUITION

If your child regularly attends elementary school, and school is not in session due to a holiday, teacher in service, inclement weather, etc., an additional daily fee will be charged in accordance with the current tuition schedule to attend a full day at SPCC.

FIELD TRIPS & SPECIAL ACTIVITY FEES

In addition to the regular program activities, field trips and special events will also be planned. Additional fees will be charged for activities scheduled during the summer or on teacher-in service days. Parents are invited to join us on field trips but must travel in their own vehicles. The Center's Director will keep you informed as these trips and activities are scheduled.

ABSENTEE POLICY & PAYMENTS

Upon your child's enrollment at Starting Point Children's Center we immediately reserve a space in the appropriate classroom for your child. You may use our services for as many or as few hours as you require during our normal operating hours. For that reason, ***if your child is in attendance for any portion of the week, the full regular weekly tuition is due. If your child does not attend any part of the week, the regular weekly tuition is due.*** If your child is absent for one (1) week and you have not contacted the Center and have not paid the appropriate tuition fee, as specified under the "Absentee Policy", your child will automatically be *dis-enrolled* from the Center. Your child may be re-admitted to the Center upon payment of all unpaid tuition. Registration fees will also apply should the space remain available.

Students may utilize a "reservation fee" of 50% off regular week's tuition which will be due in advance for each vacation/absence of one full week (Monday through Friday). Parents will need to provide written notice to the Director at least *two weeks in advance* if they would like to request the half-price rate. After a total of 2 weeks charged at one-half regular tuition within a one-year period, the regular full tuition rate will be charged, regardless of attendance, for the remainder of the year.

NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCES

We appreciate a phone call and/or written communication when children will be absent from the Center so that we can better plan for the daily program. If your child is absent due to a communicable illness, we need to know so we can inform other families (i.e., chicken pox, thrush, strep throat, etc.).

PROPERTY DAMAGES

Parents agree to pay for damages to the Center caused by the wrongdoing of parents and/or any member of their family. Examples of such damages include: purposely destroying toys and books, damaging or vandalizing Center equipment (vehicles, playground, etc.), shattering Center windows by throwing toys or other objects, damages to the parking lot (posts, light fixtures, fence, other vehicles, etc.).

NOTIFICATION OF WITHDRAWAL

A two (2) week *written* notice is required before withdrawing your child from Starting Point Children's Center. This time provides the Center an opportunity to fill your child's vacancy. Parents will be charged the regular tuition rates for this period regardless if the child attends the Center or not.

DISMISSAL FROM CHILDCARE

Starting Point Children's Center reserves the right to withdraw a child or family from the Center if it is decided that the relationship between the Center, child and parent or guardian is not mutually beneficial. A two-week written notice will be given to the parent or guardian should the Center decide to exercise this right to withdraw a child or family. In extreme situations, the immediate removal of a child or family from the Center may be necessary. Reasons for dismissal include but are not limited to:

- Health and safety issues for the child or for the larger group of children or employees.
- Child appears to be a danger to himself, other children or staff, and behavioral issues cannot be resolved. Child or parents needs cannot be met by the Center.
- Non-payment of fees or recurring late payment of tuition.
- Failure to follow any state or county regulations.
- Failure to follow Starting Point Children's Center policies and procedures.
- Not completing and returning required enrollment forms promptly, including physical/medical information, emergency information, etc.
- Physical or verbal abuse or intimidation of staff or children.
- Habitual late pick-ups.
- Inappropriate behavior towards other children, staff, parents.

ACTS OF GOD / FORCE MAJEURE

In the event that Starting Point Children's Center is unable to open for business and/or provide normal services due to Acts of God (flooding, lightning, hurricane, storms, tornados or earthquake) or due to a declared Force Majeure (terrorism, epidemic diseases, major utility issues, government actions such as strikes, war, etc.), SPCC reserves the right to suspend or modify Center operations. Furthermore, SPCC will be entitled to charge half of the current tuition fees until such time in which SPCC is able to resume normal operations.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

HEALTH POLICY - GENERAL POLICIES ON ILLNESS

Starting Point Children's Center is a "well-child care facility". We recognize that Parents are often faced with decisions about bringing an ill child to the Center or keeping an ill child at home. These are not easy decisions, but please keep in mind that an ill child has an impact on everyone. Neither the ill child nor the healthy children can receive the care and attention they deserve. Children that are sick must stay home and return to the Center when healthy and able to keep up with scheduled activities. The illness policies will be strictly enforced for the health, well-being and safety of all concerned.

SICK OR INJURED CHILD

Under no circumstances may a Parent bring a sick child to daycare (or when the child shows any signs of illness). Sick children will expose all children and staff members who they encounter. If your child is unable to participate in the normal activities of the daycare (including being able to play outside), then your child **MUST** stay home.

This is not a comprehensive list, but rather a list of the most common illness or issues:

- **Fever:** Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100.4°F or higher. A child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to daycare without the aid of any fever reducing medication.
- **Diarrhea:** runny, watery, bloody stools or 2 or more loose stools within last 4 hours. The child can return to the Center when normal activities are back for 24 hours.
- **Vomiting:** 2 or more times in a 24-hour period. Note: please do not bring your child if they have vomited in the night.
- **Conjunctivitis:** a child with symptoms will be removed from the classroom and parents will be contacted immediately. The child can return to the Center after being on eye ointment for 24 hours and all the discharge from the eye or eyes is cleared up.
- **Strep Throat:** A child with strep throat must stay home and be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to the Center.
- **Ear Infection:** a child may attend the Center with these symptoms if a note from the pediatrician is provided.
- **Scarlet fever/ hand, foot and mouth:** a child with these symptoms must stay home and can return to the Center with a note from the pediatrician stating that the child is not contagious and may participate in all the activities.
- **Chicken pox:** a child with these symptoms must stay home. The child may return to the Center with a note from the pediatrician stating that the child is no longer contagious and is able to participate in all daily activities.
- **Lice:** a child must stay home and return to the Center once she/he has been lice and nits free for at least 24 hours. A verification of treatment will be required.
- **Irritability:** Child is irritable, continuously crying or requires more attention than we can provide without hurting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care.
- **Breathing trouble, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing.**
- **Runny nose (other than clear), draining eyes or ears.**
- **Frequent scratching of body or scalp, rash, or any other spots that resemble childhood diseases, including ringworm.**

HEALTH CHECK

Upon arrival of each child, our staff will conduct a visual or physical assessment of a child to identify potential concerns about a child's health, including signs or symptoms of illness and injury, in response to changes in the child's behavior since the last date of attendance.

SICK CHILD PICK-UP AND RETURN

In the event a child becomes ill while at the Center and needs to be picked up, the Parent(s) will be called and are expected to come pick the child up within one hour (60 minutes). If the Parent(s) cannot be reached, or have not arrived within an hour, the emergency contact person will be called and asked to come pick the child up.

For the benefit of our staff and other children in our care, a sick child will not be permitted to return to care for 24 hours after condition has returned to normal. If you aren't sure about whether to bring your child to care, please call SPCC to discuss it. Allergy related symptoms, and non-communicable illnesses do not require exclusion if you have a note from your doctor. Parents will be immediately informed by the SPCC Administration if a child is ill or shows symptoms of being sick. The child will be removed from his or her classroom and wait in the Administrator's office until the Parents' arrival. All the child's belongings must be taken home and washed.

PHYSICIAN NOTES

It is to the discretion of SPCC to determine if a Physician's note will be required for your child to return to care. Most often this is not the case, but in the event of a concern for the well-being of the children in the Center, this may be required. Notes or prescriptions for your child must be from a non-family member. When a child has an illness, and has been seen by their Physician, a Physician's note is required stating the diagnosis and a date the child may return to the Center.

In addition to a Physician's note, SPCC will also take other factors into consideration, primarily the ability for your child to comfortably participate in a group care setting. SPCC understands that children may be more comfortable and appear well at home and ready to return to care, as opposed to coming to the Center and still be recovering and having difficulty keeping up with the level of activity in a school setting. We ask that parents take this into consideration even if the family is of the opinion your child is well enough to return. In all cases, the final decision about whether a child may attend the Center is made by the SPCC's Management.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES / ACCIDENTS

In the event of a medical emergency or an accident, we will contact the Parents and the doctor of the child. If it is not possible to reach either Parent immediately and emergency treatment is required, we will contact 911 and have your child transported to the nearest clinic / hospital. Your authorization for SPCC to contact your child's pediatrician and take whatever medical measures deemed necessary is part of the Emergency Contact Form, of which you have signed.

HAND WASHING

To help control the spread of illness, children are required to wash hands upon arrival at the Center and at other times throughout the day. Washing hands is the best way to prevent the spreading of illness. We are happy to provide lotion for children whose hands become dry due to hand washing.

STAFF IMMUNIZATIONS

Neither Starting Point Children's Center nor the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services require staff members to receive adult immunizations. However, Starting Point Children's Center does encourage staff members to receive adult immunizations as recommended by the Texas Department of State Health Services

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

SPCC will be glad to help you in administering the necessary medication to your child. However, we will only administer prescription medication as directed by a physician. To do so, we must have the following:

- Written instructions from a licensed physician
- Written permission from the parent/guardian (the "Medication Authorization" form can be obtained at the front desk)
- The medication in its original container

All prescription medication must have an affixed label with:

- Child's first and last name
- Name of medication
- Date of issue of prescription
- Instructions for storage
- Dispensing physician's name
- Instructions for administration (note: SPCC must administer all medication as directed by the product label-if your doctor has advised differently, your doctor will need to provide a written statement with specific dosage)

NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

SPCC will only administer non-prescription (over the counter) medications/ointments as outlined:

- Over the counter medicine as prescribed by a doctor, stating the dosage, the reason and duration.
- Diaper cream and ointments, as needed, and supplied by the family.
- Sunscreen of an SPF of 15 or higher, supplied by families in the original container. Your permission to apply sunscreen will be kept on file in the office. We ask that sunscreen be applied prior to coming to daycare and the teachers will then reapply the lotion for the full day children before playing outside in the afternoon.

MEDICAL FORMS & IMMUNIZATIONS

In the interest of your child's health, the safety of all children enrolled in the Center, and as required by state law, you must submit to the Center your child's current medical and immunization forms on or before the first day of attendance. Also, it is important that your child's physician and hospital of choice be listed with the Center. If this information should change, please notify the Center immediately. In addition, we ask that all medical information and immunizations be updated on a regular basis. Each child enrolled must meet applicable immunization requirements. Current immunization requirements can be found at www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize. Note: TB testing is not required in Harris County.

VISION & HEARING SCREENING

First time enrollees who are four years of age or older and all children enrolled in programs who are four years of age by September 1 of each year must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems within 120 calendar days of enrollment per State of Texas mandate. For your convenience, we arrange vision and hearing screenings with specifically trained and certified professionals once a year at the Center. You will be notified in advance of the screening and informed if there are any indications that further testing is necessary.

BITING POLICY

Children bite for many reasons. Biting is unfortunately age appropriate, normal and relatively expected behavior for toddlers. Some children and many toddlers communicate through this behavior. They bite to gain a reaction, and/or because of lack of language or social skills required for a situation (such as sharing toys). Obviously preventing the situation from occurring is most desirable, but toddlers and babies can be quick in their actions even if a caregiver is nearby. It is inevitable that these accidents will occur in a childcare setting, but our staff is constantly working towards minimizing biting behavior.

This biting policy has been developed with the goal of preventing children from biting, and identifying what is causing the biting behavior. As we try to resolve and minimize the biting issues, this policy serves to protect the children that are bitten.

When Biting Does Occur:

For the child that was bitten:

1. The staff will attend the child immediately and administer first aid if necessary.
2. The bite will be cleaned with soap and water. If the skin is broken, the bite will be covered with a bandage.
3. The staff will cuddle and provide reassurance, comfort to the child.
4. Parents are notified.
5. An "Incident Form" is filled out documenting the facts of the incident.

For the child that bit:

1. The teacher will get the child's attention to stop behavior.
2. The staff will deal with the negative behavior at the child's level and with positive communication.
3. The child will be redirected with independent play.
4. Parents are notified.
5. An "Incident Form" is filled out documenting the facts of the incident.

When Biting Continues:

1. The child will be shadowed to help prevent any biting incidents.
2. The classroom staff will observe the child to try to determine what is causing the child to bite (teething, communication, frustration, etc.). The administrative staff may also observe the child if the classroom staff is unable to determine the cause.
3. The child will be given positive attention and approval for positive behavior.

When biting becomes excessive:

1. If a child inflicts 2 bites in a one school week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised, or the bite leaves a significant mark, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
2. If the child again inflicts 1 more bite in the same school week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised, or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 2 business days.
3. After suspension, if a child inflicts 2 more bites during one school week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised, or the bite leaves a significant mark, the parents may be asked to make other childcare arrangements.
4. If a child, who has been through steps 1 and/or 2, goes 3 school weeks without biting, then the child will go back to step one if the child bites again.
5. If a child bites twice in a 4-hour period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised, or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be required to be picked up from Starting Point Children's Center for the remainder of the day. Steps 1 through 4 will apply.

GENERAL POLICIES ON SAFETY

GANG FREE ZONE

The House Bill 2086 passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, designates the area within 1000 feet of a child care Center as a Gang Free Zone. Thus, certain gang related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of the Starting Point Children's Center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES, & SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIALS

The use of tobacco or alcohol on the premises is prohibited. The use or possession of illegal substances or sexually explicit materials on the premises is prohibited.

FIREARMS, EXPLOSIVES & WEAPONS

Except as expressly permitted by law, firearms, explosives (including firecrackers, fireworks, and pyrotechnics) and other weapons are not permitted on the premises.

INTRUDER POLICY

In the event of an intruder, SPCC has a lock-down procedure that will be set into motion. As with all emergency procedures, there will be a monthly or quarterly drill to ensure that all staff and students are prepared to act promptly and safely. We will take all necessary precautions to keep your child safe. In the event of any emergency at SPCC, families will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so.

SEVERE WEATHER, FIRE, OR ANOTHER EMERGENCY

If an emergency develops such as severe weather, fire, physical problems to the building, or power failure, the children's safety is our first concern. Depending upon the emergency, we may shelter in place, move the children to a safe area inside the building or evacuate to a safe area outside of the building. Fire drills are conducted monthly and severe weather drills are conducted quarterly. In the event of an emergency, the children are not as alarmed due to their awareness of procedures. The Center is equipped with a fire alarm system and fire extinguishers as well as a weather band radio. Each classroom has at least two exits in the event of an evacuation. If you would like more information about our emergency preparedness plan, please contact the Director.

In the case of severe weather warnings, we do not want to jeopardize the safety of our staff or the children we care for, but we want to be realistic and sensitive to the needs of our parents who need to get to work. A good "rule of thumb" is to expect the possibility of closing or a delayed opening if something similar is occurring in Cy-Fair ISD. If weather begins to deteriorate during the school day and it is determined necessary to close the Center, parents will be notified to make arrangements for early pick up for their child.

EVACUATION

If in the opinion of safety personnel, the children need to be relocated, we will relocate the children and to Gleason Elementary School 9203 Willowbridge Park Blvd, Houston, TX 77064 (281) 517-6800

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

It's up to all of us to prevent child abuse. We care about children and want to keep all children strong and safe. To help protect children, Starting Point Children's Center provides annual training to our staff regarding warning signs, risk factors and prevention techniques concerning child abuse and neglect. We work with community partners such as Texas Children's Hospital and Child Protective Services to stay informed and increase awareness. We also provide information through our monthly newsletters and/or notices to parents. Parents are not alone. The Web site www.itsuptoyou.org contains information on how to prevent child abuse, where to go to get help with parenting skills and what to do if you suspect a child is in danger. Parents can contact their local Child Protective Services office to get more information. Child Abuse can be reported at 1-800-252-5400.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Texas Law requires caregivers to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or law enforcement. 1-800-252-5400.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNICATIONS

From time to time it is necessary for the Center to communicate with the parents on various matters. General information will be posted at the front desk in the lobby. In addition, messages will be provided on the key pad during the sign in and sign out process and sent via email. Specific information concerning your child or family will be communicated in writing or in person by your child's teacher, Assistant Director or Center Director.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Throughout the year there will be opportunities for parents to participate in Center activities with their children. Prior to each event, parents will be notified of the event details and how they may help or participate.

Parents are invited to join us on field trips, but must travel in their own vehicles. If you want your child to ride with you to and from the field trip, you must provide a member of management with written notice no later than one day before the trip the Center Director will keep you informed as these trips and activities are scheduled.

UPDATING ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

It is very important that Starting Point Children's Center maintain current and accurate enrollment information on each student. If there is a change in any information provided in the enrollment forms (i.e. phone numbers, email addresses, persons authorized to pick-up, special needs etc.) please notify the Center as soon as possible with the updated information. At least once per year, we will ask each family to review the information on file with the Center and update any information necessary.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of information is a very important aspect of our program. Sometimes we encounter situations such as a parent who expresses a concern about another child's behavior. Although we understand your concern for the welfare of your child, we cannot discuss detailed information about other children and families with you. Please keep in mind that children develop at very different rates and it's not realistic to expect all children to "behave" the way you expect. What could be disturbing to one parent (name calling, hitting, etc.) is may not be as upsetting to another. As professional staff, we shall decide what behavior is unacceptable and beyond what is considered typical for that age. Please know that we are always working with individual children and families, but we cannot disclose this information to you. Parents need to be assured that we won't discuss their child's development or progress with others, so this applies to your child as well.

Only staff who have a "need to know" will receive information that is deemed confidential. It is very rare that we share family information with student workers unless safety is an issue. Only parents and professional, full-time administrative and teaching staff will have access to your child's file. Children's assessment records are kept in each child's file which is stored in a locked cabinet in our front office area. Only teachers within your child's classroom will review your child's assessment information.

PARENT CONFERENCES

A parent conference may be held whenever a parent, teacher or Director feels it is necessary. Starting Point Children's Center is committed to maintaining an open door, open-forum approach to problem solving and conflict resolution. If a family has a concern regarding the behavior of a teacher, the concern should be discussed with the Director. If a family has a concern regarding the behavior of the Director, they should speak directly to the Director and/ or Owners. Parents are invited to speak with classroom teachers or management at any time concerning Center matters or your child's development. It is best to talk directly to your child's teacher if you have concerns regarding your child development or your child's classroom. It is best to speak with the Center Director if you have concerns about a staff member, child behavior, Center policies and/or procedures. If SPCC requests a Parent Conference, we expect the Parent to promptly arrange time to meet with SPCC. Failure to meet with Center staff regarding your child's well-being could be grounds for dismissal.

WHAT WE EXPECT OF PARENTS

- Read the bulletin boards, notices and newsletters that are sent home. Important information is shared with you on a regular basis, but you must make the effort to read it.
- Give your child time to adjust to child care before leaving them here. Parents can help set a positive tone for the rest of the day by taking a few minutes in the morning to greet the teachers and help involve your child in an activity.
- Value staff members and show them common courtesy. Caregivers are more than just babysitters. We employ teachers who have training and education in child development. Show respect for their position as an important part of your child's development. They have valuable knowledge which they are eager to share to help your child be successful at school and at home.
- Focus on your child when you pick him/her up. Take time to greet staff and your child and see if there is anything the teacher wishes to communicate before you leave.
- Pay your child care tuition fees on time.
- Be respectful and support Center policies. If we ask that you don't bring in toys, then please don't allow your child to do this. It is impossible to fully enforce all policies at all times, but know that your disregard for a policy is causing a problem.
- Make sure your children follow Center rules. Please don't allow them to run away from you, climb on furniture, etc. Your child's safety and well-being is our primary concern.
- Make sure your child is wearing appropriate clothing. Children will get dirty in child care. It is not realistic to send them in good clothing and expect teachers to keep them clean. Make sure clothing is easy to remove if your child is in diapers or in the process of toilet training (don't send them in overalls or 'onesies').
- Keep a sick child home. The state mandates health regulations to prevent spread of infectious illness. Although it may seem inconvenient at times, these rules also keep your child from being infected by others as well. It is up to you to have a back-up plan for a child who cannot attend.
- Address concerns in a respectful way and to the appropriate person.
- Communicate with teachers about what's going on at home.
- Make sure children get a good night's rest so they are ready for their busy day.
- Pick children up before the Center closes. Staff need to get home to their families too!