

Signal Centers Inc.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

FAMILY HANDBOOK



This book contains general child care family services information for families with children in Signal Centers Inc. facilities.

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FAMILY HANDBOOK



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Preface

Signal Centers services, established in 1957, include helping children get the best start possible through excellent early childhood education and developmental therapies; supporting adults to facilitate independent living and employment, helping individuals of all ages use technology to overcome obstacles, supporting parents; and training professionals who work in the field of education. All programs promote lifelong learning and independence.

Our Mission

To strengthen children, adults, and families through services focusing on disabilities, early childhood education, and self-sufficiency.

Our Vision

A community that fosters lifelong independence for children, adults, and families.



Welcome

Dear Signal Centers Children's Services Family,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our community. The following handbook is provided to you as a guide to the policies and procedures of our program. It is intended to educate you about the daily operations and provide answers to questions you may have. Although this document was carefully designed to anticipate your questions and needs, I realize that you may have questions beyond the scope of this handbook. Please feel comfortable approaching the teachers, office staff and myself with any questions or concerns you might have.

I love having conversations with families about child development, our school's approach and parenting. It is my pleasure to help families feel successful both in our school community and in the home. It is important to me to maintain an open-door policy. It is typical to find me in the school office throughout the day, so feel free to stop in to discuss brief questions, concerns and success stories. I also have meetings planned that make it necessary for me to be out of the office from time to time, so it is best to make an appointment if you would like some intentional one-on-one time for conversation. Our office staff are very knowledgeable about the daily operations of our program. If you have scheduling, billing or other operational questions they are happy to help you or send you my way if they are not able to address your needs.

Finally, I want to encourage you to be involved in our community by volunteering four hours over the course of each school year and joining us for special events. We love having parents, grandparents and special friends take active roles in our experiences and growth. If you would like to participate in classroom activities, help plan an event, be active in a parent committee or advisory committee, please let the teachers or office staff know. A strong community is based on sharing the strengths and talents of all its members.

I am looking forward to another amazing year at Signal Centers Children's Services. I am thrilled that your family is going to be an important part of our continued growth and development as we are for you and your children.

Sincerely,
Pam Hudson, Director
Children's Services, Chattanooga

A Message from Signal Centers' CEO

Welcome!

Thank you for choosing to trust Signal Centers to be a part of your child's life. 19 years ago, I chose Signal Centers to provide child care for my only daughter. That was one of the best parenting decisions that I ever made. We are committed to providing a rich educational experience. Equally important is nurturing your child's social and emotional development in a safe and supportive environment.

We look forward to working with your family to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Signal Centers wants to be more than an educational partner.

We hope we can be part of your family's support system. All families experience challenges, and if you hit a bump, please reach out to us for resources.

I know you will have a great experience at Signal Centers. After all, Signal has been providing the highest quality early childhood education since 1957.

Best,
Donna McConnico, CEO
Master's in Education, Master's in Counseling



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I. About Us

A. Philosophy

We celebrate children as competent, capable, and complex. Through a child-centered and play-based setting, we foster and support your child's development. Signal Centers Children's Services believes in creating classroom communities where children feel safe, supported, and empowered to care for themselves, others, and the environment. Here, each child's creativity, thoughts, and ideas are valued. As such, they are partners with their teachers and peers in the educational process.

Signal Center's Children's Services is a highly specialized Early Care & Education Service, within the context of Early Childhood/Special Education environments, providing services to children ages six-weeks through five years of age and for children eligible for special education. Six distinct services exist: Early Intervention (Center-Based), Early Intervention (Home-Based), Early Head Start, Head Start, Hamilton County Department of Education: Exceptional Education, and Child Care – known as Early Care and Education.

Based upon chronological age, developmental needs, and individual strengths, children attending Signal Centers receive services in classrooms and those with special needs may receive early intervention services in their homes. Approximately half of the children enrolled in our Children's Services have special needs. All children who attend Signal Centers have the opportunity for inclusive and diverse learning experiences.

Classroom Structure

Hamilton County Department of Education makes referrals for placement of three, four and five-year old children who are eligible for special education and related services. The classrooms exceed the minimal state early education standards to provide high quality early education services to prepare every child for kindergarten. Each classroom is led by a teacher who has earned credentials in Early Childhood and/or Special Education and is supported by a credentialed assistant. In addition, a third staff member (Paraprofessional) is assigned to every room ensuring full time implementation of special education services. Some classrooms benefit from our partnership with the Department of Human Services, Foster Grandparent Program and have a "Grand" assigned to add individualization to the established services.

Certified Special Education Teachers serve as Early Care and Special Education Coordinators. They are assigned to each classroom to provide routine direct special education services. In addition to the direct IEP services for children in each room, the Coordinators serve as coaches and mentors to the staff.



I. About Us

Each staff member exceeds the minimal state requirements of twenty-four (24) professional training hours per year. The training focuses on current early childhood and special education practices. These efforts are intended to provide deliberate, high quality inclusive early learning opportunities.

Classroom enrollment will never exceed the State of Tennessee's adult-to-child ratio. Ratios vary based on the age of the children in each classroom and are posted on the parent boards outside of each classroom. At various times, student teachers, interns and/or volunteers are present to assist in the learning environment, though they are not counted in ratios.

Tennessee Early Intervention System refers children for placement of infants and toddlers (under age three) with special needs. Professionals and parents determine if Early Intervention services will occur in the Center or in the home. Each Early Intervention (EI) classroom is led by two highly trained and credentialed staff who serve as teaching partners. Full-time enrollment is eight. The adult: child ratio for infant and toddler classrooms is 1:4. Paraprofessionals are also assigned to the EI classrooms as needed. Two staff members are always assigned to each EI classroom. At various times, Foster Grandparents, student observers, interns and/or volunteers are present to assist in the learning environment.

Therapy (Related Services)

In accordance with each child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), specific therapeutic needs are addressed for each child enrolled. Speech/Language Therapy, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Vision Therapy, Feeding Therapy (for those enrolled in Early Intervention classes), Behavioral Intervention, and Nursing Services support the teaching and learning in the classroom. For the most part, therapies are embedded within the daily classroom routines and structures, with therapists and teachers functioning as co-educators. Professional collaboration and integrated service delivery enhance each child's developmental outcomes.

B. Licensure.

We are licensed by the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and maintain school approval from the Department of Education. Additionally, we maintain a Three Star Rating [1] through the Tennessee Department of Human Services

[1] Programs licensed by DHS may participate in the Star-Quality Child Care Program which is a voluntary program that recognizes childcare agencies who exceed minimum licensing standards. These agencies can receive a one, two, or three-star rating on their annual report card. Signal Centers Children's Services consistently scores three stars (the highest rating) on the annual report card.

II. Hours of Operation & Holidays

- Children who are enrolled through the **Hamilton County Department of Education** (HCDE) and who ride a bus to and/or from Signal Centers are generally dropped off between 8:30 and 8:45 am. HCDE buses begin afternoon pickup at 3:30 pm and all buses are typically loaded by 3:45 pm.
- Children who are enrolled through **Head Start** may arrive at 8:30 am and must be picked up by 3:30 pm.
- Children who are enrolled through **Early Head Start** may arrive at 9:00 am and must be picked up by 3:00 pm.

A. Optional Extended Hours

Though most of our children are enrolled for the hours of 8:30 to 3:30, Monday through Friday, we recognize that parents often need care outside of those hours, so we are pleased to offer a before and after care program for a fee, see below.

Our program closes at 5:30 pm daily. Timely pickup is the responsibility of each parent.

B. Holidays and Closing for Inclement Weather

Signal Centers Children Services Program is closed for the following holidays;

- New Years Eve/Day - December 31st & January 1st
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day - July 4th
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving.
- Christmas Eve/Day

Closing Due to Extreme Weather.

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on local new stations. We will also notify you through the Brightwheel app. When possible, we will also send an email. Please make sure to update the school office if your contact information changes. If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

III. Tuition & Fees

A. Payments

Fees for child care are as follows:

6 weeks to 2 years old by August 15th--\$225/week

3 years old by August 15th--\$205/week

The fee schedule for before and after care is as follows

Before Care (may arrive as early as 7:30 am) --\$25.00/week

After Care (may stay as late as 5:30 pm)--\$90.00/week

Before & After Care (7:30–5:30)--\$115/week

Payments for care can be made in person (with administrative staff), online at <https://www.signalcenters.org/giving/program-payments>. Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, illnesses, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control. Payment is due as outlined in the tuition schedule included in your enrollment packet.

B. Early Drop-off and Late Pick-up Fees.

Timely pick up is crucial to our daily operations. Parents who pick up after 5:30 pm will be charged \$5.00 for the first 15 minutes and \$1.00/minute thereafter.

C. Late Payment Charges.

Weekly fees are charged for care. Parents are expected to pay in full by or before the close of business on Fridays. If payment is not received by the end of each week, a \$5.00 late fee will be added to the account total. Parents who wish to pay bi-weekly or monthly are permitted to do so as long as payment is received in advance.

D. Additional Fees.

A \$30.00 fee will be assessed for all returned checks.

E. Scholarships.

We accept the Child Care Certificate, provided by the State of TN Department of Human Services for families who qualify. Families can apply for the Child Care Certificate program at the local DHS office (visit <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/families/child-care-services/child-care-certificate-program.html>) for more information.

We also accept the Early Learning Scholarship, which is provided by the City of Chattanooga (through United Way) for families who qualify. To apply for an Early Learning Scholarship, contact United Way of Greater Chattanooga or speak with our Children's Services Director.

F. Special Activity Fees.

From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities.

Participation is VOLUNTARY. These fees are due prior to the activity.

IV. Attendance & Withdrawal

A. Absence.

We worry about our children when they aren't present and believe it is our responsibility to ensure that children are safe at all times. If your child is going to be absent or arrive exceptionally late, please call us at (423) 698-8528 or contact your child's teacher using the Brightwheel app.

B. Withdrawals.

Written notice, at least one week in advance is required when withdrawing from the program. Changes in scheduling must be approved in advance so that we may staff our classrooms accordingly.

C. Admission & Enrollment.

Based on availability and openings, Signal Centers Children's Services admits children from 6 weeks to 5 ½ years of age. Applications must be completed, and registration fees paid to be considered for enrollment or waiting list placement. Registration Fee: \$50.

D. Orientation.

All families will tour the school before their child enrolls. Additionally, children will participate in an in-class orientation with a parent and/or caregiver prior to the child's first day of attendance. Additionally, the Family Advisory Committee and teachers work together to plan a unique, school-wide parent orientation prior to the start of each school year. All families are invited to join us for this fun, informational event.

V. Family Partnerships

A. Inclusion.

Signal Centers Children's Services believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities in our environment. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation for all children in our program, based on their individual capabilities and needs.

B. Non-Discrimination.

Signal Centers Children's Services offers equal educational opportunities for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

C. Family Activities.

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program by volunteering at least four hours during each school year, visiting children's classrooms, participating in events, and providing feedback on the program. Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this booklet. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals. Please let us know about your unique skills and interests that you would be willing to share with our program.

V. Family Partnerships

D. Confidentiality

All records concerning children at our program are confidential. Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except when required by our regulatory and partnering agencies.

E. Staff Qualifications.

Signal Centers Children's Services hires teachers in compliance with the State of Tennessee requirements and qualifications. We have a wide range of experience, degrees, and specialized certifications represented among our teaching staff; additionally, we employ a licensed nurse. We are pleased to have a staff that brings longevity, experience, expertise, diversity, and a dedication to viewing the child as competent members of our community. Teachers participate in on going continuing education (24 hours/year minimum) in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

F. Family Communication.

Our goal is to have ongoing, meaningful communication with our families. One way that we do this is through Brightwheel. Brightwheel is a software application that we offer to our families at no cost. We recommend that every family download the Brightwheel app so that you may have regular, real-time communication with your child's teacher and other Children's Services staff members. Our Director, Assistant Director or Administrative Assistant can help you download and register for the app if needed.

We want our families to feel free to email our staff at any time however please understand that your child's teacher may not be able to response to you outside of regular working hours. We assure you that our staff will respond as quickly as possible the following business day.

(i) Daily Communications. Daily notes from teachers will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at Signal Centers Children's Services. Notes are generally sent out through the Brightwheel app, but of course exceptions are made for parents who prefer not to use Brightwheel. Classrooms for infants and toddlers receive daily notes about routine care (food intake, diapering/toileting, naps etc.). Preschool classrooms communicate daily regarding curriculum, classroom experiences, projects, etc. Often, teachers (in all classrooms) include photos that capture the children's experiences.

(ii) Conferences and Open Door Policy. You are welcome to visit our classrooms, volunteer, or visits and /or eat a meal with your child. (this is in a future section). Family & teacher conferences are offered twice per year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes, and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

V. Family Partnerships

(iii) Open Door Policy. We welcome feedback about the program. We love to hear how we can create the best environment for our families. The preschool director maintains an open-door policy to discuss any concerns and is also delighted to consult on several topics including child development, parenting etc. Our team will always do its best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not practical to engage in long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, we will be glad to schedule an appointment.

VI. Curricula & Learning

A. Learning Environment.

We provide a rich learning environment using the Creative Curriculum that is developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible daily routine that allows children to advance at their own pace, and we strongly believe that learning happens through play. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us and the ability to work and play with others.

The Creative Curriculum is an inquiry-based approach in which the curriculum is designed around the children's interests and passions. In this responsive approach, key skills and concepts are integrated into the classroom experiences and explorations. Often called investigations, projects may involve a single child, a small group of children, or the entire class and vary in length of time. Teachers are intentional about integrating all the basic domains (math, science, technology, literacy, fine and gross motor skills, social studies, social-emotional development, etc.) into the various investigations that take place in the environment. Parents are informed of the lessons through daily communications, documentation, and lesson plans posted within and outside of the classrooms. On occasion, the classrooms will team up with a community partner to deepen an investigation.

In addition to planning meaningful, educational activities for your child to learn, our staff work hard to ensure that children are meeting milestones and that they are getting the most from our program. One way that we do this is by providing regular, ongoing assessments/screenings that can help us identify gaps in learning. All assessments/screenings, including vision and hearing screenings, are provided at no cost to families for the benefit of the child, and are conducted by trained and certified teachers, special education coordinators, or Head Start staff (if your child is enrolled through Head Start). We welcome and encourage parents to openly ask questions about assessments/screenings results at any time.

B. School Transitions.

Your child's transition into school should be a positive and exciting experience. We will work with you and your child to ensure a smooth transition as new routines and new people are introduced.

(i) Transition from home to center. Prior to your child's first day of attendance, you will have an opportunity to tour the school, meet with your child's teachers, and communicate your child's specific needs.

VI. Curricula & Learning

(ii) Transition between classrooms. When transitioning a child to a new classroom, we consider age, developmental readiness, space availability, as well as state licensing requirements. During the transition, current and future teachers meet to discuss your child's needs and learning style. Teachers make sure to meet with your child and/or have your child visit his/her new classroom before moving to the new classroom.

(iii) Transition to elementary school. The preschool administration provides parent education opportunities for guidance through the kindergarten admissions process. Our students consistently attend their zoned elementary school or the school of their family's choice. Feedback from admissions directors and faculty from both private and public schools are that children matriculating from Signal Centers Children's Services transition well into the elementary school environment, both academically and socio-emotionally.

C. Screen Time.

We integrate technology within our classrooms in ways that are developmentally appropriate for children and are in compliance with State guidelines.

D. Celebrations.

Our holiday/celebrations policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs. If at any time you do not wish for your child to take part in holiday celebrations, please let us know and we will gladly make accommodations.

E. Rest Time.

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are placed on their backs to sleep. The State of Tennessee prohibits toys and/or blankets in cribs. After lunch, all other children participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities. Signal Centers Children's Services provides cribs, mats and/or cots for all Children. Families provide sheets and blankets which are taken home at the end of each week to be cleaned and returned to school. We welcome any comfort items that may help your child rest or feel more at ease while at school. Please label all items brought to school.

F. Routine Care.

We believe that children are always learning, therefore, we consider routine care a significant part of our curriculum. Whether changing a diaper, washing hands, toilet training, dressing, or having a meal or snack, we consider these to be opportunities for continued growth in development. Children are encouraged to try to do things for themselves. We allow for extra time for children to practice new skills, work through frustrations, and celebrate successes. We believe that the most powerful rewards are intrinsic satisfaction, and we shy away from material rewards. Instead we celebrate children's efforts and ask them to consider how it makes them feel to have tried something new or succeeded at a skill.

G. Toileting.

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically,

VI. Curricula & Learning

and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel movements. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet training is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

VII. Behavior

A. Social-Emotional Development.

Helping children strengthen their ability to self-regulate, communicate needs and desires, and consider other people's needs and feelings are at the core of our approach. We believe that conflict presents an opportunity for growth, and therefore we do not simply try to solve problems for children but encourage them to become aware of their feelings and respectfully express them to those around them. We respect the child's right to play, and we consider our role to protect that play. If a child is not quite ready to be finished with materials or does not want to share personal space with someone else, then we consider that child's right to respectfully decline to share.

We encourage children to work together to seek alternative solutions. We are intentional about setting up the environment with many opportunities for play and exploration so that alternative options are available to children. We also encourage children to work together to decide when a material might be available for sharing. When children are empowered to problem solve for themselves, the solution is usually mutually accepted and often one that an adult may not have even considered.

B. Expected Behavior Policy.

It is our desire to provide assistance and support to all children and families enrolled in our program. Our goal is to facilitate an age-appropriate introduction to self-regulation, respect for others, and responsibility for one's actions. We acknowledge that each child is different and may require a plan that is specific to his/her individual needs when addressing a specific behavior. Below is the action plan for addressing specific behavior concerns:

(i) Verbally offensive behaviors, as well as behaviors that cause harm to others, will be documented by teachers and communicated to all parties involved.

(ii) If negative behavior continues regularly after preschool/parent communications, then an official conference will take place between the parents and teachers.

(iii) If negative behavior remains a problem, then the director will join the above in a conference, and an individual behavior plan will be developed for the child. Subsequent to this meeting, regular conferences will be scheduled to check progress.

(iv) If/when deemed necessary, professional services will be contacted in consultation with parents.

VII. Behavior

If, at any time, a child's behavior is deemed to be out of control and a threat to him/herself or others, the parents may be called to remove the child for the remainder of the day, and partial days may be considered.

C. Biting.

Biting is a normal part of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once. When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting but on effective, developmentally appropriate behaviors that address the specific reason for biting. Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change. This will be strictly confidential, and no names will be provided when describing the incident. We may provide individual teething tools for children who may find comfort in having something safe to chew on during oral stages of development.

D. Respectful Behavior.

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior, such as cursing, threats or physical aggression on our campus. If this occurs, we reserve the right to contact law enforcement as needed or to remove your children from our care.

E. Guidance/Discipline Policies and Practices.

Our program follows the State of Tennessee Child Care Licensing guidelines regarding discipline. Discipline will never be shameful, humiliating or frightening and will not be related to rest, food or toileting. Staff may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child.

Staff is informally trained in the use of Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) which is a research-based, internationally recognized program designed to prevent children from displaying behaviors that may cause harm to themselves or others, however if a child should display behaviors that may cause harm to self or others, CPI training provides staff with safe and healthy options to calmly restrain and remove a child from such a situation. Our contract with the Hamilton County Department of Education requires that our staff be trained in this program.

Our Early Childhood and Early Care Learning License prevents us from using restraint as an intervention, except for particular children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in need of behavior plans that may be inclusive of safe holds as recognized by the CPI informal training) and physical and/or occupational therapists.

VIII. Drop-off & Pick-up

A. Cell Phone Usage.

In order to make drop off and pick up transitions successful, we ask that you refrain from using your cell phone during these times.

VIII. Drop-off & Pick-up

B. Information Exchange at Drop-off and Pick-up.

A brief exchange of information between parent(s) and teacher(s) is important. In the mornings, please let us know if anything is out of the ordinary in your child's routine. At pick-up, teachers will let you know if there is anything out of the ordinary about your child's school day (we also love sharing success stories!). Always make sure you make contact with a teacher when dropping off and picking up your child.

C. Authorized Pick-up Procedures.

The Emergency Contact form should be completed annually for each child and updated if there are changes in contact information. Please include anyone to whom your child may be released (other than parent) in a typical scenario (grandparents, nannies, etc.). For last minute changes in pick-up plans, you may contact the school office with verbal consent. The person picking-up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy. If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, a local child protective services agency will be contacted.

D. Right to Refuse Child Release.

We may refuse to release a child if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

E. Security & Emergency Preparedness.

For the safety and protection of the children, external doors are always locked and monitored by staff. All visitors are required to register with the office and wear a visitor's badge throughout their visit. We ask that families be our partners in our security efforts. Please do not let someone you do not know into our building. We monitor all entrances and have specific policies when allowing entrance to our facilities. If someone you do not know enters our facility with you, please escort them to the school office for assistance. Things you should know about our Emergency Preparedness:

(i) Signal Centers Children's Services staff assist us when evacuating the building during a drill or an actual emergency.

(ii) We practice fire drills with the children on a monthly basis.

(iii) We practice tornado drills twice a year.

(iv) All of our employees are trained in adult and infant/child CPR and first aid every two years.

VIII. Drop-off & Pick-up

(v) First aid kits are available in each classroom, on our playgrounds, and in our emergency storage.

(vi) In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called. You will be immediately notified, and a staff member will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

(vii) Staff review portions of our emergency preparedness plan at each monthly staff meeting.

(viii) We have back up food, water, clothing, blankets, and emergency supplies in the event of an emergency.

(ix) We have one partner facility, the Chambliss Center for Children, that has agreed to temporarily house us if we need to evacuate the building for an extended amount of time. The Chambliss Center for Children is located at 315 Gillespie Road, just across the street from our facility. Should we have to exit the premises for an emergency, parents will be notified as quickly as possible using the Brightwheel app, phone, email, and/or by any other available means.

F. Closing Due to Extreme Weather.

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on local new stations. We will also notify you through the Brightwheel app. When possible, we will also send an email. Please make sure to update the school office if your contact information changes. If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

IX. Personal Belongings

A. What to Bring.

(i) A complete change of clothes. Pants, shirt, socks, underwear, and sneakers to leave at school. Please send several changes of clothes if your child is learning to use the toilet and remember to quickly replace any article that is used. Please send your child in comfortable clothing that can be worn during messy play.

(iv) Diapers (if needed). Keep at least one extra day's supply at school. You may bring them in by the bag if you wish, we can store extra diapers in the classroom.

(v) Food and/or bottles. Please see the Nutrition section below for details on food and/or bottles.

Additionally, each classroom will provide a unique list of items to bring. Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items.

IX. Personal Belongings

B. Cubbies.

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a “cubby.” Cubbies are labeled with your child’s name. Please check your child’s cubby daily for items that need to be taken home.

C. Toys from Home.

We request that toys from home be left at home. There is a possibility that personal toys will get lost or broken if brought to school, and we want to avoid this unnecessary stress for children.

X. Nutrition

We provide a nutritious, USDA-approved breakfast and lunch for all children. An afternoon snack is provided (generally around 3:45) for children who are enrolled in our aftercare program. Meals and snacks are included in your weekly fee.

A. Foods Brought from Home. Food Guidelines:

(i) Families supply infant formula or breast milk and baby food until babies are able to eat our snacks. Bottles will be warmed (if needed) under warm running water (crockpots and microwaves are not permitted for bottle warming, as prohibited by the State of Tennessee).

(ii) We are happy to accommodate children with allergies, but we must be made aware of allergies upon enrollment or as soon as they arise. Food allergies can be life threatening, and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a form detailing the child’s symptoms, reactions, treatments, and care. Families must provide the proper medications (Benadryl, epi-pen, etc.) and proof of prescription. All medications must be labeled with the child’s name and date the medication was provided to the school. Individual classrooms may be required to be nut (or other anaphylactic allergens) free. Signs are posted on classroom doors, and families are notified of this requirement through classroom communications. Each child’s allergy notifications are posted conspicuously in order to be easily identified by teachers, substitutes, and volunteers. Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid as well as administering epi-pens and medication (according to individual allergy plans).

(iii) If celebrating your child’s birthday with the class, please be health-conscious with treats. Some suggestions for special occasion treats are: fruit pops, frozen yogurt cups, muffins and specialty breads. If you feel you must bring a sweeter treat we suggest miniature cupcakes (with limited icing) or cookies. Please check with classroom teachers for special dietary needs that may be present in your child’s class.

Families who wish to bring food for their children must follow the USDA Guidelines (see office for guidelines).

B. Food Prepared for or at the Center.

We love to do cooking projects in the classrooms. When preparing food, we are careful to be aware of any special dietary needs.

X. Nutrition

C. Infant Feedings.

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- (i) Bottle-fed infants are fed while being held or sitting up.
- (ii) Infants are fed “on demand” to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly).
- (iii) Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. Fresh breast milk must be used within 48 hours. Previously frozen (thawed) breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child’s name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to 3 months.
- (iv) Formula must be brought to the premises in a factory-sealed container in a ready-to-feed-strength powder or concentrate. Formula will be diluted at the school according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer or from the child’s health provider, using water from a source approved by the local health department. Formula brought from home must be labeled with the child’s name.
- (v) Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child’s family.

D. Toddler Feedings.

Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat a variety of foods. Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age will be cut into age appropriate sized bites.

XI. Health

A. Immunizations.

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. State regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department. A Child Care Immunization form that shows up-to-date immunizations is required upon enrollment in our program. This form must include a physician’s signature documenting a health examination.

B. Illness.

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to school. The preschool administration has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. We ask that parents notify us immediately if your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness so that we may be on the lookout for children with any similar symptoms.

XI. Health

(i) You will be called and asked to pick up your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

(a) Acute Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities (child looks or acts differently, unusually tired, pale, no appetite, confused, irritable, excessive nasal drainage for greater than seven days, or a cold lasting longer than ten days).

(b) Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.

(c) Fever: Parent will be contacted for pickup if a child has a fever of 100 degrees or higher. Child may return to school when fever-free for 24 hours without medication.

(d) Diarrhea: We will call parents for pick-up after increased episodes of loose, runny stools. Child may return to school when symptom-free for 24 hours without medication. If diarrhea appears to be a side effect of antibiotics, you will be asked to speak with the school nurse for further instructions.

(e) Vomiting: Parents will be contacted for pick-up after two episodes of vomiting occur. Child may return to school after being symptom-free for 24 hours without medication.

(f) Rashes: Parents will be called for pickup if an unexplained rash is noted. Child may return with doctor's statement.

(g) Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge: Parent will be notified and contacted for pick-up. Child may return with a doctor's statement.

(h) Infected Skin Patches: Parent will be notified and contacted for pick-up. Child may return to school 24 hours after treatment and with a doctor's statement.

(i) Sore Throat and/or painful swallowing: If a child has a sore throat and/or painful swallowing with fever or swollen glands, parent will be notified and asked to pick-up. Child may return to care with doctor's statement. If a child has a persistent sore throat or painful swallowing with no fever, parent will be contacted, and we will continue to monitor.

(j) Head lice: If live lice are noted on the scalp or hair, parents will be contacted for pick-up and provided with information on treatment of head lice. Child may return with proof of lice treatment (box, receipt, or other proof of purchase). Parent will be asked to continue to monitor and work on nit removal and speak to our nurse to determine if a second treatment is required.

(k) Scabies: A rash with intense itching may be scabies. If it is believed that a child has scabies, parent will be contacted for pick-up. Child may return to care with doctor's statement that indicates that it is safe for them to return.

XI. Health

(i) Continued...

(l) Severe or Uncontrolled Coughing: If a child has severe or uncontrolled coughing, parent will be contacted for pick-up. Child should be seen by a doctor and may return to school with doctor's statement.

(m) Ringworm: Symptoms include ring-shaped, raised border of lesion, usually intense itching. If ringworm is noted and area is oozing or larger than a Band-aid can cover, parent will be contacted for pickup. Over-the-counter medications may be effective; child may return to school with proof of treatment (box, receipt or other proof of purchase). However, if there is no improvement in 5-7 days, child must see a doctor.

(n) Open Lesions: All lesions must be covered while at school. If, for any reason, the lesion cannot stay covered, parents will be contacted for pickup.

C. Medications.

(i) If a child is to be administered ANY (prescription and/or over-the-counter) medication, the following guidelines must be followed:

(a) We must have a doctor's order for prescribed or over-the-counter medication to be administered. A form must also be completed and signed by the parent.

(b) Certain medications may require a Medication Action Plan to be completed by the provider.

(c) The medication must be in its original container with the following information on the label: child's name; name of the medication; dosage to be administered; instructions for administration.

(d) Medication must be stored in a locked container (each classroom has a container for storing medication).

(e) Sunscreen: Hamilton County Department of Education requires children to have a prescription for sunscreen and we can only apply as directed.

(f) Diaper cream: Diaper cream may only be applied with a doctor's order.

(ii) All medications and ointments should be handed to a staff member with specific instructions for administration. Medications and ointments should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is dispensed as directed.

XII. Safety

A. Clothing.

Children enrolled in our program have lots of opportunities for messy play (this can include painting, sand play, and water play during warmer months). Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather and choose clothing that is good for messy play. Children must wear closed toe shoes.

B. Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play.

We believe that outdoor play is essential to our curriculum. Our playground is used as an extension of the classroom and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits. Whenever possible, we will spend some amount of time outdoors each day. During extreme temperature conditions, we will limit the time we spend outdoors and will not stay out longer than is comfortable and appropriate for children. In the event of extreme air quality warnings, we will stay indoors.

C. Injuries.

Safety is a major concern in any early education program, and daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by our trained staff if your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an accident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

D. Smoking.

Smoking is prohibited on the entire Signal Centers campus. The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children. The indoor and outdoor environment are always non-smoking areas.

E. Prohibited Substances.

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the preschool premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited. Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately. We reserve the right to contact law enforcement as necessary and/or refuse release of a child to an adult that appear to be under the influence of prohibited substances.

F. Dangerous Weapons

Weapons are prohibited on the Signal Centers campus. Anyone who brings a weapon onto our premises will be asked to leave immediately and the police will be contacted immediately.

XII. Safety

G. Child Custody.

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

H. Marketing, Advertising & Publicity.

Pictures, images, and/or names of children may be utilized for marketing, advertising, or publicity purposes. A consent form is included in the enrollment packet. Families may opt out.

I. Suspected Child Abuse.

We are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities. If we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred, we are mandated reporters. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may investigate. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect. Preschool staff is trained in the prevention, detection and reporting of child abuse twice a year.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

I have received the Signal Centers Children's Services Family Handbook, and I have reviewed the handbook with a member of the Children's Services program. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Signal Centers Children's Services Family Handbook.

Recipient Signature

Date

Children's Services Staff Signature

Date