



# Early Childhood Education Program

## PARENT HAND BOOK

LEARNING CENTER

2025-2026

## WELCOME

Dear Family,

It is an honor to warmly welcome you to Joy Learning Center and the NM PreK program for the 2025–2026 school year. We are pleased that you have chosen to be part of our educational community, and we are committed to providing your children with a caring, safe, and enriching environment where they can learn, grow, and fully develop.

Our mission is to offer high-quality early childhood education that fosters the integral development of each child, respecting their pace, interests, and needs, and recognizing the importance of the family as the child's first teacher. We work to create an inclusive environment where all children and families feel welcome, respected, and valued. We want you to feel like part of our educational team. That is why we will review this handbook together and invite you to ask questions and share any concerns you may have. Open and constant communication is essential to ensure the well-being and success of each child.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education and care. We are confident that this will be a year full of learning, discoveries, and positive experiences for the whole family.

Sincerely,

Director: Nancy Alarcon

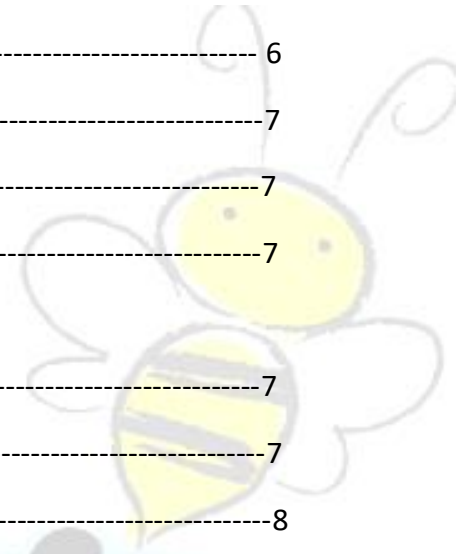
Administrator: Alejandra Alarcon

Joy Learning Center

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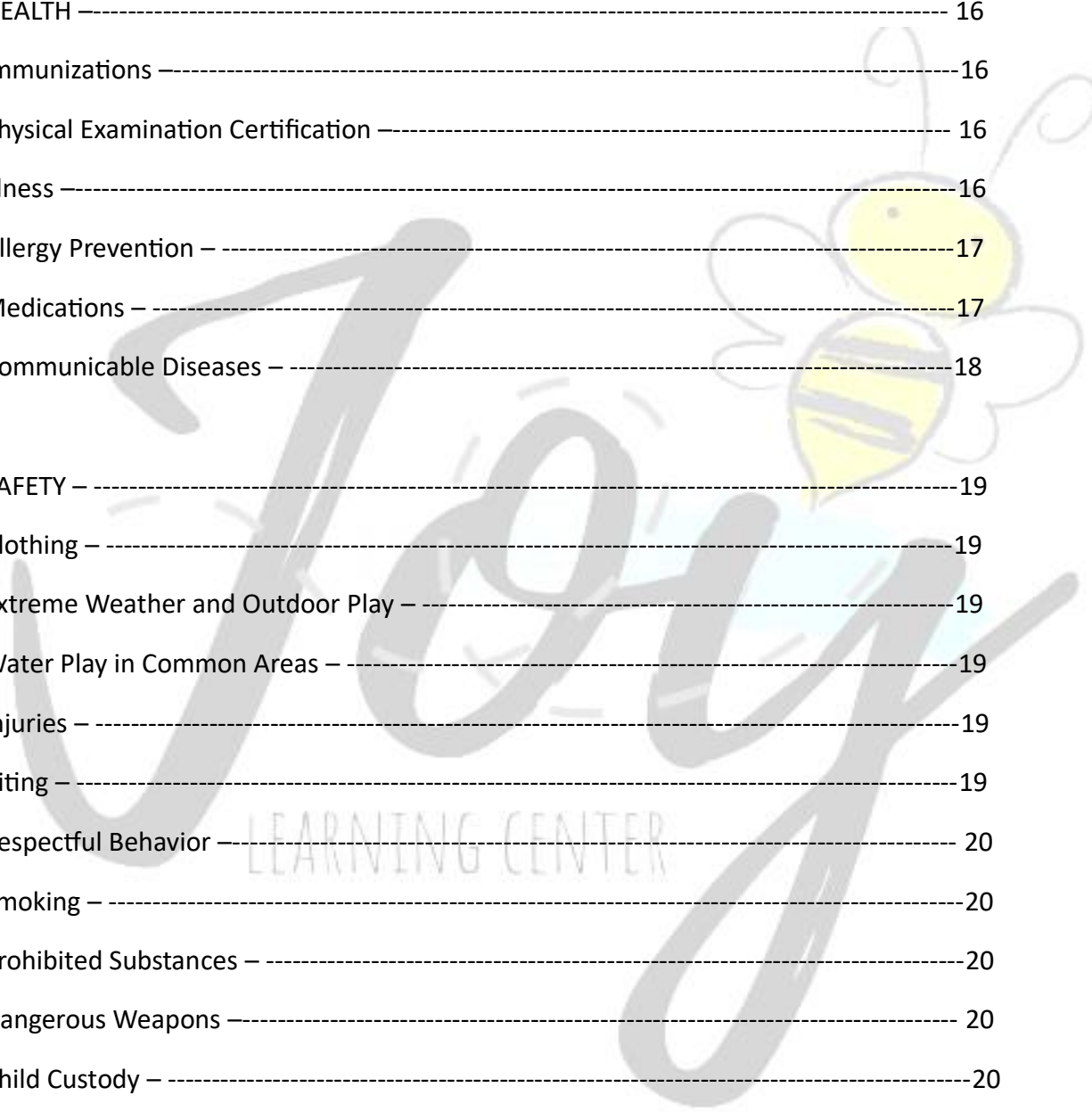
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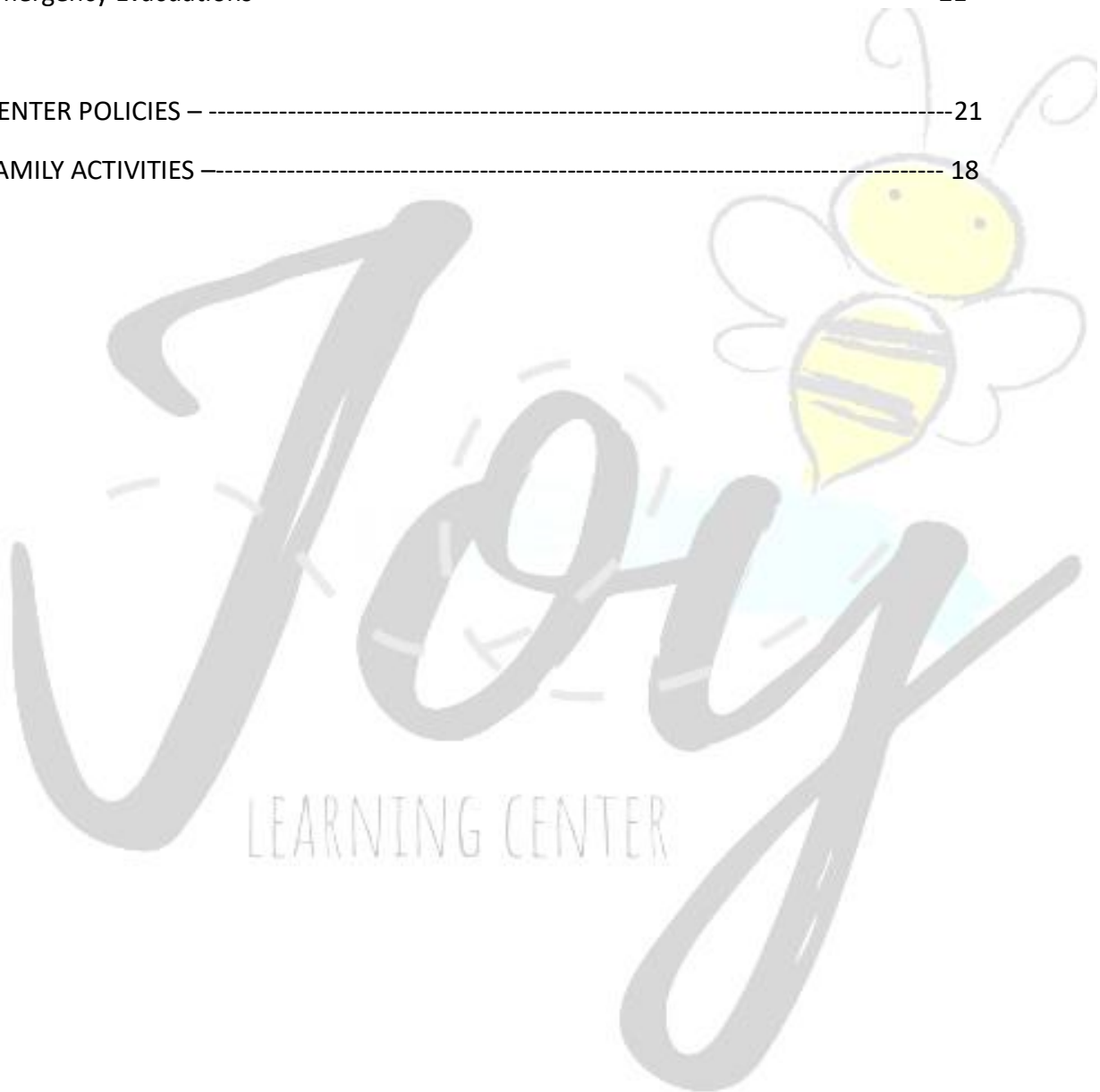
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# ABOUT US

## Philosophy

Joy Learning Center focuses on Early Childhood Learning, providing tools for growth, development, and socialization so that each child has an equal opportunity to succeed when entering school. The center offers healthy and nutritious meals so children can learn, grow, socialize with peers, and have fun at the same time. All children and their families are valued and welcomed, with opportunities to participate in various events and activities while respecting their cultures, beliefs, abilities, and circumstances. Communication with parents is our top priority, as it is the key to a successful childcare partnership.

## Mission

At Joy Learning Center, we are dedicated to providing a safe, clean, and welcoming environment where children can develop in a well-rounded way. We promote fun and educational experiences that foster learning, socialization, and emotional growth. In addition, we provide balanced and nutritious meals that contribute to each child's health and well-being.

## Licensing

Joy Learning Center has a team of highly qualified professionals. Our teachers hold all required certifications and continue their professional development through ongoing courses and training. The staff member in charge of the kitchen also holds up-to-date certifications and participates regularly in training related to nutrition and food safety. Joy Learning Center is a quality center, recognized with a 5-star distinction, actively participating in the FOCUS continuous improvement program as well as the state PreK New Mexico program. Both teaching and administrative staff maintain current professional credentials and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to educational excellence and the holistic development of children.



## Definition of Family

At Joy Learning Center, families are the heart of our community. We deeply value their trust, participation, and collaboration in their children's education. We believe that a close and respectful relationship between the center and families strengthens children's development and creates an environment of mutual support. For us, each family is a key partner in raising happy, safe, and well-prepared children for the future.

## Attendance Policy – PreK New Mexico Program

Regular attendance is essential for the academic and social progress of children in the PreK program. Our goal is for each student to take full advantage of the learning opportunities offered during the school year.

Each child must maintain at least 90% attendance during the school year to meet program standards.

If a child accumulates five (5) unexcused absences within the same month, the case will be reported to the PreK New Mexico Program or to ECECD, as applicable.

Unexcused absences are considered those for which no valid written justification is provided or when the absence does not meet the criteria established by the center for excused absences (for example, illness with a doctor's note).

It is the family's responsibility to promptly inform the center of the reason for any absence, preferably before the start of the school day.

Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in additional interventions to support attendance and, if necessary, in notification to the corresponding program authorities.

## Hours of Operation

We are open Monday through Friday, offering extended hours from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. to support families who require care before and after school hours.

The official schedule for the NM PreK program is also Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., during which the approved curriculum is implemented and the program's educational activities take place.

All families are welcome to request before- or after-school care. If you need this service, the administration is available to provide the necessary information about the process, which is managed through the ECECD program. In addition, families may also request access to the vacation program if services are needed during school breaks. This benefit requires a separate application process, also handled through ECECD.

## Holidays

The center will be closed on the following days during the 2025–2026 school year:

- September 1 – Labor Day
- November 27 and 28 – Thanksgiving
- December 22 to January 5 – Winter Break
- January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 16 – Presidents' Day
- March 30 to April 3 – Spring Break
- May 25 – Memorial Day

On family conference days, hours will be reduced only for the PreK program, which will end at 1:00 p.m.

Additional closure dates may be added during the school year; all will be communicated in advance.

In the event of adverse weather conditions, the center may close or delay opening. Families will be notified immediately through the established communication channels.

## Admission and Enrollment

The application to enter the NM PreK program is completely free of charge. All children must meet the requirements established by the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) for the before- and after-school program. Admission depends on space availability, meeting program criteria, and the complete submission of all required documentation.

Age requirements are as follows:

- **Early PreK:** The child must be 3 years old before September 1 of the current school year.
- **PreK:** The child must be 4 years old before September 1 of the current school year and must not meet the requirements for Early PreK.

Children are admitted regardless of race, culture, gender, religion, nationality, or disability. No discrimination is made based on special needs, provided we can ensure a safe environment and adequate support for the child.

To begin the process, families must complete an application and submit the necessary documents, such as a birth certificate, medical forms, and immunization records. The administration is available to support families throughout the entire enrollment process.

## Inclusion

As a center, our goal is for every family to feel welcome, respected, and included, while providing the necessary support for each child's holistic development. To achieve this, we are committed to strengthening collaboration with organizations specializing in early intervention, allowing us to offer a stronger and timelier support network for children with different needs.

We aim to develop and promote inclusive activities within the center that foster mutual respect among families, teachers, and, most importantly, among children. We want to create an environment where diversity is valued and actively promoted.

As part of this commitment, the administration will provide each teacher with a form containing the results of the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaires), including ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2, in order to monitor the individual development of each child. This monitoring will help identify progress and areas needing additional support. In cases where development is below expectations, a joint work plan will be implemented with the family. If necessary, early intervention specialists will be involved, with whom we will also maintain direct collaboration.

Additionally, we have a consent form that allows parents to authorize participation in meetings related to an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or an IEP (Individualized Education Program), when applicable. This collaboration with families and specialists is key to providing comprehensive support.

We will also provide our teachers with tools and strategies to support children's emotional self-regulation, recognizing the importance of this skill for their active participation in daily activities and in their learning process.

In the Early Childhood Education Program, we believe that children of all ability levels have the right to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging in child care. We will make all reasonable accommodations to encourage the full and active participation of all children in our program, according to their abilities and individual needs.

## Non-Discrimination

In our Early Childhood Education Program, we provide equal educational opportunities for all children, regardless of race, color, creed, nationality, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, parents' or providers' special needs, or any other consideration prohibited by local, state, or federal law.

All our educational programs are designed to meet the diverse needs of students, promoting an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for everyone.

In the Early Childhood Education Program, we ensure that all children have access to the same educational opportunities without distinction of race, color, creed, nationality, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, parents' or providers' special needs, or any other unlawful consideration under local, state, or federal law. Our educational programs are designed to address the varied needs of all students.

### Family Activities

We recognize that each family is a child's first teacher. We deeply value families as essential partners in the growth and development of the children in our program.

Each family is required to complete a minimum of 90 hours of family participation during the school year. These hours can be fulfilled through various forms of involvement, such as classroom visits, attendance at events, providing support from home, participating in workshops, or engaging in school activities, among others.

As a center, we will provide the necessary resources, opportunities, and guidance to help families meet this goal. However, it is the responsibility of each family to remain active and committed to completing the required hours, as this participation is key to the success of the program and the children's development.

We encourage parents, guardians, and other family members to:

- Actively engage in the program
- Visit classrooms
- Participating in events and activities
- Share their ideas and opinions about the center's operations

### Confidentiality

The personal information of each child is strictly confidential. It will not be shared with third parties unless we have the family's written consent, or in cases where the law requires it and it is requested by regulatory entities or partnering agencies.

All records, assessments, forms, and documents related to children in the program are stored securely, with access limited only to authorized personnel.

We are committed to protecting each family's privacy and handling all information with the highest level of professionalism and respect.

## Staff Qualifications

Our staff is hired in compliance with, at minimum, state requirements and qualifications. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

Job Title-----	Education/Certification-----	Experience
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Lead Teacher-----	Associate degree in Early Childhood Education-----	-1 year
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Assistant/Aide Teacher-----	Child Development Associate Credential-----	1 year
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Caregivers participate in orientations and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

### Teacher – BS/BA Degree (Bachelor’s):

Teachers without a bachelor’s degree must complete a minimum of 6 undergraduate credit hours each fall and spring semester until it is obtained, for a total of 12 credits per fiscal year.

### Educational Assistants – AA Degree (Associate):

Educational assistants without an AA degree must complete a minimum of 6 AA credit hours each fall and spring semester until it is obtained, for a total of 12 credits per fiscal year.

We strongly discourage families from making employment arrangements with staff (e.g., as babysitters). Any agreement between families and our caregivers outside of the programs and services we provide is a private matter and is not connected to or sanctioned by the Early Childhood Education Program.

## Child-to-Staff Ratio

Children are always supervised. All caregivers have scheduled breaks to reduce fatigue and help ensure they remain alert.

We maintain the following child-to-staff ratio standards:

Age-----	Children per Staff-----	Maximum Group Size
6 weeks to 24 months	4 to 1	11
2 years	6 to 1	10
3 to 4 years	8 to 1	8
5 years	8 to 1	8

## Communication and Partnership with Families

### Daily Communications

Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Notes will be placed in your child's cubby at the end of the day.

### Information Boards

Located throughout the center, information boards display center news, upcoming events, staff changes, holiday closures, announcements, and more.

### Newsletters

Newsletters will be distributed once a month to share updates, events, announcements, and other center information. Copies will be available at the check-in/check-out table.

### Email

We encourage you to provide an email address you check regularly so we can send announcements, event invitations, newsletters, and general updates.

### Parent Resource Room

Our parent resource room provides a learning space for parents to share opinions, ideas, and experiences, and to deepen their understanding of learning and development.

### Family Visits

Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer, join us on a field trip, or share a meal with your child. For the safety and protection of our children, visitors must sign in. Each visitor must wear an ID while on the premises and sign out when leaving.



## Meetings

Family-teacher meetings are held three times a year. During these meetings, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and learning styles. Together, we will set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional meetings at any time to discuss your child's progress. We encourage you to share any concerns you may have.

## Open-Door Policy

We welcome family participation in our program. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are welcome to visit at any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to attend to or feed their child.

An open-door policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of children, all exterior doors will always remain locked.

Our staff will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. However, because staff time is dedicated to caring for the children, extended conversations during program hours may not be possible. If a longer discussion is needed, please schedule an appointment.

## Publicity

At times, photographs of children at the center may be taken for use within the center or on our website. Written consent will be obtained before using any photos.

Unless a family specifically requests that their child not participate, we will not use children's images or names for advertising purposes.

## CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

### Learning Environment

We offer a rich learning environment with a developmentally appropriate curriculum tailored to the specific ages in each class. We maintain a flexible daily routine that allows children to progress at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploration are hands-on activities supported by interest areas.

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 differences and the ability to work and play cooperatively with others.

## Curriculum and Assessment

In our Early Childhood Education Program, we use the curriculum approved by the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD), which is designed to support the holistic development of children in the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social areas.

The curriculum is implemented as part of our weekly planning, serving as the foundation for the activities, routines, and learning experiences carried out in the classroom. In addition, we conduct daily observations and periodic assessments to tailor teaching to each child's individual needs.

As part of our assessment process, we also use the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2 tools, which allow us to identify the strengths and developmental areas of each child based on their age. This information helps us adjust our strategies and provide more individualized and effective instruction.

Progress and results are shared periodically with families during the school year through conferences and weekly notes on their child's development.

## Developmental Screenings

In our Early Childhood Education Program, we conduct developmental screenings as part of our commitment to early detection and individualized support for each child.

We use standardized tools such as the ASQ-3 (Ages & Stages Questionnaires®) and the ASQ:SE-2 (Social-Emotional), which allow us to observe and monitor developmental achievements and expected milestones for each child's age. These assessments are aligned with our curriculum and integrated into regular classroom practices.

Based on the results, we share observations with parents or guardians, and, if necessary, provide information about resources for further evaluations, early interventions, or specialized treatments.

This process is conducted collaboratively, with active family participation and, when appropriate, in coordination with the child's primary healthcare provider, as well as health, education, and early intervention consultants.

Developmental screenings are only conducted with the written consent of parents or legal guardians, and results are handled with complete confidentiality.



## Outings and Field Trips

Weather permitting, we provide 30 minutes of supervised outdoor play twice a day for all children. These activities may include time on the center's playground or short neighborhood walks. Children are supervised at all times. Authorization for neighborhood walks is included in the enrollment packet signed by each family at the beginning of the school year.

Occasionally, we organize supervised field trips. We invite and encourage families to join their child on these trips, as their participation enriches the experience. For each field trip, a permission slip will be sent home that must be signed and returned before the trip date.

For outings, we ask that children wear season-appropriate clothing and comfortable, safe walking shoes. Sandals and flip-flops are not allowed, as they make walking difficult and increase the risk of accidents.

At all times, both at the center and during outings, the safety of the children and staff is our priority. During transportation, we use proper restraint systems (seat belts) and ensure they are correctly fastened before starting the trip.

## Adjustment Period

At Joy Learning Center, we believe that the transition into childcare should be a positive, safe, and exciting experience for each child and their family. Our goal is to work with you to make the adjustment as smooth as possible, helping the child become familiar with new routines, people, and spaces.

## Transition from Home to Center

Before your child's first day, you will have the opportunity to tour our facilities, visit their classroom, meet classmates and teachers, and share any anticipated concerns or needs with us.

During this meeting, we will also ask you to provide your preferred contact methods so the teacher can communicate with you effectively.

## Transition Between Learning Programs

A child's move to a new program within the center will depend on their age, developmental readiness, state requirements, and available space.

To support this transition, the current and future teachers will meet with the family to present a gradual adjustment plan to help the child become familiar with their new group and routines.

### Transition to Elementary School

Preparing children for the transition to elementary school is an essential part of our program. We carry out adaptation activities such as:

- Field trips to the local elementary school
- Creating “friendship murals”
- Special moments to celebrate the end of the school year

We will also provide information about local schools, what to expect from the change, and strategies to talk to your child about this new stage.

### Transition to Elementary School

Preparation for the transition to elementary school is a fundamental part of our program. We carry out adaptation activities such as:

- Field trips to the local elementary school
- Creation of friendship murals
- Special moments for the end of the school year

We will also provide information about local schools, what to expect from the change, and strategies to talk with your child about this new stage.

### Transition for Before/After School Care

School-age children who require it may continue receiving care before and after school at our center. The staff of Joy Learning Center will be responsible for:

- Receiving them back in the afternoon after school
- To access this service, the corresponding supplemental enrollment form must be completed and submitted to the center.

### Electronic Media

At Joy Learning Center, our daily routine does not include the regular use of electronic audiovisual media (television, videos, DVDs) or computers. However, occasionally, we may use non-commercial television programs as a pedagogical tool and a starting point for conversations and learning activities.

All electronic content will be evaluated beforehand to ensure that it is educational, non-violent, and of high quality. Our priority is to provide each child with positive experiences that contribute to their understanding of the world.

The use of electronic media will be offered only as an optional activity, always with an educational purpose and to support a specific developmental goal. In addition, it will be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per week per child.

### Multiculturalism

At Joy Learning Center, we consider multiculturalism an essential value in the education of all children, as it fosters important social objectives and promotes respect for all people and the environment in which we live.

Our approach seeks for each child to learn to value and celebrate cultural diversity, understanding that differences enrich our community and strengthen empathy and coexistence.

- To achieve this, we incorporate into our daily activities:
- Books that represent different cultures and realities
- Music from different traditions and regions of the world
- Games and dynamics that promote cooperation and inclusion
- Artistic activities and sensory experiences that reflect the diversity of life and our planet

We believe that, by actively and positively experiencing and learning about diversity, children develop respect for themselves, for others, and for the world around them.

### Celebrations

At Joy Learning Center, our holiday policy encourages a better understanding and greater respect for the different cultures, traditions, and beliefs of the children, their families, the staff, and the community.

We recognize that each family may or may not celebrate certain holidays for cultural, religious, or personal reasons. Therefore, we seek to:

- Respect and honor the customs and traditions of each family.
- Avoid imposing celebrations that may conflict with their beliefs.
- Offer opportunities for children to learn about different festivities and cultural practices in an inclusive and educational way.
- We encourage families to share their traditions with us so that we can incorporate them into activities that enrich multicultural learning and strengthen the sense of community and mutual respect.

## Rest Time

At Joy Learning Center, we recognize the importance of rest as part of the healthy development of children. Our goal is to ensure that each child has a calm, safe, and comfortable environment to relax and recharge during the day.

**Infants:** They sleep according to their own schedule and are always placed on their backs, following safe sleep guidelines. Caregivers and teachers directly observe infants, remain attentive to any sound, and perform physical checks every 10 minutes while they sleep.

**Children under 5 years old:** After lunch, children in this group have a quiet rest period. It is not mandatory for them to sleep, but quiet activities such as reading, coloring, or doing puzzles are provided if they do not wish to sleep.

**School-age children:** Although it is not mandatory, they are offered the opportunity for a rest period if they wish. Those who do not want to rest may participate in quiet games in a designated space for this purpose.

Our staff ensures that during the entire rest time a safe, supervised, and comfortable environment is maintained for the well-being of each child.

## Toilet Training

At Joy Learning Center, we believe that toilet training should be a positive, gradual, and pressure-free process in which we work together with families to support the child in this important stage of development.

The most successful process occurs when:

- The child shows signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions.
- Shows interest or curiosity in using the toilet.
- There is a consistent support plan between family and school.

Our commitment is to work with each family to ensure that toilet training is carried out respecting the rhythm, abilities, and needs of each child, as well as the expectations and concerns of parents or guardians.

### Additional practices at Joy Learning Center:

- We establish consistent routines, so children have regular opportunities to use the toilet.
- We use positive reinforcement, never punishment, to motivate progress.
- We respect each child's privacy and dignity throughout the process.
- We maintain constant communication with families to share progress and challenges.

## GUIDANCE

### General Procedure

Early Childhood Education Program is committed to the success of every student within a caring, responsive, and safe environment, free from discrimination, violence, and harassment. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to reach their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful connection with members of the school community.

Thoughtful leadership and proactive planning are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Consistent communication, clear rules, and involving children in problem-solving help them develop self-discipline. We encourage children to be fair, respectful of others and of property, and to understand the consequences of their actions.

### Discipline Policy

Our discipline policy is based on the philosophy of positive guidance, emphasizing the teaching of social skills, peaceful conflict resolution, and preventive adjustments instead of punishments. We promote an environment where children learn to self-regulate, understand the consequences of their actions, and develop empathy and responsibility.

### Prevention of Expulsions and Suspensions

Joy Learning Center complies with state regulations based on Senate Bill SB 147, which prohibits disciplinary expulsions and strictly limits out-of-center suspensions for young children, except in cases of significant physical risk.

## Alternative Support Strategies

When challenging behaviors arise, we apply constructive strategies such as:

- Consultations with early childhood mental health specialists.
- Training in trauma-informed and social-emotional practices.
- Early intervention through an individualized plan in collaboration with the family and other professionals.

### Procedure for Repetitive Aggressive Behaviors

If a child displays repeated or significant aggressive behaviors toward teachers or peers, and after discussion with the family there is no collaboration or supportive action at home, the following protocol will be followed:

- Detailed documentation of each incident and actions taken.
- Formal meeting with parents or guardians to review the support plan and establish clear commitments.
- Implementation of an intervention plan with specific strategies and regular follow-up.
- Joint review with outside specialists if the behavior persists and poses a safety risk.
- Temporary suspension as a last resort, only if the behavior poses an immediate risk to other children or staff, always in compliance with state regulations.

### Behavioral Issues

At Joy Learning Center, we guide children to treat each other and adults with self-control, respect, and kindness.

- Each student in the Early Childhood Education Program has the right to:
- Learn in a safe, inclusive, and friendly environment.
- Be treated with respect and dignity.

Receive help and support from caring and trained adults.

When a child exhibits aggressive verbal or physical behaviors, we intervene immediately to protect the safety of all children and staff. Our main approach to helping children with behavioral issues is to teach them, through examples and guidance, positive ways to resolve conflicts and interact appropriately.

When discipline is necessary, it is applied in a clear, consistent, and understandable way for the child, using positive guidance strategies, avoiding punitive punishments, and always respecting the child's dignity.



We have zero tolerance for bullying in any form. If at any time you have concerns about bullying or inappropriate behaviors, please contact the center's administration immediately.

### Physical Restraint

At Joy Learning Center, physical restraint is neither used nor permitted as a method of discipline. We strongly believe in positive guidance strategies, conflict prevention, and the teaching of social-emotional skills to address challenging behaviors.

In exceptional and rare situations, when it is necessary to ensure the immediate safety of the child, other children, or staff, a properly trained team member may physically restrain a child by holding them gently and in a controlled manner, only for the amount of time strictly necessary to stop or prevent harm.

#### In all cases:

- The intervention will be documented in detail.
- The family will be notified on the same day.
- The child's support plan will be reviewed to prevent future incidents.

Our goal is for any such measure to be temporary, safe, and non-traumatic, always ensuring the child's respect and dignity.

### Behavior Concerns Notification to Families

At Joy Learning Center, we believe that open and timely communication with families is essential to understanding and meeting the individual needs of each child.

If a child's behavior or circumstances raise concern, the first step will be to establish a dialogue with the parents or guardians to discuss the situation and jointly assess the child's needs within the context of our program.

We will work collaboratively with the family to implement support strategies and, if necessary, involve specialists or external resources to ensure the child's well-being.

In exceptional cases, a child's behavior may require assessing the possibility of an alternative care setting, always as a last resort and after all available support strategies have been exhausted. Some examples include:

The child poses danger to themselves or others.

Remaining in the program could be harmful or contrary to their well-being, as determined by a physician, psychologist, or social services staff.

The child's care imposes an excessive burden on resources and staff, affecting the program's ability to ensure their participation and success.

Any such decision will be made in compliance with NM PreK and ECECD regulations, ensuring the child's dignity and maintaining a focus on their overall development.

## ENROLLMENT AND FEES

### Important Notice

All payment and fee processing will be managed by the Director and Assistant Director during office hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This person will be responsible for:

- Collecting enrollment and other fees.
- Recording and tracking payments.
- Contacting families in case of any issues related to late or incomplete payments.

If you have any questions or concerns about payment or charge, please contact:

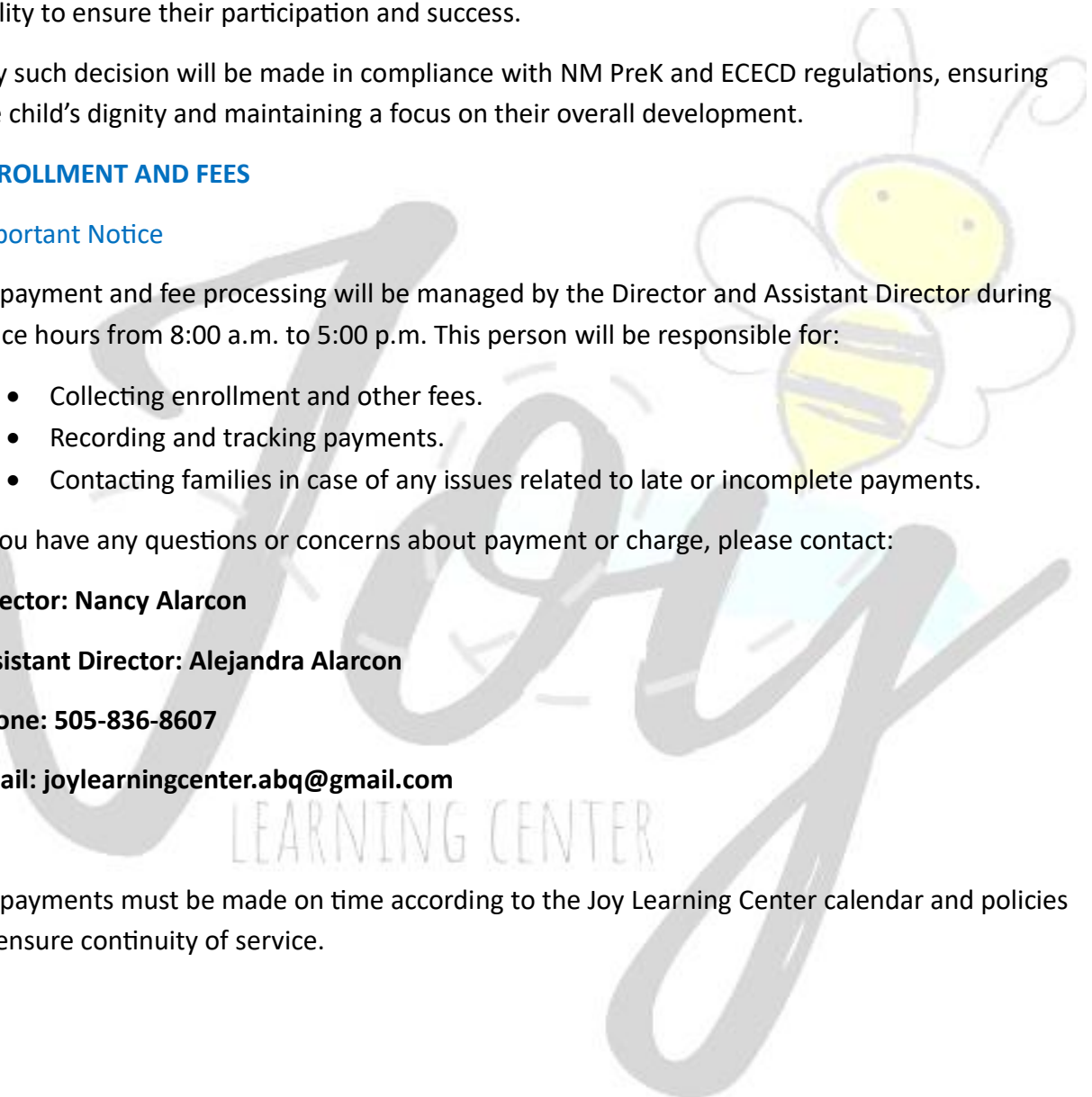
**Director: Nancy Alarcon**

**Assistant Director: Alejandra Alarcon**

**Phone: 505-836-8607**

**Email: [joylearningcenter.abq@gmail.com](mailto:joylearningcenter.abq@gmail.com)**

All payments must be made on time according to the Joy Learning Center calendar and policies to ensure continuity of service.





## Enrollment Fees

Each enrollment application will include a document with the price table and available schedules so families can select the care option that best meets their needs.

A payment agreement will also be provided, which must be signed by parents or guardians before services begin. This agreement will detail:

- The amounts and due dates for payments.
- The policies and charges for late payments.
- The conditions for service continuity in case of nonpayment.

This process ensures that all families have clear, written information about costs, schedules, and financial commitments before joining the program.

## Payment

Payment is always made in advance and without deductions for absences, holidays, or closures caused by weather conditions, power outages, or other situations beyond our control.

**Weekly payments: Due each Tuesday no later than 12:00 p.m.**

**Monthly payments: Due between the 1st and the 5th of each month.**

The payment amount will depend on the contracted modality (full day or half day) and the child's age, according to the price table included in the Enrollment Agreement.

All these details—fees, schedules, payment dates, and late payment charges—will be provided to families along with the signed payment agreement at the time of enrollment.

## Payment Methods

Several payment methods are available for families' convenience. We accept:

Cash

Check

Money order

Cashier's check

If a check is returned by the bank, the family must cover the bank's penalty. If this happens a second time, in addition to covering the penalty, checks will no longer be accepted, and the family will be required to make payments only by cash, money order, or cashier's check.

### Late Payment Fees

Late payments can cause serious operational issues for our programs; therefore, families will not be allowed to accumulate a debt greater than one week of tuition.

If payment is not received by the previously stated due date, a \$20 late fee will be added to your account and included in the next tuition bill.

After two occurrences of overdue payments, whether on a weekly or monthly plan—services will be suspended until the account is paid in full.

Late payments can significantly affect our programs, and the company cannot allow families to accumulate a debt equivalent to more than one week of tuition. Late payments will result in late payment fees. Failure to pay for childcare services will result in termination of care.

If payment is more than 60 business days overdue, we may attempt to collect it through small claims court or by sending the account to a third-party collection agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions, including court and attorney fees.

### Returned Check/Declined Transaction Fees

All returned checks or rejected debit or credit card transactions will incur a fee equal to the bank's charge. Two or more returned checks or declined transactions will result in your account being placed on a "cash only" status.

### Late Pick-Up Fees

Each child will have a specific schedule for before and/or after care services. Late pick-up outside the agreed-upon schedule is not part of the normal program and will only be considered in exceptional cases. A fee of \$10.00 per minute will be applied starting at the time indicated in the individual contract and must be paid upon arrival. Repeated late pick-ups may result in termination of childcare services.

### Other Fees

From time to time, there may be additional fees associated with special activities or field trips. These fees must be paid before the event, activity, or trip.

### Credits and non-credits

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the Enrollment Agreement Form. Payment for this schedule is required every week throughout the year, regardless of whether the child attends or not. This allows us to guarantee stable salaries for teachers and cover operating expenses. No credits are given for sick days, vacations, holidays, staff training

closures, closures due to bad weather, infectious diseases, public health emergencies, or weather- or environment-related emergencies.

In the event that any of these circumstances prevent us from operating, families will be required to pay 50% of tuition for a maximum period of two weeks. This payment ensures staff retention, covers operating expenses, and holds the child's spot until we can safely reopen.

A credit may be granted only in cases of serious illness or injury. This includes hospitalization of the child, extended absence due to a severe contagious illness, or serious injuries. To be considered for a credit, a written doctor's note will be required.

## **ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL**

### **Absence**

If your child will be absent or arrive after 11:00 a.m., please contact us at 505-836-8607 or email [joylearningcenter.abq@gmail.com](mailto:joylearningcenter.abq@gmail.com). We will be concerned for your child if we do not receive notice.

If a school-age child will not attend before- or after-school care, you must also notify us in advance.

### **Withdrawal**

The center requires a minimum of two (2) weeks' written notice when withdrawing a child. Failure to provide this notice will result in the loss of the deposit equivalent to two weeks' tuition.

If prior notice is not provided, no payment arrangements or refunds of tuition or fees already paid will be made.

### **Record Transfer**

When moving to the next program or a new classroom, your child's records are transferred internally.

If your child is moving to a new school, you will be asked to submit a written request with instructions on where the records should be sent.

## Closure Due to Extreme Weather

In the event of severe weather or other conditions (such as snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, power outages, fog, or lack of water) that prevent us from opening on time or at all, we will follow the guidance of Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). If APS determines delays or closures due to inclement weather, our center will follow the same decision.

If it becomes necessary to close early due to drastic weather changes while children are already at the center, families will be notified immediately to pick up their children as soon as possible. Communication will take place as soon as we receive official notice.

In the event of any delay, closure, or schedule modification for weather or safety reasons, families will be informed through our usual communication channels and by direct contact. Arrangements for early pick-up are the responsibility of the family.

## ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP

### General Procedure

The center is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The PreK schedule is from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with a 15-minute grace period for arrival and departure. Before- and after-school care only applies to families who have contracted for it. Pick-ups outside the agreed-upon schedule will incur a charge of \$10 per minute per child.

### Use of Cell Phones

Arrival and pick-up times are key opportunities to communicate with you about your child. To make the most of these moments and keep our focus on the children, we ask that you refrain from using your cell phone while inside the center.

### Authorized and Unauthorized Pick-Up

Your child will only be released to you or to individuals you have previously authorized as emergency contacts or authorized pick-up persons.

If you wish someone not on record to pick up your child, you must notify us in writing in advance. Without this written authorization, we will not release your child.

All individuals picking up a child must present photo identification. Please inform anyone picking up your child of this policy.

To protect your child, we will need a copy of any court custody agreement. Without this document, we cannot prevent either parent from picking up the child.

If a child is not picked up after closing and we cannot reach you, we will attempt to contact individuals on the authorized list. If after two hours we have not reached anyone, we will notify local child protective services.

### Right to Refuse Release

We may refuse to release a child if there is reasonable cause to suspect that the person picking them up is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in a way that could endanger the child.

In such cases, to protect the child, we may request that another adult listed as an emergency contact pick them up, or we may contact the police to prevent potential harm.

Any serious or high-risk situation will be immediately reported to Child Protective Services. Recurring situations of this nature may result in the permanent removal of the child from the program.

### PERSONAL BELONGINGS

#### What to Bring

**Infants:** Enough clean bottles for daily use, at least 6 diapers per day, and 2 changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.

**Toddlers:** Enough clean bottles (if applicable), at least 6 diapers per day, and 2 changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.

**Older Children:** At least 2 changes of clothes or more per day if potty training.

**Preschoolers:** At least 1 change of clothes, socks, and shoes.

**Kindergarten:** At least 1 change of clothes, socks, and shoes.

**After-School Care:** Homework books and appropriate play clothes.

Important:

Label all items brought from home (clothing, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, sheets, blankets, etc.) with the child's name to avoid confusion or loss.

The center is not responsible for damaged or lost items.

Sheets and dirty clothes will be sent home as needed to be washed and returned to the center.

### **Cubbies**

At the time of enrollment, each child will be assigned a personal cubby labeled with their name and photo. This space is exclusively for storing personal belongings and materials.

Families are encouraged to check their child's cubby daily to remove dirty clothes, schoolwork, notices, or any other items that need to be taken home.

### **Lost and Found**

You may look for lost items and place found items in the lost and found box located at the classroom entrance.

Please remember that the center is not responsible for lost or damaged personal items. We recommend labeling all your child's belongings with their name to reduce the risk of loss.

### **Toys from Home**

We ask that you do not allow your child to bring toys to the center unless they are part of a special "show and tell" activity. In such cases, toys must be age-appropriate and safe for all children. The center is not responsible for toys that are lost or damaged.

## **NUTRITION**

### **Food Brought from Home**

#### **[A] Do Not Bring Food:**

We prefer that children do not bring food from home to the center.

#### **[B] Exceptions and Conditions for Bringing Food:**

Food from home will only be allowed when requested by the teacher for a special activity or to share with the group. In these cases, families will be given specific instructions about the type of food to send.

#### **General Rules for Sent Food:**

Perishable food to be shared with other children must be store-bought and in its original packaging.



Baked goods may be homemade if they are well-cooked, do not require refrigeration, and are made with fresh ingredients. A list of ingredients must be included, and enough must be provided for all children.

All food must be labeled with the child's name, date, and type of food.

Sharing food that was not sent specifically for all children will not be permitted.

Leftovers will be discarded, except for non-perishable food or commercially packaged items in sealed wrappers.

Examples of Nutritious, Balanced Lunches:

Bean and cheese dip, tortilla chips, tropical fruit salad, broccoli, milk.

Chicken strips, whole wheat roll, orange slices, broccoli, milk.

Cheese quiche, cup of fresh fruit, broccoli, milk.

Whole wheat macaroni with tuna salad, green beans, carrots, milk.

#### Food Prepared for or at the Center

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared, and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and state food service requirements.

#### Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notice must state the appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life-threatening. Each child with a food allergy must have an emergency action plan determined by the family's physician.

#### Mealtimes

At mealtimes, the table is set with [disposables or real dishes and utensils], and food is served in small bowls from which children can serve themselves. Everyone sits together, and each child is encouraged to serve the food as it is passed around the table, promoting independence and good manners.

Weekly menus are posted for parents and caregivers to review. A caregiver trained in first aid for choking is present at all meals.

### Meal Schedule:

Breakfast: 8:30 a.m. (15-minute grace period; after that time breakfast will not be served to avoid disrupting the group's routine).

Morning Snack: 10:30 a.m.

Lunch: 12:30 p.m.

Afternoon Snack: 2:30 p.m.

Dinner: 5:00 p.m.

### Infant Feeding

Infants will be held while being bottle-fed until they can hold the bottle themselves. Babies will never be left alone with a propped bottle.

Infants will be fed "on demand" as much as possible (at least every 4 hours and generally no more than once per hour) and always by the same caregiver/teacher to promote safety and bonding.

Breastfeeding is supported by offering a comfortable, private space for mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may also be brought from home if kept frozen or refrigerated during transport.

All breast milk and formula will be returned home or discarded at the end of each day.

Previously frozen and thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours.

Frozen breast milk must be dated and stored in the freezer for no more than 6 months to maintain quality and safety.

All bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date of expression or preparation.

Labels must be permanent, so they are not erased during washing or handling.

The introduction of solid foods will only be done after consultation with the child's family.

### Children 24 Months or Older

No child should go for more than 4 hours without being given a meal or snack.

Children are encouraged to eat on their own to the extent of their abilities. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat a variety of foods.



Firm, round foods that pose a choking risk for children under 4 years old are not allowed. Examples include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thick layers of peanut butter, and hard candies.

### **School-Age Participants**

Children attending before- and after-school care will receive a light snack during each session, which does not constitute a full meal. If your child arrives before 8:30 a.m., breakfast may be provided within the designated serving time. After that time, breakfast will not be served to avoid disrupting the group's routine, so you must ensure your child eats breakfast before arriving.

Likewise, if your child attends in the afternoon and will not be eating lunch at the center (12:30 p.m.), you must provide an appropriate lunch from home. Afternoon snack is served at 3:00 p.m., and dinner is served at 5:00 p.m.

## **HEALTH**

### **Immunizations**

All children are required to have up-to-date immunizations in accordance with the schedule recommended by the U.S. Department of Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics ([www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)). Each [designated month], we review updates issued by the Department of Public Health and the American Academy of Pediatrics to ensure compliance with the current schedule.

We comply with state regulations that allow exemptions for medical or religious reasons; however, unvaccinated children may be temporarily excluded from the center in the event of outbreaks of preventable diseases, as directed by the Department of Public Health.

In addition, all staff, caregivers, and teachers must be up to date on adult immunizations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### **Physical Examination Certificate**

A physical examination is required in accordance with the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). You must submit a copy of your child's physical examination within [30] days of starting the program. Families are responsible for ensuring that physical examinations are kept up to date and for providing the program with a copy of the health evaluation results.

## Illness

We understand it can be difficult for a family member to leave work early or take time off, but to protect other children, sick children should not be brought to the center. The center reserves the right to refuse admission to a child who appears to be ill. If your child displays any of the following symptoms, we will call you and request that you pick up your child. This list is not exhaustive. We will keep the child comfortable, but they must be excluded from all activities until you arrive:

- An illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- An illness that requires more care than we can provide.
- An illness that can be spread to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher orally, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – bloody or mucus-filled stools, or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper, underwear, or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody vomit, or vomiting more than twice in the past 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a reportable communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after starting treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after starting treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment is completed and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after starting treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions are dry and crusted.
- Whooping cough, until 5 days after starting antibiotic treatment.
- Hepatitis A, until one week after immune globulin administration.
- Tuberculosis, until a healthcare professional confirms the child is no longer contagious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the onset of rash.
- Mumps, until 5 days after the onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after the onset of rash.

When a physician or healthcare professional provides written instructions that the child should be separated from other children.

- Children who have been ill may return when:
- They have been free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have received antibiotics for at least 24 hours.
- They are able to comfortably participate in their usual activities.
- They no longer have open or oozing skin conditions or excessive drooling (not related to teething), unless:
- The child's doctor provides a written note stating the condition is not contagious, and
- The affected areas can be covered with a bandage that prevents leakage or drainage.

If a child has a reportable communicable disease, a doctor's note is required stating the child is no longer contagious and may return to our center.

### Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to inform us of children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies must provide a written letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments, and necessary care. A list of children's allergies will be posted in the main area and in the kitchen. Staff are trained to be familiar with each child's condition and to check the list to avoid possible exposure to known allergens.

### Medications

**(A)** Our center does not administer prescription or over-the-counter medications to children unless the requirements outlined in this policy are strictly followed.

#### **(B)** Medication Delivery and Documentation

All medications must be handed directly to a staff member along with specific written administration instructions. Medications must never be left in a child's cubby or given to the child to self-administer. Staff will log on to the medication received, along with the instructions, and administer it as directed.

**Prescription Medications:** Require a signed note from the family and a written order from the child's physician. The original prescription label meets this requirement if it includes the child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the physician's name and phone number. Medication must be in its original container. It is recommended to request the pharmacy provides the prescription in two labeled bottles, one for home and one for the center. Instructions must clearly state the dosage and administration times.

Over-the-Counter Medications: Require written authorization and instructions signed by the child's primary care physician. This authorization must include the child's name, dosage, current date, and frequency. All medications must be in their original containers. Over-the-counter medications will not be administered for more than three (3) consecutive days unless otherwise directed by the physician.

### **(C) Topical Ointments, Sunscreen, and Insect Repellent**

Over-the-counter topical products, such as diaper cream, teething gel, sunscreen, and insect repellent, require a signed note from the family and/or physician specifying the frequency, dosage, and authorization validity period (maximum 12 months).

**Sunscreen:** The center will apply sunscreen provided by the family before outdoor activities, if there is a current authorization on file. It is recommended that sunscreen be labeled with the child's name.

**Insect Repellent:** Will only be applied when exposure to areas with a high insect presence is expected, following the frequency and instructions authorized by the family and/or physician. The product must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name.

### **Communicable Diseases**

When an enrolled child or a center employee has, or is suspected of having, a reportable communicable disease, we are legally required to notify the Health Board or the Department of Public Health. We will notify families about the exposure so that children can receive preventive treatment.

#### **Some reportable communicable diseases include:**

- Bacterial meningitis
- Botulism
- Chickenpox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspected cases)
- Meningococcal infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspected cases)
- Rabies (human cases only)
- Rubella, congenital and non-congenital (including suspected cases)

- Tetanus (including suspected cases)
- H1N1 virus
- Any outbreak or cluster of illnesses
- Tuberculosis

## **SAFETY**

### **Clothing**

Dress your child in practical clothing that allows freedom of movement and is appropriate for weather conditions. Children will participate in a variety of activities, such as painting, outdoor play, sand play, and other sensory activities, as weather permits. Our playground is used as an extension of the center and is part of the daily outdoor program whenever conditions allow.

An important safety consideration is that certain clothing items can become caught while climbing or sliding, creating a risk of strangulation or other serious injury. For this reason, all drawstrings or cords on clothing must be removed as a precaution.

Additionally, sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for safe walking and may limit participation in some activities. Closed-toe, comfortable, and secure footwear is recommended.

### **PreK Uniform**

Families of children enrolled in the PreK program will be provided with detailed information about the required uniform for the school year. If a child does not arrive in the appropriate uniform, the family must notify the center in advance with the reason. If no notice is given, the child may not remain at the center until the proper uniform is provided.

### **Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play**

#### **Outdoor play will be suspended if:**

The outdoor temperature is above 82 °F (27.8 °C) or below 68 °F (20 °C) — based on the comfortable temperature range required in childcare settings under the New Mexico Administrative Code.

The air quality index (AQI) reaches a rating of “unhealthy” or worse (e.g., AQI 101 or higher), as exposure could pose health risks to children. This standard reflects recommendations from environmental and public health agencies, though no exact limit is set by New Mexico regulations. References such as the EPA’s air quality index guidelines are recommended.



## Water Play in Common Areas

- Unsupervised water play is prohibited.
- Children under active supervision may participate in water activities.
- Strict precautions are taken to minimize the risk of waterborne illnesses, such as:

Cleaning and disinfecting water play containers or areas daily with a bleach solution (recommended mix: 1 cup bleach to 9 cups water), especially after use — per New Mexico Department of Health (NM DOH) guidance.

Preventing the spread of waterborne diseases (e.g., *Cryptosporidium*) by ensuring children do not swim or play in water if they have had recent diarrhea, following NM DOH recommendations.

Promoting thorough handwashing before and after water play for both children and staff; diaper changes must be made in a separate area, never beside the water play area.

Using disposable or properly washed and disinfected clothes after each use, especially if they came into contact with water.

## Injuries

Safety is a top priority in childcare; therefore, daily safety inspections are conducted inside and outside the center to prevent injuries. A trained caregiver will administer first aid if a child suffers a minor injury (such as a scraped knee). You will receive an incident report describing what happened and the actions taken. If the injury results in swelling or requires medical attention, we will contact you immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a state-approved first aid kit.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be transported to the hospital by ambulance while we attempt to contact you or an emergency contact.

## Biting

Biting is a normal developmental stage common among infants and toddlers, and sometimes among preschoolers. Most young children will try it at least once.

When it occurs, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten, and to help the child who bit learn more appropriate behavior. Our approach focuses not on punishment, but on understanding the specific reasons for the biting behavior.

Notes will be sent to both the family of the child who was bitten and the family of the child who bit. We will work with each family to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

## **Respectful Behavior**

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all families. Hostility and aggressive behavior will not be tolerated. If such behavior occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your child from our center.

## **Smoking**

Secondhand smoke is especially harmful to the developing bodies of infants and young children; therefore, smoking is not permitted at any time in any indoor or outdoor areas of the center, or in vehicles used by the center. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on center premises.

## **Prohibited Substances**

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on center premises. The possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is also prohibited.

Any adult who appears intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, or handling mind-altering substances must leave the center immediately.

## **Dangerous Weapons**

A dangerous weapon is defined as a firearm, knife, pocketknife, or any object that, by its manner or intended use, can cause bodily harm. Families, children, staff, or guests (except law enforcement officers) in possession of dangerous weapons are not allowed on center premises.

In cases involving the clear use of a firearm or any other weapon on our premises, police will be called, and the individuals involved will be required to leave immediately. This policy applies to both visible and concealed weapons.

## **Child Custody**

Without a court document stating otherwise, parents or legal guardians have equal custody rights. We are legally required to honor the wishes of the custodial parent/guardian based on the most recent certified court order, active restraining order, or court-determined visitation schedule.

We will not accept responsibility for determining which parent or guardian has legal custody without legal documentation.

## Suspected Child Abuse

We are legally required to report all observations of suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect that a child is suffering abuse or neglect, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, regardless of where the abuse may have occurred. The child protective services agency will determine the appropriate actions and may investigate. At that point, it becomes the agency's role to determine whether the reports are valid and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will fully cooperate with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality regarding any report of child abuse or neglect.

## EMERGENCIES

### Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 30 minutes and it has been confirmed that they are not inside the center, the family and the appropriate authorities (police) will be notified.

### Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, clearly visible evacuation maps, and an up-to-date evacuation plan.

The evacuation plan is reviewed with children and staff monthly, and evacuation drills are conducted every month to ensure everyone knows the exit routes and procedures to follow in case of an emergency.

These drills include activating the alarms and practicing an orderly evacuation to designated safety areas to ensure a quick and safe response in any real situation.

### Emergency Transfers

If your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, and it is not possible to contact another authorized person, and transportation is deemed essential, an ambulance will be called. The child will be accompanied by qualified individuals who will remain with them until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

### Emergency Numbers

It is essential that families keep their contact and emergency numbers up to date. We ask that, whenever possible, you answer calls from the center. We understand that in many cases parents



or guardians are working, but we assure you that we will only contact you for important or urgent matters, so it is crucial to answer or return the call as soon as possible.

