

Altadena Children's Center

# Parent Handbook



## Infant/Toddler Preschool

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Altadena Children's Center

# PARENT HANDBOOK

Hello!

We would like to welcome you to the “family” of ACC. We began in 1982 as a preschool child care program founded by Altadena Baptist Church. In 1991 ACC became a separate non-profit corporation and a United Way agency. Recognizing a growing need for families, in the fall of 2002 ACC began providing care for infants and toddlers. ACC currently serves a total of over 60 children and families!

Although our program has grown in size and scope over the years, we have held fast to our original philosophy and goals. We continue to strive to provide high quality child care for children, to work with parents to successfully meet the needs of their children and to ensure a supportive work environment for the teachers who care for the children in our programs.

In this handbook we hope you will find the information you need to understand the operations of our programs. **PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE HANDBOOK CAREFULLY.**

We are committed to working together with you to create a community of children and families who work and play, laugh and cry together! Join us!

Sincerely,

Toni Boucher  
Executive Director

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

PHILOSOPHY

ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Children Served

Initial Interview

Waiting List

Admission Agreement

Children's and Parent's Rights

Grounds for Dismissal

Terms of Payment

Tuition Assistance

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Philosophy

Curriculum

Discipline

Daily Routines

Groupings and Ratios

Field Trips

SPECIFIC PROGRAM DETAILS

TEACHERS

PARENTS

Parent Hours

COMMUNICATION

HEALTH

Illness

Medications

IMS Plan (Incidental Medical Services)

HEALTHY EATING

SAFETY

Training

Accidents

Disaster Preparedness

DAY TO DAY DETAILS

Arrival Time

Sign In and Sign Out

Release of a Child

Individuals Authorized To Pick Up Child

Clothing

Toys From Home

Cubbies

Naptime

Birthdays

THE FIRST FEW DAYS

Medical Reporting Requirements

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

ACC is committed to strengthening families by providing the highest quality child care and education for children; serving families of varied economic levels and cultural backgrounds in an atmosphere that celebrates diversity.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The programs of ALTADENA CHILDREN'S CENTER are a joint responsibility of the staff and the Board of Directors. Both components work together to create quality child care services.

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall planning and implementation of appropriate programs for the children, staff training and development, parent involvement and community outreach of the Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs and facilitates the day to day operation of these programs. Each classroom at the Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs has a Lead Teacher who manages the classroom in terms of children, curriculum and other teaching staff.

The Board of Directors is the body that governs the operations of all the programs, including setting policy, establishing the budget and doing long term planning. The volunteer membership of this Board is composed of parents and other interested community members. Members are selected by a Nominating Committee who recruit individuals for Board consideration. Parent participation on the Board is solicited and highly valued.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS**

ACC is an agency that provides quality early care and education for children from 2 months to prekindergarten. The Infant/Toddler program serves children from 2 months to 24 months. The Preschool program serves children from 1 ½ years old to PreKindergarten, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. This program is licensed by the State of California, Department of Social Services.

## PHILOSOPHY

At the heart of ACC is a philosophy that guides and directs its structures, systems and operations. This philosophy is woven of separate strands into a comprehensive whole. The separate strands include program planning that addresses the needs of “*whole child development*” within the framework of “*developmentally appropriate educational practices*” with an “*anti-bias*” perspective. “*Family centered relationships*” and “*competent and caring teachers*” are critical parts of the whole.

“*Whole Child Development*” – The curriculum – activities and experiences – that are provided for the children are based on an understanding that there are specific areas of growth and development within the child including social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual/moral. These areas are not separate from one another, but interactive. It is our belief that tremendous growth occurs in children in all of the above areas and it is our job to provide an enriching environment that nurtures this growth. (Please see PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN – Philosophy – for further clarification of this concept.)

“*Developmentally Appropriate Educational Practices*” – this approach to education is based on the understanding that children progress through stages of development in the different areas of growth. For example, in physical growth we know that children roll over and sit up before they crawl and crawl before they walk (usually!). Likewise, in social growth children play alone first (parallel play) before they begin to play with others (cooperative play). In general, there are predictable patterns to growth. The rate at which individual children progress through the stages varies from child to child. Even within the same child there are variations of growth. A child may be intellectually precocious, yet socially delayed. This information is important as teachers plan curriculum, set up classrooms and design routines.

Our understanding of the developmental growth of children is largely based on the work of Jean Piaget who studied how children acquire knowledge, Erik Erikson who studied the social dimension of human growth, Stanley Greenspan who charted the milestones of emotional development and Lawrence Kohlberg who marked the stages of moral growth. We are indebted to these theorists as we observe children and plan environments that help all the children to reach their potential.

We seek to understand not just typical development for each and stage, but the unique development of each child. With this in mind, we do a developmental assessment called Desired Results Developmental Profile on each child in the Infant/Toddler and Preschool twice a year. This lets us know the range of each child's development relative to their peer group. We use this understanding of their needs and strengths to guide us in our curriculum planning and to monitor their ongoing development. We also want to make sure that we are aware of any gaps in their development so that in consultation with families we can seek outside professional guidance if necessary and work with families to implement any plans created. At the time we do these assessments, we hold a Parent/Teacher conference to share our observations and to plan for each child.

*“Anti-bias” Perspective* – The children we are caring for are growing up into a society that is becoming increasingly more diverse. They need specific tools to become effective citizens of this global society. An “anti-bias” perspective begins with a recognition and celebration of the uniqueness of each child. It honors the children in terms of their color, likes and dislikes, abilities, ethnic heritage, etc. In addition, children learn to appreciate the differences in others while at the same time learning about the common ties the bind us as human beings. Issues of justice come into play as children work on questions of “fairness” in their own classrooms.

We are grateful to Pacific Oaks College for their development of this theory and its application in the classroom.

*“Family Centered Relationships”* – Effective communication and active involvement of families are central to building family centered relationships. From our first interactions with our families, we want to start creating a healthy partnership. This partnership is grounded in effective communication. We have many different ways of communicating with our families including verbal contact each day, daily notes on each child, weekly curriculum newsletters, weekly program newsletters, email updates and website updates. This communication is a two way street as we strive to share information about your child while he or she is in our care and to listen carefully to your questions, concerns, and ideas. In addition, our work with the children in our programs is not complete without the active participation of the parents. The most recent research about children's success in education seems to indicate that the most accurate predictor of academic success is the level of involvement of a child's parents. We want to help you begin or continue that involvement! While your participation definitely enhances your child's experiences, it also enriches the quality of programs we can offer. Parents have many talents and skills to bring to our program. With the support of parents we can offer special activities for children, raise funds for new equipment and learn about interesting topics! But, probably the most important reason for the involvement of parents in our programs is to create a sense of community for the children and adults. A sense of belonging is important to the well-being of kids and grownups! (Look for specific ways to be involved in the section called THE PARENTS.)

*“Competent and Caring Teachers”* – If parent involvement is key to a child’s success in school, a well-trained teaching staff is essential to the success of a child care program. The greatest predictor of a quality child care program is a quality teaching staff. We understand this and work hard to recruit and retain competent and caring teachers. The work of a child care teacher is hard. It requires a vast knowledge of children and families, skills and techniques for managing a classroom and, even, plumbing expertise! The work is hard, yet the rewards are great. Teachers thrive on being a part of the growth of a child. Yet teachers in child care are undervalued and underpaid. It is a part of the work of Altadena Christian Children’s Center to support teachers in their struggle to be recognized as the professionals they are and to encourage a nationwide campaign to increase the status and salaries of child care workers.

## **ADMISSIONS POLICIES**

**CHILDREN SERVED** – Children from the ages of 2 months to prekindergarten age who exhibit readiness for group child care may be enrolled. Children need not be toilet-trained to be admitted. Enrollment is open to all children within this age range without discrimination in regard to sex, race, color, ability, national and /or ethnic origin, provided the child will benefit from the program offered. Children with special needs will find a welcoming environment for them and their family!

**INITIAL INTERVIEW** – An initial interview is required in order to determine whether the Center will be able to meet the particular needs of the family and the child. The interview is also a good opportunity for the parent to visit the Center and ask any questions of the staff. The initial interview does not guarantee the Center will be able to enroll a child, because that depends on available space and the number of persons on the waiting lists. At this first meeting, the parents will receive a brochure about the program. If the parents are interested in enrollment and there is space available, the parents will receive all the necessary forms needed to apply to enroll the child in the Center, and a copy of the Admissions Agreement, Payment Agreement and Parent Handbook.

**WAITING LIST** – If enrollment at the Center is full, children will be placed on a waiting list in chronological order from the time the initial contact with ACCC is made. Generally this order is followed, although the Center reserves the right to “balance” the groups in terms of gender, characteristics of development, special needs, etc. so that all children’s needs can be met.

**ADMISSION AGREEMENT** – Every parent must complete and sign the Admission Agreement, Payment Agreement and all attached enrollment forms, prior to the child’s enrollment. All information submitted on the Agreements and attached enrollment forms must be updated on an annual basis.

**CHILDREN’S AND PARENTS’ RIGHTS** – Included with the enrollment forms that parents fill out is a statement of the rights of children and parents which include the right to be accorded dignity in personal relationships and to be provided a safe and healthy environment.

#### **FOUNDATIONS FOR DISMISSAL**

All of the conditions regarding dismissal are listed in the ACC Admission Agreement.

**TERMS OF PAYMENT** – The Admissions Agreement and Payment Agreement set forth the parents’ obligations to make payments to the Center. All tuition charges and penalties are explained therein.

**TUITION ASSISTANCE** – If funds are available, the Center offers tuition assistance for children based on financial need. To apply for a scholarship, the parent should contact the Center Director and complete all necessary forms. The scholarship committee of the Board of Directors makes the scholarship award decisions. Additional funding may be available to qualified families through public subsidies. Please ask the Center Director for Further information.

#### **PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN**

**PHILOSOPHY** – As we understand the growth and development of the “whole child,” the separate, yet interactive areas of development are the focus of our work with your child. Specifically, what follows is a description of our understanding of how and what children are learning in each of the areas and how we create a curriculum that meets the needs of children in those areas.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT** – Children from infancy to preschool are really learning about how to be “social.” They are learning about appropriate social expectations, limits and boundaries. They are learning about themselves in relation to other individual children and to a group. Learning to share, to wait for a turn, to make friends, to negotiate conflict, to assert their own needs and respect the rights of others area all a part of the major tasks of these years. The teacher’s role in this area is to be available to children to help facilitate this learning by modeling the appropriate social behaviors, by setting clear limits, by positively reinforcing appropriate behaviors and by helping children to see the consequences of inappropriate social behaviors. Discipline is seen as part of the curriculum in fostering children’s social development. (Please see the section on **DISCIPLINE** for further information.) Classroom environments and games are created to help encourage positive social interactions.

**EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT** – In the early years children still tend to react to their emotions in a physical way – to withdraw, to throw a tantrum, to scream. It is hard for them to understand the complex feelings they are having. Our emphasis with children is to help identify the feelings for them, “It seems like you are feeling sad. Can you tell me what is making you feel sad?” Then to affirm the feeling, “It’s okay to be sad when you are missing your mommy.” And then, when the child is ready to appropriately channel the feeling, “Would you like to write a note to your mommy?” It’s important that children learn about the variety of emotions they experience and ways to manage the feelings. Stories are read that help children to learn these concepts and activities are planned that guide children toward greater understandings in this area.

The nurturing of the child’s self-esteem is seen as an attempt to help children develop positive feelings about themselves. The teachers use the children’s names in songs, display their art on the walls, take their ideas seriously, and, in general, communicate to the children that they are important and of great value.

Emotional safety and security are also important to the child’s well-being. The children must know that their needs will be met, that the teachers will take care of them, that they can trust the teachers to be there for them in the joys and struggles of the day.

**PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT** – Incredible physical maturation occurs in children from the infancy to prekindergarten. Children go from toddlers with an unsteady gait to confident runners, jumpers and bike riders! Our program seeks to promote this growth by providing the time, space and equipment to challenge children to new levels of skills. This occurs in large motor development – the big muscles of the body, and in small motor development – the finer muscles in the hands. Preschool children work with playdough so that the muscles in their hands will be developed for later pencil-holding tasks.

**INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT** – We believe, based on the studies of Piaget and our own observations, that children are “active learners.” That is, they need to act on their environment with their senses and motor abilities in order to create meaning and knowledge. Infants and toddlers seek knowledge through their senses and motor actions. The thinking of preschool children can be characterized in a few ways. 1. They are egocentric. They cannot intellectually take another person’s point of view. 2. They do not think logically. That is why the line between fantasy and reality is so thin for these children. 3. Although they can memorize a great deal, they can only create real understandings from a “hands-on” learning experience. For example, although they can memorize a “5” on a page, understanding about “fiveness” requires actual manipulation of 5 objects. A general principle that applies to Piaget’s theory is that children actively discover their own knowledge through their play and interaction with the people and things around them. Children are not empty vessels into which adult knowledge is poured. They think very differently than adults. Our classrooms reflect this belief with learning centers that encourage the children to create and invent their own understandings. (See CURRICULUM for further information.)

## CURRICULUM

In our programs for children, the curriculum is the classroom environment, the equipment and material and the teaching staff. The curriculum is based on an understanding of the unique developmental stage of each child and the subsequent implications for appropriate learning experiences. At the Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs we use a specific curriculum called The Creative Curriculum for Infants/Toddlers and Twos and The Creative Curriculum for Preschool. This research based curriculum has a framework for planning a high quality learning environment for young children. This framework includes *How Children Develop and Learn* – characteristics of development, *The Learning Environment* – the structure of the classroom including designated learning centers and daily schedules, *What Children Learn* – the knowledge and skills essential for children to learn in all content areas: literacy, math, science, social studies, the fine arts, and technology, *The Teacher's Role* – keeping the curriculum goals and objectives in mind when they plan for and set up the classroom, and *The Family's Role* – participating in a healthy partnership with the teacher to support and extend the learning experience for the child.

Monthly, the teachers plan together to create a focus of study for the month. This focus is based on the interests of the children or particular events occurring such as seasonal changes, the birth of a baby, etc. The various curriculum areas such as art, science, math, music and movement, dramatic play, block construction, literacy, are all integrated to help deepen the understanding of the child as they explore the focus. In addition, teachers observe children to see what new skills and interests are arising that need to be incorporated in to the curriculum. In this way an “emergent” curriculum evolves that responds to the child’s development and explorations. Parents are invited to share their observations of their child’s emerging interests and skills so that can also be incorporated into the curriculum planning.

## GUIDING CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOR

All behavior is communication. This is an important starting point for helping to guide the social and emotional development of young children. When we think of helping children to learn appropriate social behaviors, we often call this Discipline. This word is sometimes used as a substitute for punishment and that is not how we view this important social learning for children. Rather, as adults we want to understand what needs children are expressing through their behaviors and then help them understand their needs and to find effective ways to express those needs.

We use a specific approach to guiding children’s behavior that is called Conscious Discipline.

“Conscious Discipline ® is a comprehensive classroom management program and a social-emotional curriculum. It is based on current brain research, child development information, and developmentally appropriate practices. Conscious Discipline® has been specifically designed to make changes in the lives of adults first. The adults, in turn, change the lives of children.

It utilizes everyday events rather than an external curriculum, and addresses the adult's emotional intelligence as well as the child's. Conscious Discipline empowers adults to consciously respond to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children. With Conscious Discipline, teachers, children and the entire school culture can become a safe haven of cooperation, constructive problem solving and academic success.

Conscious Discipline is a brain state model that addresses internal state first, using a neurodevelopmental brain model, so adults and children may learn to self-regulate effectively.

There are seven skills that are taught as a part of Conscious Discipline; Composure, Encouragement, Assertiveness, Choices, Empathy, Positive Intent and Consequences. These skills enable the adults to turn problems into opportunities for life lessons.

There are classroom structures and loving rituals that help to create the School Family. These create a positive school climate by eliminating rewards and punishments in favor of the safety, connection and problem-solving of a School Family.”

For more information, you can go to their website, *consciousdiscipline.com*.

## DAILY ROUTINES

There is a predictable routine to everyday. The components are the same in all the programs, yet the order and length of time of each component varies from group to group depending on the ages of the children. Following are the components:

**ACTIVITY CHOICES** – Children choose from teacher-planned and child-initiated activities in the different learning centers in the classrooms including art, science, literacy, math, music, dramatic play, block and construction, and technology.

**GROUP GATHERINGS** – Children and teachers gather to sing songs, read stories, have discussions and play games.

**SNACK TIME** – Breakfast in the morning and a healthy snack after nap.

**LUNCH TIME** – A variety of healthy foods are served for lunch.

**OUTDOOR TIME** – All the children play outside everyday. The outdoor space is seen as a learning environment and equipment and materials are varied to provide new experiences for the children.

**NAP/REST TIME** – All the infant/toddler and preschool children have naptime. Teachers play quiet music and rub backs to create a calm atmosphere for resting.

## **GROUPINGS AND RATIOS**

Each child is assigned to a small group in the infant/toddler and preschool program. The children are placed in these groups according to their developmental needs and abilities, rather than by age alone. At the school age programs children are in same age and stage groups and some mixed age groupings to facilitate multi-age learning experiences. Within these groupings there are certain teacher to child ratios. The ratios are important because they relate directly to the quality of care.

Infant and Toddler - 1 teacher to 4 children, maximum group size of 8

Green Group (1 ½ to 2 ½ year olds) – 1 teacher to 4 children, maximum group size of 8

Rainbow Group (2 ½ to 3 ½ year olds)- 1 teacher to 7 children, maximum group size of 21

Red & Blue Group (prekinders – 4 to 5) – 1 teacher, maximum group size of 12

## **FIELD TRIPS**

In order to extend the learning experiences of the children, we will sometimes take field trips out into the community. The Infants and Toddlers only take walking or buggy ride field trips around the block, occasionally visiting some of our community helpers like the post office. The Preschool children venture out about once a month, taking vehicle trips to museums, the zoo, etc. These trips are taken in a school van and/or vehicles driven by parents. Car seats are always used. Families may drive on a field trip if they have the level of car insurance mandated by our insurance company. Whenever we take a field trip, we want to have a much lower ratio of adult to child to ensure everyone's safety. On walking trips, the regular ratios will apply. On vehicle trips for the Preschool children, we would like a 1:3 ratio. Families must sign permission slips for their child's participation in each of these trips.

## **SPECIFIC PROGRAM DETAILS**

At Back-to-School Night every Fall a folder with specific information regarding your child's program will be distributed. This will include a daily schedule and specific classroom routines. Details about the summer programs of HAPPY TRAILS (preschool) will be distributed in the Spring.

## **TEACHERS**

Our program is staffed by caring people who have a rich educational and experiential background in the development of children. They have been carefully selected because of their sensitivity to the needs of children and families. Although the State requires that Lead Teachers have a minimum of 12 units in Early Childhood Education, we request that Lead Teachers have a Bachelor's Degree in ECE or be working toward that goal, with a minimum of a Children's Center Permit. Assistant Teachers need to have a

minimum of 12 units in ECE. We prefer that teachers have some prior work experience with children. Additionally staff are encouraged to continue their training by attending in-services held on site, by attending conferences in the community, by taking classes and by observing at other programs.

All staff members are credentialed through the State of California, Commission on Teacher Credentialing with a Child Development Permit. The level of credential is based on education and years of experience and ranges from Program Director to Classroom Aide. The credentials require a 5 year renewal with 105 professional development hours completed during that time.

In the absence of one of the “regular” members of the teaching staff, a substitute will be called in. We maintain a regular roster of subs who receive an orientation and training about our program. We try to keep you informed about any teacher changes due to illness or vacation and almost always have at least one “regular” teacher in the classroom

In addition, we try to recruit volunteers from the local colleges to work in our programs. These volunteers help us to lower our adult to child ratio and bring special talents and skills that help to enrich our program.

## **PARENTS**

Parents are encouraged to take an active advisory role in the operations of the Center. Our child care programs are cooperative ventures between the staff and the parents. We provide our professional experience as teachers and you provide your special knowledge of your particular child. In this way, we hope to create a program that is designed to meet the individual needs of each family.

**PARENT HOURS** – Because we feel strongly about the role of the parent in a child’s educational experience, we require that each family in the infant/toddler and preschool participate at least 3 hours per month in the program. Understanding the time constraints on all of us, we try to be flexible about how you can invest your hours. Here are some options:

**PARENT ADVISORY LEAGUE** – this group meets monthly to advise the Director on the needs of the parents and to plan and coordinate programs for parents. Officers are elected in the Fall. The three areas of work for this group include parent engagement, community building and fundraising.

**ROOM PARENTS** – Individuals volunteer to assist the classroom teacher and facilitate the involvement of other parents in the room.

**PARENTS AS LEARNERS** – About once a month there is an opportunity for you to learn about a parenting topic you are interested in. Speakers from the community help us to understand ourselves and our children better. Parenting classes provided by community organizations are held at least once a year.

**FUNDRAISING** – We are always in need of extra funds to purchase the equipment we need to improve and maintain the quality of our programs. Parents are instrumental in this area as we sell goods and plan events to raise money! **SCRIP** is an on-going fundraising program at our Center. Shopping at the grocery store help raise money for **ACC**! Ask the office staff for more information.

**CREATIVE PARENT PARTICIPATION** – Here's where we can use your talents and skills! Each year you will fill out a survey telling us of your strengths and interests. We will find a need in our program that matches your abilities. In this way our program is enriched and, hopefully you feel that your time has been well spent.

**CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION** – Working in the classroom, attending field trips, taking care of a classroom pet – these are all other ways to earn your hours each month!

**ACC BOARD OF DIRECTORS** – This Board sets policy and oversees the operations of **ACC**. Parents are vital to the decision making of this Board. Consider your involvement here. You are welcome to join the whole Board or participate on one of the committees – Buildings and Grounds, Finance, Personnel, Program Planning, Resource Development.

Now, how do we know if you have worked your hours for the month? In each program there is a form with your child's name on it. Please look for it each month and sign in for the number of hours you worked and the specific project you worked on. Ask your child's teacher for the exact location of this in your child's classroom. If you are not able to fulfill your hours, you will be asked to pay a nominal fee of \$5.00 per hour. This money goes into the Parent Advisory League treasury to be used to purchase materials for the children.

**YOU ARE NEEDED!**

## **COMMUNICATION**

Effective communication is essential to the operations of a quality child care program. We are always working to find better ways to let you know what is happening in your child's program. Also, it is important to us that you find successful methods to let us know about your concerns, questions, ideas and dreams. With this in mind, following are our current systems for communication.

**DAILY** – Each morning and afternoon we try to talk with each family to share a few tidbits of the day. It helps us if you let us know of anything significant that has occurred that might impact your child's day. Sleepless nights, special trips? Please let us know. In addition to the verbal feedback, the teachers in the infant/toddler and preschool program write "Daily Notes" on each child so that you will get a small glimpse of your child's

day. These notes are kept in the “Sign-In” books or on clipboards. You are invited to leave notes for the teachers on those notes. Phone calls are welcome as well. In both the preschool and school age programs teachers write a daily report of the group activities. This is called “Our Day.” Please look for it on or near the Parent Bulletin Board.

**WEEKLY** – Check the Parent Bulletin Boards and the Easel at the entrance to the infant/toddler and preschool for the events and information of the week. Each week we will be sending home information about the specific activities and experiences in your child’s classroom that week. In addition, look for weekly flyers that will keep you informed about developmental issues, health and safety concerns, legislation affecting children and families, etc. A weekly email called This Week at ACC will be sent to you to keep you informed about current happenings.

**ANNUALLY** – At least once a year parents are asked to complete a survey to evaluate the quality of the services our program are providing. Your input on this is critical as we continue to work toward our goals.

**CONFERENCES** – Twice a year, you will have a formal meeting with your child’s teacher to discuss your child’s growth and development. We are always open throughout the year to meet with you to discuss any concerns you might have.

**WEBSITE** - Check it out for news! [www.acc-kids.org](http://www.acc-kids.org)

You can also stay current with ACC happenings, by “liking” our Facebook page. Search for Altadena Children’s Center and you will find us there.

## **HEALTH**

Our goal is to promote the health and well being of all the children at ACC in partnership with our families. We support the *Let’s Move!* initiative championed by First Lady Michelle Obama in 2010. The initiative focuses on five major strategies to promote general health and reduce risk factors for obesity in early childhood: increasing physical activity, limiting screen time, serving healthy foods, reducing sugary beverages and promoting breastfeeding of infants.

We also want to prevent the spread of illness as much as possible. We practice good hygiene with children and adults so that we can limit the spread of infectious illnesses. Handwashing and sanitizing are the two most effective way to do this. However, children are just developing their immunities and colds and coughs and other illnesses do occur. In the event of any contagious illness there are certain state regulations we must abide by in terms of exclusion from the program and return to school. We can administer medications as prescribed by the doctor and certain over the counter medications with the parents signed consent.

## ILLNESS

The Center cannot permit any child who is ill with a contagious or communicable illness to attend the Center. Children should not attend the Center if:

1. they have a fever, 100° F., oral (following an illness, temperature should remain normal for 24 hours before they return to the Center).
2. they have vomited or had diarrhea within the previous 24 hours,
3. they are complaining of a sore throat or upset stomach,
4. they are unusually listless and /or irritable,
5. they are coughing excessively or their chest and nose are severely congested,
6. there are any signs of a contagious infection such as pink eye, etc.

A good rule of thumb is – if you judge that your child is not well enough to play outside, the child is probably not well enough to come to the Center.

If, in the opinion of the Center's staff, a child arrives at the Center and is ill, the staff member will refuse to admit the child. If the child becomes ill while the child is at the Center, the staff will immediately notify the parent and isolate the child until the child is picked up. The parent must pick up the child as soon as possible. The Center staff has great sympathy for the difficulties that parents encounter with disrupted schedules, job time loss, etc. when children are ill. We try to be flexible, but feel that the children are all healthier when parents cooperate with the above guidelines.

If your child does have a contagious illness, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can pass on the information to the other parents. The health department provides us with specific guidelines regarding the return of children who have had contagious illness. We will inform you of these requirements as the need arises.

**MEDICATIONS** – The Center will administer prescription drugs to children with the container clearly labeled with the name of the child, the name of the medicine, the dosage and the name of the pharmacy and/or physician. Non-prescription drugs will be administered to the children as long as they are in the original, labeled container. Over the counter cold medications will not be administered to children unless there is a note from the doctor.

In addition, in order for the staff to give your child medication, we must have a signed consent from you authorizing the medication. Please ask the office staff for a consent form. Once you have signed the consent form it is to be given to the director or office staff. They will then notify your child's classroom teacher of the medication to be given that day. Each time the medication is given, the teacher will note the date and time that the medicine was given. You may ask to see this at anytime. It is kept in a binder. Each program has a locked area where medications are stored. Any medication that needs to be refrigerated can be stored in the office refrigerator. **PLEASE DO NOT PUT ANY MEDICATIONS IN A CHILD'S CUBBY, DIAPER BAG OR BACKPACK!**  
Thank you.

### *IMS PLAN (Incidental Medical Services)*

ACC will be as inclusive as possible, including integrating children with various on-going medical conditions into our daily routine. The following plan outlines what our procedures are for the four conditions we currently accommodate.

1. We can accommodate children with potential anaphylaxis due to severe, potentially life-threatening allergies; asthma or related chronic lung condition such as reactive airway disease that impairs breathing; febrile seizures, seizures brought on by sudden rise in body temperature due to a fever; and eczema, inflammation of the skin.

2. Personal care plans provided by the doctor or the parent with procedures for treatment will be kept for each child with one of the above conditions.

3. Epi-pens, nebulizers, inhalers and doctor prescribed medications are kept in our locked medicine cabinets. Or, in the case of the Epi-pen, it is kept in a cabinet out of reach of the children, but easily accessible to the teachers if needed immediately for treatment.

4. All of our staff is certified in pediatric first aid and CPR. This training includes use of the Epi-pen, nebulizer and inhaler. In addition, parents are required to train all staff in the use of their child's particular treatment.

5. This training ensures that adequately trained staff are available in the event that IMS care is needed.

6. We ensure that proper safety precautions are met including the wearing of gloves in the event of exposure to bodily fluids, proper hand cleaning following glove removal, safe disposal of all relevant materials.

7. In case of a disaster that requires us to vacate the facility, we bring the emergency back pack with us. For class trips, the teachers carry the backpack with any needed medical supplies.

8. Following an IMS occurrence, treatment is logged in the medical record book and parents are notified by phone.

9. Serious incidents and any change in this plan will be reported to our licensing office and a report filed.

## **HEALTHY EATING**

EATING is a very important part of children's days. It gives them fuel for their bodies, enjoyment of new tastes and a time to gather for conversation with friends and family. We view meal times as an opportunity for children to learn about good nutrition, self help skills and manners. We also have specific standards related to the kinds of foods we serve and would like you to bring for your child. It is important for you to know that the current thinking about the best way to encourage healthy eating habits in young children is to provide an array of healthy food choices at each meal and then allow the child to select the foods he or she wants to eat. The adult's role is to provide the healthy foods, the child's role is to make the choices. This ensures good nutrition and also prevents an emotional struggle with a basic human need.

**FOOD PROGRAM** – Food is provided for the children three times a day – breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack. The cost of this food service is included in the tuition rate.

FOOD - We provide healthy food each day for the Infant/Toddler and Preschool. Our food includes cheeses, lean meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, milk. We encourage good nutrition with the children in the food we provide and in the cooking experiences for the children and through discussion of good eating habits. The food provided for all of the children meets nutrition standards created by the US Department of Agriculture.

ALLERGIES – Some children have allergies to certain foods. It is essential that you notify the staff about these allergies on the enrollment forms provided for you. We will make sure not to serve your child any of those foods. There are some particular food allergies that are extremely serious, including peanut allergies. These can be life-threatening and require strict avoidance of peanuts. Some children who are allergic are not only allergic to eating the peanut, but can also be allergic to the smell and the oils of the peanut. For example, if a child eats a peanut butter sandwich and then touches the table and the allergic child touches the table and then touches his or her mouth, there could be a severe allergic reaction. For these reasons, we do not allow any peanut products in our classrooms. The only way we can ensure the safety of a child who has a peanut allergy is to not have any possible exposure. You might be interested to know that peanut allergies in children have doubled in the last five years. There are many theories about this, but the answers are not yet clear. Ask your doctor about current practices related to reducing the possibility of this allergy.

FAMILY STYLE MEALS – At ACC we want to encourage children in their meal time habits much as you would at home. These habits include sitting at the table to eat, passing food to others at the table and talking about our day. We see meal times as an opportunity to learn important self help skills such as pouring our own milk. These experiences help to develop motor skills in the children as well as giving them a sense of confidence in their capabilities.

*SIPPY CUPS* – As children transition from bottles, it is easy to begin to have them start using “*Sippy Cups*.” While these cups are easy for children to use without spilling, many concerns are beginning to emerge about their continued use. Speech and language therapists are concerned that children may not develop certain mouth motor skills if they continue to suck from a *Sippy Cup* as opposed to learning to move their mouth to drink from a cup. Dentists are concerned that milk and juices coming out a *Sippy Cup* linger too long on the teeth and increase the risk of cavities. Because of these reasons, after children reach one year of age, we want to introduce cups for drinking. Our toddler class, the Busy Bees, will be a transition year for this, but once they are in our 18 month to 2 ½ year old class, the Green Group, we will ask you to keep the *Sippy Cups* at home. We will make sure that children get plenty of fluids throughout the day.

BIRTHDAY FOODS - Birthdays are our favorite holidays at ACC and we have lots of them. We want to celebrate this special day with your child in healthy ways. Because we are trying to encourage healthy eating habits in the children in our care, we would

also like children to know that there are celebration foods that can be healthy. Please avoid high sugar foods for your child's birthday. Following are some ideas of low sugar, somewhat healthy party foods that we know the children enjoy – 100% fruit juice Popsicles, carrot cupcakes with cream cheese frosting, angel food cake with strawberries, pound cake, gingersnap cookies, cream cheese as a filling for an oatmeal cookie sandwich, yogurt and fruit sundaes, etc. You can probably think of many more! When your child's birthday is coming up, please talk to your child's teacher and plan the celebration at ACC together. Please give the teachers at least a week's notice so that they can incorporate your plans into their classroom activities. THANK YOU!

## **SAFETY**

### **TRAINING**

All of the Center staff are required to be certified in Infant/Child CPR and pediatric First Aid. We continue to review safety procedures throughout the year.

**ACCIDENTS** – In case of non-emergency bumps and scrapes, the attending staff member will administer first aid. The accident will be written up on an "Accident report." One copy will be given to you and we will keep one copy for our files. If we are concerned about the extent of the injury, we will contact you immediately for further instructions. If we cannot reach you, we will attempt to contact the persons listed on your child's emergency card. If we cannot reach those persons, we will contact your doctor. If we cannot reach your doctor, we will call another doctor or a paramedic. If the injury is life-threatening, we will immediately call 911 and then call you to inform you of the injury.

All accidents will be written up for your information and our files. This includes both medical and dental accidents.

Beyond the limits of your own insurance coverage, our medical insurance will cover any accidents sustained while under the care of Altadena Children's Center.

### **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

Each month the children and staff practice disaster drills for fires and earthquakes and any outside danger. In addition, an active Disaster Preparedness Committee continues to evaluate the total readiness of the programs to deal with a major disaster. Tasks and timelines are set each year to bring us to our goal of full preparedness. (Please join the committee and help out!)

**FIRE DRILL** – The fire alarm rings and the children are instructed to stop whatever they are doing and walk with their teachers to the designated evacuation spots. A discussion about fire safety is held and children practice "Stop, Drop and Roll." When it is all clear, the children return to their classrooms.

**EARTHQUAKE DRILL** – Each group discusses the nature of earthquakes and the feelings they might have that are associated with them and then the children are instructed to “DROP, Duck, Cover and Hold.” Drills are practiced in the classrooms and in the yards so that children get practice with identifying their “Safety Spots” in different areas. We try to encourage a calm response to these events.

**SHELTER IN PLACE DRILL** – For this drill, the children practice going into the classroom or staying in the classroom to avoid any kind of external threat outside of the classroom. We keep the mood light so as not to alarm the children as the teachers lock the doors and turn out the lights and find a safe, inside wall to sit near.

**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS KITS** – For infants, families are asked to bring a disaster prep kit that consists of a change of clothes, non-perishable formula and food for 3 days. For toddlers and preschoolers, ACC provides a pre-made kit with these supplies that has a 5 year shelf life. All families are asked to bring in a comfort kit for their child. This consists of a change of clothes family pictures and a “love note.” A detailed list of items needed is sent out to parents. For the school age children, we utilize the resources of the elementary school for this purpose. We want your children to be as safe as possible while they are in our care!

## **DAY TO DAY DETAILS**

**ARRIVAL TIME** – We ask that you bring your child to the infant/toddler and preschool no later than 9:00 a.m. each morning. This is when the small group activities begin. It is difficult for your child to fit into the group if you child comes later. The child feels left out having missed the activities that the other children have done. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you cannot avoid being late one day, please call the staff before 9:00 a.m. to let us know when you will be coming. Thanks.

Please notify the office if your child will not be coming to the Center for the day. It is especially important that the parents of school age children notify the staff if the child attended school in the morning but is not coming to the after school program. In general, a call to the office to inform us of your child’s absence on any day is most helpful as we plan our day. Thanks!

## **INDIVIDUALS AUTHORIZED TO PICK UP CHILD**

The Center can release a child only to the parents or legal guardian(s) of the child, or the individuals authorized to pick up the child whom the parent/guardian has listed on the Center’s “Emergency Information Card.” Staff members of the Center may require any person who arrives to pick up a child to show identification. All persons authorized to pick up a child must be at least 18 years old.

Any request by the parent for pick up by a family member or friend who is not on the authorized pick up list, must be in writing and signed by the parent. Phone calls or emails will not be accepted.

If only one parent has custody of the child and the other is not authorized to pick up the child, the parent must instruct the Center of this fact, and must provide the Center Director with a certified copy of the Court Order confirming that one parent does not have visitation rights.

If there is any change in the legal custody of the child while the child is enrolled in the Center, the parent must immediately notify the Center, and must provide the Center Director with a certified copy of the Court Order confirming the change in custody. Although we at the Center recognize that this may be inconvenient for the parent, this policy is essential in order to protect the Center against potential claims for releasing a child to an unauthorized person or for refusing to release a child to an authorized one.

If an unauthorized person arrives at the Center to pick up a child, the Center staff will notify the parent immediately.

**SIGN IN AND OUT** – All children must be signed in by the parent or the parent's authorized person each day. The signature must have a full first and last name. No initials are allowed by state licensing. All children at the end of the day must be signed out by the parent or the parent's authorized person. This person must be at least 18 years old.

In addition when a child is dropped off and picked up the parent or the parent's authorized person must make contact with a staff member in order for the child to be released.

**RELEASE OF A CHILD TO INTOXICATED OR DRUGGED INDIVIDUAL** – Rarely, a parent or other authorized person arrives at the Center intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. In order to protect the children from any potential danger that could arise because of a parent's condition, and to protect the Center against potential claims, it is the policy of the Center to take all reasonable steps to avoid releasing a child to a person in a drugged or intoxicated state.

Accordingly, if in the opinion of the senior staff member present at the Center, a parent or authorized person who arrives to transport the child home from the Center is in an intoxicated or drugged condition, the staff member will: a. notify any other parent or guardian about the situation; b. ask the person to leave the car at the Center and take the child home using another means of transportation; and c. offer to call another relative, friend or taxi (at the parent's expense) to drive the person and child home.

If the parent or guardian insists on driving the child home, the Center's staff member will notify the local police department. If a particular parent or guardian frequently arrives in an intoxicated or drugged state, the Center will not only notify the police department, but also will alert other appropriate governmental authorities involved with the care and treatment of children.

**CLOTHING** – Childhood is a time of discovery and many learning activities are messy. Please send your child in comfortable, playing clothes. We try to keep them reasonably clean, but we are more concerned that your child fully participates in the activities! We hope you share our sentiments.

Please LABEL all of your child's clothing. It is tricky to sort out whose white socks belong to whom! Permanent markers seem to be effective labeling tools! (We do have a Lost and Found for the inevitable.)

**TOYS FROM HOME** – We do allow children to bring toys from home to share at the Center. We believe that sharing a toy from home often helps a child to feel more comfortable. It is a nice bridge for children, allowing them to share a little bit of home with friends. However, the children are responsible for their own toys. Please label the toy with your child's name. DO NOT send any "weapon" toys – no play guns, knives, swords, etc. Books and records are encouraged. Please check with your child's teacher regarding classroom policy for sharing of toys.

**CUBBIES** – All the children have their own special place to store their things. We call them "cubbies." Their name is posted on their cubby and it becomes their special space. Please send a complete change of clothes for your child, diapers if needed. Please check your child's cubby at the end of each day for projects, notes from teachers, etc. Please take your child's projects home. They are important to your child and deserving of your care and respect.

**NAPTIME** – Naptime is a critical time of day for the infant/toddlers and preschool children. Children sometimes have a hard time closing their eyes and shutting out the world even for a short time. We provide a naptime routine that helps children ease into a much-needed rest. If your child has a favorite toy or blanket that helps the child to sleep, please bring it. Also, for each child who naps please send a small crib size sheet and a blanket. You may bring a SMALL pillow. We will ask you to take the sheet and blanket home each Friday to be washed and returned on Monday. Time for resting each day is required by state licensing for young children. If your child does not nap and is in preschool, the child will be asked to rest quietly for a while.

**BIRTHDAYS** – Each child's birthday is special in our programs. We celebrate the day with birthday songs and games. You may bring a birthday treat for your child. Check with your child's teacher about specific birthday routines in your child's classroom.

## **NOW THAT YOU HAVE READ ALL ABOUT US AND HAVE CHOSEN TO ENROLL YOUR CHILD IN OUR PROGRAM...**

FIRST, fill out and return all of the forms for your child's enrollment packet including the following – admission agreement, parents' rights, personal rights, identification and emergency information, consent for emergency medical treatment, parents' report of health history, physician's report, immunization report, needs and services plan for infants and toddlers, and consent for placement in toddler option program if applicable.

**MEDICAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS** – Upon enrollment we must receive a written medical assessment of the child. The assessment enables us to determine whether we can provide the necessary health-related services to the child. This assessment must be signed by the doctor. It must also contain the results of a test for tuberculosis. In addition, a record of immunizations up to the current standards is required. No child will be admitted without being up to date on the most currently approved immunization schedule.

**THE FIRST FEW DAYS** – Your child's first few days at the Center may or may not be difficult depending on their developmental stage and temperament. Whether your child has been in group child care before or is new to such a program, this Center is still a new place, with new faces and experiences. As any adult who goes to a new place knows, new experiences can sometimes be scary and separating from mom and/or dad is often a new experience and a big step in "growing-up."

This can be particularly hard for young children who are just learning about the great big world outside of their families. Children need support at this time to help them to begin to trust the adults who will be caring for them in the new environment.

We plan to make this separation time as easy as possible for all of us. We will ask you to bring the child to visit the program a couple of times before the child is enrolled. In that way, we want to familiarize the child with the staff and facilities before the child actually starts. We would like you to spend some part of your child's first few days visiting at the program – just until your child feels comfortable in the new surroundings. If your child has a favorite object, please feel free to bring it to help the child through this transition time. Pictures of the family and phone calls are often comforting when the parent leaves for the day.

We hope that by easing this beginning separation, you and your child will have a happy and successful experience in our program. (We are here to help you as the parent deal with any feelings of guilt or sadness you have about leaving your child, too!)

### **WHAT TO BRING AND DO!**

For the Infants and Toddlers:

\*Bottles for the infants – bring enough bottles for the full day. Label each bottle with your child's name and the number of ounces per feeding. Put the bottles in your child's assigned container.

\*Sippy cups for the toddlers – bring 2, one for water and one for milk. Please label the top and the bottom with your child’s name. Put them in the refrigerator in the assigned container.

\*Bibs – We provide bibs.

\*Pacifier – Please bring a few if your child uses a pacifier.

\*Diapers and wipes – Please give these to the teacher and they will store them for you. Please bring any diaper crème that your child uses.

\*Diapering – Please change your child before he or she comes to ACCC. This makes for an easier transition for the child when you give them to the teacher. In turn, we will make sure your child is changed and ready for you when it is time to go home. Thanks.

\*Extra clothes – bring 3 sets of extra clothes and put them in your child’s assigned container. Check your child’s supply every day as we change often! Bring an extra jacket to have on hand for cooler days.

\*A small, crib size blanket for sleeping. We provide the sheets. These will be taken home by you on Fridays to be washed and returned on Monday.

\*Diaper bag – For the infants, hang the diaper bag under the clothes cubbies. For the toddlers, hang the diaper bag in your child’s cubby.

\*Car seats – These can be stored just outside the classroom.

\*Family photos – please bring in a few family photos. We use these for our “family wall” as it helps us learn about our own families and the families of others.

\*Transitional object – this can be any kind of lovey that helps your child feel safe as they learn to trust the new people in their lives!

\*Summer – bring sunscreen, a towel and water diapers for water play.

\*Sign in and out every day! Please sign using your full first and last name.

\*Participate in the life of ACC!

For the Preschool:

\*Change of clothes – bring a complete change of clothes – pants, tops, socks, shoes, underwear – labeled with your child’s name.

\*A small, crib size blanket and sheet for naptime. These will be taken home by you on Fridays to be washed and returned on Monday.

\*Transitional object – this can be any kind of lovey that helps your child feel safe as they learn to trust the new people in their lives!

\*Diapers and wipes – Please give these to the teacher and they will store them for you. Please bring any diaper crème that your child uses.

\*Diapering – Please change your child before he or she comes to ACC. This makes for an easier transition for the child when you give them to the teacher. In turn, we will make sure your child is changed and ready for you when it is time to go home. Thanks.

\*Car seats – These can be stored just outside the classroom.

- \*Family photos – please bring in a few family photos. We use these for our “family wall” as it helps us learn about our own families and the families of others.
- \*Transitional object – this can be any kind of lovey that helps your child feel safe as they learn to trust the new people in their lives!
- \*Summer – bring sunscreen, a towel and bathing suit for water play.
- \*Sign in and out every day! Please sign using your full first and last name.
- \*Participate in the life of ACC!

WE ARE HERE TO SERVE YOU AND YOUR CHILD WITH ALL OF OUR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND ABILITY. WE VIEW YOUR CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT AS A COOPERATIVE ADVENTURE AND WELCOME YOUR INVOLVEMENT, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS. WE ARE GLAD YOU WILL BE A PART OF THE “FAMILY” OF ALTADENA CHRISTIAN CHILDREN’S CENTER