



2026-2027

Family Handbook

FAMILY HANDBOOK

The Weekday School Mission Statement

The purpose of The Weekday School at University Park United Methodist Church is to build a strong, Christian foundation of love and learning in every child through nurturing and challenging them appropriately in all developmental areas.

The Weekday School (WDS) adheres to the philosophy that children are naturally curious about their environment and active participants in the learning process. The WDS offers a linear developmental program where children are given opportunities to gain age-appropriate skill sets. Our learning environments provide a place where this natural curiosity can develop into a practical, on-going knowledge base for the child. The WDS also adheres to developmentally appropriate practices. It is our belief that within the context of developmentally appropriate practice, the child's educational growth is maximized.

Our education program is play-based. We are committed to maintaining learning environments that promote play. Play and learning go together. They are intertwined. At the WDS, children learn through play by developing cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills, and literacy skills. During play, children can practice and integrate their learning across all areas of development. Teachers and staff work to incorporate play and playful exploration in WDS learning environments. They achieve this by scheduling time for play (daily schedule); creating space for play (room arrangement); and encouraging interactions that promote collaboration, experimentation, and imaginative thinking (relationships, materials, activities).

Our educational philosophy also extends to the families that we serve. The WDS believes that parents/legal guardians are the child's first teachers. As such, our program works to establish open ongoing communication about the individual and developmental needs of the children we serve. We work together as families and teachers to meet each child where he is and help her grow. Families are invited to talk with teachers and administrators at any time.

The Weekday School Core Values

We believe in and are committed to:

- Sharing spiritual life lessons
- Offering developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Providing a caring, safe, nurturing environment designed for children
- Advocating for and supporting children and families of the school
- Fostering the sense of community developed throughout our history

The Weekday School Vision

We seek to create enthusiastic children who experience and exemplify God's love. These children will gain leadership skills and sharing spirits through a cultivated zest for learning, allowing them to become the most of who God created them to be.

Our WDS program uses teaching methods that engage children creatively and experientially in hands-on exploration of developmentally appropriate concepts. Children are provided opportunities to learn through play with peers and teachers in a variety of settings. Our curriculum is developed and taught by experienced, dedicated teachers.

The Weekday School Board of Directors

The WDS Board of Directors is comprised of UPUMC members who volunteer their time and talent to further the mission and goals of the WDS. Per WDS Bylaws, many of our board members are also WDS families. Board members participate in various committees and monthly board meetings. To contact the WDS Board of Directors, please email our Board Chair at wdsboardchair@upumc.org

To qualify to serve on the WDS Board of Directors, the parent/legal guardian of the child must be an active member of UPUMC. To qualify as an active member of UPUMC, families should attend UPUMC once a month and have a record of financial giving in the past 12 months.

Hours of Operation

Parents/legal guardians are free to observe the school any time their child is present during operating hours without prior approval. All visitors must sign in at the WDS office and wear a WDS Visitor Tag. School hours are 9:00am - 12:00pm Monday, and 9:00am - 2:00pm Tuesday-Friday. The WDS office hours are 8:00am - 3:00pm, Monday-Friday. If we can be of assistance to you, please contact us.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

The WDS is accredited by NAEYC. Our Program ID is 725136. Families may contact NAEYC by calling 1-800-424-2460. The NAEYC website is: <https://www.naeyc.org/>

Texas Health and Human Services Commission Child Care Regulation Contact Information

The WDS is regulated by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Child Care Regulation. Our operation number is 167483. Families may contact Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation office located at: 8700 Stemmons, Suite 104, Dallas, Texas 75247, by calling (214) 583-4253. The Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation website is: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/child-care-regulation>

Texas Administrative Code

Texas Administrative Code

<u>TITLE 40</u>	SOCIAL SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE
<u>PART 19</u>	DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES
<u>CHAPTER 745</u>	LICENSING
<u>SUBCHAPTER K</u>	INSPECTIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS
<u>DIVISION 1</u>	OVERVIEW OF INSPECTIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS
<u>RULE §745.8415</u>	What can Licensing inspect and/or investigate?

We may investigate any part of your operation that could affect the health, safety, or well-being of children. This includes, but is not limited to, access to all children in care, employees, records, and any area of the building, home, or grounds where your operation is located.

Source Note: The provisions of this §745.8415 adopted to be effective March 1, 2002, 27 TexReg 965

Rule Reminder: Inspections, Investigations and Confidentiality

In order to ensure that child care operations comply with relevant minimum standards and other legal requirements, Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation must conduct inspections and investigations.

When conducting an inspection or investigation, Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation must be able to gather information, conduct interviews, and engage in internal discussions on the grounds of an operation in a way that safeguards confidential information.

As provided in the Texas Human Resources Code §42.04412 (a) and 26 Texas Administrative Code §745.8411 (a), an operation or any person operating on an operation's behalf, may not make a visual or audio recording during the licensing inspection and investigation.

The requirements to this rule include that an operation must provide a workspace free of audio and video recording devices for Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation staff to complete their inspection and investigation work.

For additional rules concerning confidentiality, see 26 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 745, Subchapter K, Division 3 concerning Inspections, Investigations, and Confidentiality. You can also visit the Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation Minimum Standards webpage to review the webinar, Replacing and Updating Rules from 26 TAC Title 40, Chapter 745, Subchapter K, with Rules in TAC Title 26, Chapter 745, Subchapters B, I, K.

Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation greatly appreciates the important work that providers conduct. By helping to ensure the Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation can conduct inspections and investigations, providers assure the public that the care they provide meets legal requirements.

Email CCRQuestions@hhs.texas.gov with any questions.

Gang-Free Zone

House Bill 2086. This law adds §42.064 of the Human Resource Code and designates certain areas around child care centers as 'gang-free zones'. Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of the WDS is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

For detailed information about gang-free zones, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code. Additionally, parents/legal guardians may contact the City of University Park for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

Privacy Statement

Texas HHSC values your privacy. For more information, read our privacy policy at www.hhs.texas.gov/policies-practices-privacy#security

Sec. 42.04271 Rights of Parent or Guardian with Child in certain Child-Care Facilities

- (a) This section applies only to a day-care center, group day-care home, before-school program, after-school program, or registered family home.
- (b) A parent or guardian of a child at a child-care facility has the right to:
 - (1) enter and examine the child-care facility during the facility's hours of operation without advance notice;
 - (2) file a complaint against the child-care facility;
 - (3) review the child-care facility's publicly accessible records;
 - (4) review the child-care facility's written records concerning the parent's or guardian's child;
 - (5) receive from the child-care facility the commission's inspection reports for the child-care facility and information about how to access the child-care facility's compliance history online;
 - (6) have the child-care facility comply with a court order preventing another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the parent's or guardian's child;
 - (7) be provided the contact information for the division responsibility for regulating the child-care facility, including the division's name, address, and phone number;
 - (8) inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving the parent's or guardian's child, provided that:
 - (A) video recordings of the alleged incident are available;
 - (B) the parent or guardian of the child is not allowed to retain any part of the video recording depicting a child who is not the parent's or guardian's child; and
 - (C) the parent or guardian of any other child captured in the video recording receives notice from the facility under Subsection (c);
 - (9) obtain a copy of the child-care facility's policies and procedures;
 - (10) review, on the request of the parent or guardian, the facility's
 - (A) staff training records; and
 - (B) any in-house staff training curriculum used by the facility; and
 - (11) be free from any retaliatory action by the child-care facility for exercising any of the parent's or guardian's rights.
- (c) Before allowing a parent or guardian to inspect a video recording under Subsection (b) (8), a child-care facility must provide written notice to the parent or guardian of any other child captured in the video recording.
- (d) This section does not affect the ability of a law enforcement agency or the department to access a video recording as part of an investigation of an incident depicted in the video recording.**
- (e) A child-care facility shall provide the parent or guardian of the child with a written copy of the rights listed in Subsection (b) not later than the child's first day at the facility.

Added by Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1158 (S.B. 1098), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2023.

Communication Policy

Communication through listening and talking is extremely important. We are taking this journey together and want to collaborate with you. Our communication policy encourages families to share information related to their child's personality and learning style with their classroom teacher on an ongoing basis. Families are encouraged to maintain a continuous dialogue about their child's development throughout the school year. This type of feedback is valued by the WDS staff, particularly the child's classroom teacher. Additionally, the WDS encourages families to share their questions about our program with their child's classroom teacher and/or a member of the WDS administrative team at any time. We are here to help and are happy to answer your questions.

The WDS believes that concerns are best addressed through direct dialogue. Families are encouraged to share concerns with the individuals directly involved to resolve the issue effectively. Please begin your conversations with your child's teacher(s). You may contact your child's teacher(s) via Brightwheel to schedule a mutually convenient time to talk about your concerns. If after having those conversations, you believe that there has been no resolution, then you may talk with the Early Childhood Education Coordinator, Stephanie Golden sgolden@upumc.org, to work towards a resolution. If you believe that there has been no resolution after speaking with Stephanie Golden, you may talk with the Director, Libby Nicodemus lnicodemus@upumc.org. If after these conversations, you find that a resolution has not been achieved, you may contact the Chair of the WDS Board of Directors at wdsboardchair@upumc.org.

When warranted, the WDS will attempt to keep a family's expressed concerns including any investigations or the terms of their resolution confidential. However, while investigating and resolving concerns, some dissemination of information to others may be necessary and appropriate.

Family Notifications

Please make sure the school has the correct contact information for your family, including email addresses, phone numbers, and the family's mailing address. All families will be notified in writing of any changes made to WDS operational policies and admissions agreement. The WDS's licensing inspection report and other required postings are located on the bulletin board to the right of the WDS reception desk. Families may request copies of these items at any time.

Conferences

Communication is an important part of the relationship between your family and the WDS. Parents/legal guardians are welcome to request a conference with their child's classroom teacher independent of the scheduled conferences.

If you need to speak with your child's classroom teacher at any time, please arrange for a mutually convenient time to talk.

Brightwheel

Each classroom shares pictures/anecdotal information via Brightwheel. Your child's classroom teacher will update you each time new information is posted.

Family Participation

Per our educational philosophy, the WDS upholds parents/legal guardians as the child's first teacher. We encourage our families to share their insight and perspectives about their child's learning experience with their child's classroom teacher on a regular basis. Families are encouraged to visit and engage in our classroom learning environments, throughout the school year. Please ask your child's teacher(s) how you can participate in their learning.

Parents' Association

Every parent/legal guardian of a child enrolled in the WDS is a member of the WDS Parents' Association and is invited and encouraged to attend Parents' Association monthly meetings. The purpose of the Parents' Association is to give parents/legal guardians an opportunity to be actively involved in events and mission opportunities at the school and to develop a sense of community among educators, children, and their parents. The list of the Parents' Association's Council and Committee Chairs is in the school directory. For more information regarding the Parents' Association, please contact our current Parents' Association President. Their contact information is in the WDS Directory.

Families in Need

If you know of a situation in which a family is in need, please contact the WDS office. You may also contact the current Parents' Association Sunshine Committee Chair. Their contact information is in the WDS directory.

Family Resources

The WDS office maintains a list of therapeutic service providers available for any families seeking outside assistance for their child or family. This list is made up of agencies and professionals that are local and have previously served WDS families and/or WDS employees. Please contact the WDS office for information about this list.

Admission

The WDS does not discriminate against children on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, or ethnicity in its admission process or with regard to the rights, privileges, programs, and activities available to children at the school.

The admission process includes:

- Tour of the WDS
- Application for Admission Form
- Non-refundable application fee

Age Levels & Class Options

Age Levels and Birth Date Ranges	Class Options
Infants <i>June 2, 2025 – December 1, 2025</i>	T, W, or F
Toddler 1 <i>October 2, 2024 – June 1, 2025</i>	M/W, T/Th, or F
Toddler 2 <i>March 2, 2024 – October 1, 2024</i>	M/W/F or T/Th
2.5s <i>September 2, 2023 – March 1, 2024</i>	M/W/F or T/Th
PreK 3s <i>September 2, 2022 – September 1, 2023</i>	M-F, M/W/F, or T/Th
PreK 4s <i>September 2, 2021 – September 1, 2022</i>	M-F or M/W/F
Kindergarten <i>September 2, 2020 – September 1, 2021</i>	M-F

Application

A complete Application for Admission Form is required for each child interested in attending the WDS. The non-refundable application fee is \$75. The WDS is a ministry of University Park United Methodist Church (UPUMC). Therefore, the non-refundable application fee is waived for members of UPUMC. To qualify as a member of UPUMC, one or both parents/legal guardians of the child must be a member of UPUMC for at least six consecutive months. Non-enrolled siblings must complete an Application for Admission Form and submit the non-refundable application fee (if applicable). Please note, there is no guarantee of WDS admission for non-enrolled siblings. A WDS application is school-year specific, it does not carry over to the next school year.

Per age level, applications are sorted into the following categories:

- (1) Non-enrolled siblings of UPUMC members;
- (2) Non-enrolled siblings;
- (3) Non-enrolled students of UPUMC members; and
- (4) Non-enrolled students of new families.

If an applicant is not given an offer of admission, they are placed on the waitlist. Waitlists are organized by age level, and applicants are contacted as openings become available.

Tuition Overview

Tuition and fees will be based on the age of the child and the number of days enrolled. A current tuition payment schedule is available on the WDS website or in the WDS office. Tuition payments are collected per child, not per family. Tuition payments are non-transferable. A child's placement may be jeopardized if payment is not received by the specified deadline.

Please make all checks payable to The Weekday School or WDS.

Tuition and Refund Policy

Tuition Policy

Tuition and fees for the upcoming school year are due upon registration. Tuition and fees are based on the age level and the number of days enrolled. Tuition and fees are collected per child, not per family. Tuition and fees are not transferable to another child.

Tuition and fees must be paid in advance of the school year in three installments (per the related schedule). A \$50 late fee will be assessed if payment is not received by the applicable payment date. An additional \$100 late fee will apply if payment is not received within five days of the applicable payment date. If payment is not received within ten days of the applicable payment date, your child will forfeit his/her placement. A \$30 charge will be assessed for all returned checks.

Refund Policy for Infants, Toddlers, 2.5s, PreK 3s

If you are registering for Infants - 3s and should you decide not to have your child attend The Weekday School (WDS) for the upcoming school year, a 50 percent refund of the tuition paid will be given if (i) such request is made in writing on or before March 31, and (ii) the WDS is able to meet capacity for that age level by the start of the upcoming school year; however, the registration fee will not be refunded. After March 31, the WDS is under no obligation to provide a tuition refund to a registrant, nor is a registrant entitled to receive a tuition refund from the WDS for any reason.

Refund Policy for PreK 4s & Kindergarten

If you are registering for 4s or kindergarten and should you decide not to have your child attend the WDS for the upcoming school year, the WDS is under no obligation to provide a refund of payments made for any reason.

Scholarship

Scholarship funds are available. Please contact our Business Administrator for the application. Tuition assistance does not impact admissions decisions. The deadline for requests is April 15.

Registration

Once accepted to the WDS you will receive the following:

- Registration Form
- Enrollment Form (including immunization record and signed statement of health by a health care professional)

The Registration Form and payment are due at the time of registration. Failure to turn in the forms listed above and provide payment will result in losing the registered spot.

Current Student Registration

Current student registration for the following year occurs in December. Registration dates and times are listed on the school calendar. Current student registration is completed online and is on a first come, first served basis for children currently enrolled in the Infants – PreK 3s programs. The WDS is a ministry of UPUMC. Therefore, members of UPUMC receive registration priority at the WDS. To qualify as a member of UPUMC, one or both parents/legal guardians of the child must be a member of UPUMC for at least six consecutive months.

Current student registration will occur in the following order:

- (1) Currently enrolled students of active UPUMC members
- (2) Currently enrolled students
- (3) Children of WDS employees not currently enrolled

Kindergarten Registration

Current student registration for kindergarten is completed in person with a WDS administrator.

Current student registration for kindergarten will occur in the following order:

- (1) Currently enrolled students of active UPUMC members and current students who have been enrolled since Infants/Toddler 1
- (2) Current students who have been enrolled since Toddler 2/2.5s
- (3) Current students who have been enrolled since PreK 3s
- (4) Current students who have been enrolled since PreK 4s

The Director has the discretion to consider issues of registration priority.

Enrollment

Before a child may attend the WDS, their Enrollment Form must be on file in the office. The Enrollment Form must be filled out, signed by the child's doctor, and returned to the WDS before school begins. Additionally, no child is permitted to attend school without a current health statement, updated immunization record, and completed Allergy Action Plan, if applicable. Currently enrolled children, with health statements already on file, must meet and continue to meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Age Placement

Children will be placed in classes according to their age, based on the age requirement of public schools in the State of Texas. Currently, this is September 1 of the current school year. Exceptions to this rule will be decided through joint conferences with parents/legal guardians, the child's classroom teacher, Early Childhood Education Coordinator (ECE Coordinator), and the Director. Criteria for such a decision should include a developmental assessment at the parents' or legal guardians' expense, as well as classroom observation by the ECE Coordinator and the Director. Care should be taken to make a thoughtful decision based on objective data along with developmental information such as social, emotional, and physical maturity. We encourage children to proceed in the usual order of succession unless unusual circumstances indicate otherwise. The decision for placement will be made with consideration of current developmental progress and should be reevaluated during the school year.

Class Placement

Class placement is determined carefully and prayerfully by the class placement committee. This committee is comprised of the child's current teacher, other teachers within the current age level, ECE Coordinator, and the Director. The classroom placement process considers several key factors including the child's learning style, social opportunities, balancing boy/girl ratios, recommendations from teachers, and special needs of each child.

Specific requests made by the child's parent/legal guardian for class placement for the upcoming school year must be made in writing. Family requests must address educational needs and be submitted to the child's current classroom teacher by April 1. Please note, a family request is considered but not guaranteed.

Welcome letters are mailed to children in mid-August. This letter is the initial contact made to the child by their classroom teacher(s).

Class Rosters & Class Ratios

Through the class placement process, children are assigned to specific teachers for the entire school year. The WDS office makes class rosters available for view by Back-to-School Kickoff. The WDS office does not share class roster information outside of this timeframe.

Class rosters are established to maintain the developmentally appropriate staff-to-child ratios and class sizes. The class roster is stable and remains unchanged throughout the following:

- child's school day (Monday: 9am – 12pm; Tuesday – Friday: 9am – 2pm)
- indoor learning environments (classroom, chapel, specials' classrooms)
- outdoor learning environments (playgrounds, Colgate Lawn, OLC)

Age Level	Staff to Child Ratio
Infants	2:8
Toddler 1	2:8
Toddler 2	2:10
2.5s	2:10
PreK 3s	1:9
PreK 4s	1:10
Kindergarten	1:12

Confidentiality Statement

Confidentiality is important to us. The health, behavior or progress of a child is considered confidential and is not to be discussed outside the WDS or with any other WDS families unless written permission is provided by the child's parent or legal guardian. By informing the WDS of a child's allergy, the family gives the WDS consent to post information about that child's allergy in the classroom. The parents/legal guardians of a child with severe allergies are encouraged to share specific details of their child's allergy with the families in their child's class. The WDS understands the responsibility of appropriately managing its social media platforms. The WDS will not publish, post, or release any information about children or families that is confidential or not public on its social media platforms. Consent will be obtained from a child's parent/legal guardians prior to any image or content of their child and/or family being published, posted, or released on WDS social media platforms.

Attendance

Drop-off

Timely arrival is important to the child and to the class. The school day begins at 9:00am. Classrooms and security doors open at 8:55am. At drop-off, children must be escorted by an adult (18 years or older) to their classroom, signed into the classroom via the Brightwheel attendance system, and left in the presence of the teacher. Children may not be left unattended in a classroom.

If a child arrives after 9:15am, the adult dropping off the child must sign in at the WDS office and wear a WDS Visitor Tag before proceeding to the child's classroom. Any child who arrives late must be signed into the classroom via the Brightwheel attendance system.

Pick-up

The school day ends at 12:00pm on Monday and at 2:00pm Tuesday – Friday. Security doors open for pick-up at 11:55am on Monday and 1:55pm Tuesday – Friday.

At pick-up, children must be retrieved by an adult (18 years or older) from their classroom, signed out of the classroom via the Brightwheel attendance system and escorted from the classroom. Children may not be left unattended in a classroom.

If a child needs to be picked up early, the adult picking up the child must sign in at the WDS office and wear a WDS Visitor Tag before proceeding to the child's classroom. Any child who is picked up early must be signed out of the classroom via the Brightwheel attendance system.

Late pick-up

Children must be picked up by an adult (18 years or older) by the stated closing time. Late fees are charged at \$3 per minute. Late fees begin to be charged at 12:15pm on Monday and at 2:15pm Tuesday - Friday. Please note, late fees are assigned to a child on the occurrence of the child's second late pick-up. WDS office staff sweep the building for children beginning five minutes after stated closing time. Please contact the WDS office if you are going to be late to pick-up.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent, please use Brightwheel to message your child's teacher, before the beginning of class.

Siblings

Siblings may not be left unattended in a classroom. For their safety, please supervise and manage siblings during drop-off and pick-up procedures.

Release of Children

Outside of a child's parent or legal guardian, a child may be released to adults (18 years or older) designated by the parent/guardian's written consent. Additional documentation is required by the WDS when a child will be regularly picked up by an adult (18 years of age or older) who is not the child's parent or legal guardian. These individuals must be designated as an approved pick up and added to the child's Brightwheel profile as such.

Building Security

The WDS takes the security of children seriously. All exterior doors that lead directly into the WDS are locked. At drop-off and pick-up, the Parking Lot door and the Pickwick door are unlocked but are monitored by WDS staff. The Caruth and Atrium doors are entrances into the church building and are unlocked. Interior security doors are locked throughout the school day. As always, only authorized people are permitted access to the WDS

For the security of your children, WDS employees do not admit people through locked doors.

Facilities

The indoor and outdoor facilities of the WDS are the property of UPUMC. Each morning a WDS employee walks throughout the facility and outdoor areas to ensure that they are free from trash, glass, sharp or hazardous items, harmful animals, insects, and other pests.

Playgrounds, Colgate Lawn and Outdoor Learning Center (OLC)

Playgrounds, the Colgate Lawn and the OLC are closed to the public during hours when children are present at the WDS (Monday – 9-12; Tuesday-Friday, 9-2).

Please contact UPUMC for information regarding playground(s), the Colgate Lawn and the OLC reservation and use.

Parking at the WDS

Please be mindful of children when in the parking lot. This is especially important during the high traffic times of drop-off and pick-up. Drivers should reduce their speed significantly and watch closely for children and families. Children should be held by the hand and/or use a stroller when crossing the parking lot. As a reminder, UP Police patrol both our parking lot and parking spaces along Caruth Blvd and Pickwick Ave. The WDS has been made aware that parking violations will be ticketed. Please do not park your vehicle in fire lines or directly in front of the Atrium doors.

Do not leave children or personal belongings unattended in your vehicles. The WDS strongly discourages families from idling their vehicles in our parking areas (parking lot and parking spaces along Caruth Blvd and Pickwick Ave).

Inclement Weather

Our inclement weather policy is as follows:

If HPISD experiences a closure to in-person instruction, the WDS will be closed.

In the event of the WDS closing, families will be notified via Remind text message, Brightwheel and/or email.

No refunds will be given if the WDS is closed due to unavoidable circumstances such as inclement weather or facility interruption (e.g., gas leak, electrical outage, etc.). Days missed due to closings will not be made up at a later date.

Educational Philosophy

The WDS adheres to the philosophy that children are naturally curious about their environment(s) and active participants in the learning process. Our learning environments offer a place where this natural curiosity can develop into a practical, on-going knowledge base for the child. The WDS also adheres to developmentally appropriate practices. It is our belief that within the context of developmentally appropriate practice, the child's educational growth is maximized. Employee interactions with children are critical to growth and development.

Our education program is play-based. We are committed to maintaining learning environments that promote play. Play and learning go together. They are intertwined. At the WDS, children learn through play by developing cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills, and literacy skills. During play, children can practice and integrate their learning across all areas of development. Teachers and staff work to incorporate play and playful exploration in WDS learning environments. They achieve this by scheduling time for play (daily schedule); creating space for play (room arrangement); and encouraging interactions that promote collaboration, experimentation, and imaginative thinking (relationships, materials, activities).

Curriculum

The WDS uses a thematic approach as the basis of its curriculum. The thematic approach is a method of organizing learning materials and activities. The approach supports two key teaching components: (1) information and (2) skill opportunity. Information is comprised of details about the theme that the teacher shares with the children. A skill opportunity is any activity provided to the children that helps them reach specific development goals.

Learning Centers

Learning centers are present in each classroom to provide children with a rich variety of experiences, projects, materials, problems, and ideas to explore and investigate. Learning centers include dramatic play, blocks, science/discovery, writing, library, art music/listening, sensory/water table, age-appropriate access to technology/computers, and math/manipulatives.

Child Assessment Plan

Assessment is the process of tracking the developmental progress of your child. The WDS uses a variety of instruments and methods to gain insight into your child's social/emotional, cognitive, language and physical development. Our assessment process also addresses areas of self-help and classroom functioning. Assessment information is represented in the child's portfolio and

reflects each child's progress over the course of the school year. The child's portfolio includes work samples, anecdotal observations, and age-appropriate developmental information.

The assessment instruments used at our school are both formal and informal in nature. Formal assessment tools are norm-referenced or standardized. The formal assessment tool used by the WDS is the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Assessment (Heggerty). Kindergarten classrooms are the only age level that participates in a formal assessment using the Heggerty. The Heggerty assesses various reading readiness skills and spotlights the strengths and weaknesses in the student's learning experience. The Heggerty is administered by the WDS Librarian. She enjoys a strong familiarity with these children as she works with them each week at their appointed library time.

Informal assessment tools are staff generated and paced for use in the classroom. While classroom teachers are responsible for assessing the children in their classroom, information provided by families is considered valuable in the assessment process. Developmental checklists (Infant/Toddler 1 & 2/2.5s programs), skills and progress reports (PreK 3s/PreK 4s programs) and the Kindergarten Student Report are the informal assessment tools used in our classrooms. These tools are aligned to our curriculum, which is based on the thematic approach, and completed two times each school year (fall and spring). The results of the assessment tools are shared with parents/legal guardians two times each year.

Classroom teachers are trained each school year on the methodology and application of our informal assessment tools. Assessment training provided to the classroom teachers encourages them to use our tools in an organic manner. Classroom teachers are specifically trained in the use of small groups, observation, and lesson planning to target individualized skills. At the conclusion of each school year, age-level assessment committees meet to review informal and formal assessment tools to ensure that the tools remain relevant to our program's needs.

The WDS utilizes data collected through the assessment process in two ways. First, the classroom teachers incorporate it into the development of their lesson plan. Second, the program uses assessment information to evaluate curriculum and education activities currently in use.

Parents/legal guardians participate in the assessment process by giving and receiving pertinent developmental information. They provide developmental, especially social/emotional and behavioral information in the form of the Family Survey. Throughout the school year, parents/legal guardians are invited to share anecdotal information, videos, and/or work samples from home with their child's teacher(s) to help inform the assessment process. Interactions and activities parents/legal guardians observe during day-to-day interactions with their child are valued by WDS teachers and staff as they provide additional context to the child's growth and development.

Parents/legal guardians may request information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's growth and development at any time. A written report detailing the child's progress is provided to the child's family in the fall and spring semesters.

Child Assessment Plan Statement of Confidentiality

Your child's confidentiality is maintained throughout the assessment process. Only the child's classroom teacher(s), ECE Coordinator, Director, and the child's parents/legal guardians have access to the child's assessment information. The classroom teacher(s), ECE Coordinator, and Director have access to the child's assessment information for educational support purposes only. All assessment data are collected and maintained in the child's portfolio folder, which remains in the classroom. If there is a need for outside specialists to review the assessment data, written permission from the family is required.

Educational/Developmental Differences and Special Needs

The WDS makes every effort to meet the needs of each child, including those with special needs. We encourage parents/legal guardians to provide evaluations and testing results of children with educational/developmental needs. Where possible, classroom teachers will seek to create the best situation for inclusion. Please note, these modifications must work within the resources and capabilities of the WDS. Parents/legal guardians, WDS staff, and outside therapeutic professionals can work together to implement individualized plans for the child. These plans can include, but are not limited to, Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

When the WDS teachers and staff suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, this possibility is communicated to families in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner. Families are provided with documentation and explanation for the concern, suggested next steps, and information about resources for assessment.

Child day care operations are public accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III. To learn more, visit www.ada.gov//resources/child-care-centers. If you believe that such an operation may be practicing discrimination in violation of Title III, you may call the ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Outside Therapeutic Services

Please contact the Early Childhood Education Coordinator if your child needs to be observed during school hours by a therapeutic professional. A completed Request for Observation Form must be on file in the WDS office prior to the observation.

If your child receives therapeutic services during WDS school hours, a completed Request for Therapeutic Services Form must be completed and on file in the WDS office.

All therapeutic professionals must sign-in at the WDS office prior to being admitted to the child's classroom.

If a family requests for a WDS employee to communicate with a therapist or other outside professional about a child, a completed Request for Outside Communication Form must be completed and on file in the WDS office.

Child Guidance Policy

The WDS Child Guidance Policy includes information in the Challenging Behavior Protocol, Biting, and Exclusionary Measures sections (see below). WDS staff maintain learning environments that are predictable, consistent, and harmonious. This type of learning environment allows children developmentally appropriate opportunities to make choices, play, and develop social relationships. It also provides children with clear boundaries and expectations for their behavior.

Discipline must be:

- (1) Individualized and consistent for each child;
- (2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- (3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
- (4) A positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, including the following:
 - (A) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
 - (B) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
 - (C) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
 - (D) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- (3) Grabbing or pulling a child;
- (4) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- (5) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- (6) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- (7) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet;
- (8) Placing a child in a restrictive device for time out;
- (9) Withholding active play or keeping a child inside as a consequence for behavior, unless the child is exhibiting behavior during active play that requires a brief supervised separation or time out that is consistent with §746.2803(4)(D) of this subchapter (relating to What methods of discipline and guidance may a caregiver use?); and
- (10) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapter L, Discipline and Guidance

Failure to guide and/or discipline children in accordance with the guidance and discipline techniques listed above may result in disciplinary action including reprimand and/or immediate termination of employment. Allegations of improper guidance or discipline will be investigated in accordance with the Discipline and Guidance Investigation Policy (see Employee Discipline Investigation Policy, page 38).

WDS employees are mandated by law to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Challenging Behavior Protocol

The WDS adopts the following definition of challenging behavior: "Challenging behavior is any behavior that (1) interferes with children's learning, development and success at play, (2) is harmful to the child, other children or adults, [or] (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure."

(Kaiser & Rasminsky, *Challenging Behavior in Young Children* (2nd Ed.), Pearson Education Inc., 2007, p.8).

For children demonstrating challenging behaviors, the teachers/staff implement the following:

- (1) Identify events, activities, interactions, and/or other environmental factors that predict the challenging behavior.
- (2) Track these behaviors through observations and anecdotal records.
- (3) By using the above techniques, the teacher(s) formulate a functional behavior assessment (FBA) to assess and understand "why" the behavior is happening.
- (4) With this information, teachers/staff and parents/legal guardians work as a team to implement a behavior intervention plan (BIP). Key implementation methods for positive behavior strategies will be individualized in the BIP and may include but are not limited to, environmental modifications, teaching replacement behaviors, positive reinforcement, redirection, structured breaks, schedule adaptations, etc.
- (5) As the BIP is implemented, the ECE Coordinator and Director will act as a resource to teachers and parents/legal guardians. Meetings and conversations to evaluate the effectiveness of the BIP will be scheduled.
- (6) If needed, parents/legal guardians may be asked to provide outside resources to assist with a child's challenging behavior. The WDS office maintains a resource list in the Family Resource Notebook for families of the school.

Biting

Biting is a common behavior often seen in young children. Biting behaviors typically resolve as children mature and develop better communication, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills.

While biting is a typical behavior for young children, it does not mean that it is acceptable. At the WDS, our teachers and staff implement the following procedures for incidents involving biting.

- The child who is bitten receives appropriate levels of first aid.
- Parents/legal guardians of the child who was bitten will be notified by the teacher(s) and will receive a Biting Incident Report. Please note, the name of the child presenting with the biting behavior will remain confidential.
- Parents/legal guardians of the child who bit will be notified by the teacher(s) and the incident will be documented.

If biting behaviors persist, the Challenging Behavior Protocol will be followed.

Teachers, staff, and parents/legal guardians will implement a behavior intervention plan that is individualized for the child presenting with biting behaviors.

Exclusionary Measures

The WDS strives to limit the use of exclusionary measures such as dismissal. However, if the WDS cannot adequately meet the educational/developmental needs of the child, or if the WDS documents a consistent and prolonged pattern of disruptive or unsafe behaviors such that the child, other children, staff or WDS property are injured or damaged, or if WDS operational policies outlined in the Family Handbook are repeatedly abused, the child may be dismissed from the WDS. Please note, exclusionary measures are not considered until all other possible interventions/adaptations have been utilized and there is a consensus that exclusion (dismissal) is in the best interest of the child. If exclusionary measures must be taken, applicable federal and state civil rights laws are followed. Additionally, information about access to support services and alternative placement may be offered to families.

Educational/Developmental Needs and Patterns of Unsafe Behaviors

When young children learn techniques and strategies to manage their behavior, thoughts, and feelings, they develop their ability to self-regulate. The maturation of self-regulation is an important component to a child's growth and development. Children need self-regulation to actively participate in learning.

WDS teachers and staff will work together to address a child's educational/developmental needs and patterns of behavior as they relate to the child's success in the classroom. Documentation of the child's educational experience and patterns of behavior (see Challenging Behavior Protocol, pg. 17) will be collected. Adaptations to a child's learning environment and school day schedule will be created with input from teachers, staff, and parents/legal guardians. These adaptations will be implemented and monitored within a given timeline. If warranted, both a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and a behavior intervention plan (BIP) will be created and implemented. If all possible interventions/adaptations have been utilized and there is no growth toward positive outcomes, exclusionary measures will be considered.

Abuse of Policies and Procedures

WDS teachers and staff will work to address confusion or misunderstanding of stated WDS policies and procedures with families. Communication and conversation will be documented. Detailed explanations and timelines will be utilized to help families understand and meet WDS policies and procedures. If all possible interventions/adaptations to help the family meet policies and procedures have been utilized and there is no growth toward positive outcomes, exclusionary measures will be considered.

Toilet Training

The WDS views toilet training as a developmental process. There is no magic time, nor method, for reaching this goal. If your child is in the process of toilet training, please inform your child's teacher. The WDS toilet training guidelines are listed below.

- (1) All children, regardless to their mastery, should be sent to school in loose fitting clothing that is easily handled by the child. Please, no belts.
- (2) Accidents happen. Please provide extra clothing for your child.
- (3) After toileting children should expect to wipe their own bottoms. The classroom and specials teachers cannot do this for them.
- (4) Clothing that is soiled by urine or feces is immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home with the child for laundering.
- (5) The WDS does not utilize potty chairs.
- (6) Children who are not yet fully independent in the toilet training process must be sent to school in pull-up style disposable training pants. For the WDS, "fully independent" is defined as a child who can recognize and verbalize the need to use the toilet. Changing pull-up style disposable training pants will be handled in the class bathroom. If needed, a member of the WDS office staff will be called to assist.
- (7) Children who experience a toileting accident will be changed into new clothing. Changing of soiled clothing will be handled in the class bathroom. If needed, a member of the WDS office staff will be called to assist.

Animals and Pets

No animals or pets are permitted inside WDS licensed spaces without prior arrangement with the classroom teacher and the Director. Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation requires families to be notified in writing when animals/pets are present in the school. Documentation of the animal's most recent vaccine record, as well as a statement of health from a veterinarian, must be on file in the office. Animals/pets are not permitted on the playgrounds, Colgate Lawn or Outdoor Learning Center (OLC).

Supervision

Supervision of young children is essential to their health and safety. Employees are always expected to know the whereabouts of each child in their care.

Supervision of playgrounds

Employees are to station themselves on the playground in designated zones. The use of zones allows employees to observe the children at play. Indoor active play is supervised at the same level as outdoor active play.

Supervision of infants and toddlers (Infant, Toddler 1, Toddler 2 & 2.5s*)

Infants and toddlers are always supervised by sight and sound. As such, employees must always be able to see and hear infants and toddlers. During naptime, employees must position themselves to see and hear any sleeping infants and toddlers. Children who remain awake during nap time receive the same level of supervision as children who are asleep. Please note, mirrors, video and/or sound monitors do not replace direct sight and sound supervision that is always required for children of this age.

**Sight and sound supervision of 2.5s will evolve as children at this age level master the toileting process. Supervision by sound for short intervals while children use the bathroom independently is permissible*

Supervision of preschoolers (PreK 3s & PreK 4s)

Preschoolers are primarily supervised by sight and sound with brief periods where they may be supervised by sound, as is developmentally appropriate. As such, employees must be able to see preschoolers most of the time. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible as long as employees frequently check on children who are out of sight.

Supervision of kindergarteners

Kindergarteners are primarily supervised by sight and sound with brief periods where they may be supervised by sound, as is developmentally appropriate. As such, employees must be able to see kindergarteners most of the time. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible as long as employees frequently check on children who are out of sight. An employee may permit kindergarteners to use the K hallway bathroom as this bathroom is in the secure (locked area) in the WDS. Employees monitor bathroom use by kindergarteners.

Active Play: Indoors and Outdoors

Active play is an important component to a child's physical development. This type of play helps the child develop their coordination, balance, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and body awareness. The physical activity associated with active play is also a health benefit to children. Research suggests that when adults allow children opportunities to participate in regular active play, these children develop healthier habits and are less likely to lead a sedentary lifestyle. Additionally, physical activity associated with active play (both indoors and outdoors) helps children use up their natural energy and promotes better eating and sleeping habits.

At the WDS, all children engage in active play in indoor and outdoor settings. We have three playgrounds and the Colgate Lawn available daily to children. These spaces offer opportunities for structured and unstructured play for a minimum of 30 minutes each school day for all ages. Our 2.5s, PreK 3s, PreK 4s and Kindergarten also have access to Physical Education (PE) classes taught by Stretch-N-Grow instructors. PE classes take place in the basement for children enrolled in the 2.5s, PreK 3s, PreK 4s, & K programs. Should the weather prohibit outdoor active play, the WDS works with UPUMC to find an alternative indoor space that permits age-appropriate active play.

Inclement Weather and Outdoor Play

The WDS assesses many factors to determine whether an outdoor play experience is healthy for our children and employees. The Child Care Weather Watch chart combines both temperature and humidity to determine the heat index/wind chill factor and is a primary resource for determining when it is too hot or cold for outdoor play. Additionally, the WDS monitors the air quality index by subscribing to alerts from the Texas Commission on Environmental Air Quality and The Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools chart. Using data from the charts and alerts described, the WDS will evaluate weather conditions (temperature, wind, precipitation) and air quality. If either is determined to be harmful to employees and children, alternative indoor play locations will be utilized. While outside, employees also closely monitor the children for signs of over-heating and/or breathing issues. Water is available throughout the day, so that the children and employees are well hydrated.

As part of our daily activities, state standards require us to go outside daily. For children and employees who are in good health and properly dressed, going outside provides an alternative learning environment for stimulating thoughts, ideas, and social interaction. If your child is unable to participate in the classes' daily activities that include outside time, please have your child stay at home. The WDS does not have adequate staff for supervising children who are unable to play outside.

We ask that you send your child with appropriate outerwear, including close-toed shoes. In the event of inclement weather, excessively hot weather, or poor air quality, employees, under the Director's guidance, will use their discretion on the amount of time outside and may choose to keep the children inside

Nap Time & Rest Periods

For infants and toddlers, nap time is scheduled daily between 12:30pm - 2:00pm. Although children are not required to sleep, everyone is required to sit on a mat and rest quietly. The WDS provides cribs/mats and sheets for each infant/toddler. If you would prefer for your child to nap at home, please pick up your child prior to the classroom's scheduled nap time. If a child is continually having problems during the rest time, a parent or guardian may be contacted. Please note, according to licensing guidelines, children do not have bottles and/or training cups while in a crib or on a nap mat.

During nap time, WDS employees must position themselves to see and hear any sleeping infants and toddlers. Mirrors, video, or sound monitors are not utilized by WDS employees during nap time and rest periods. Direct sight and sound supervision is always required for children enrolled in the Infant, Toddler 1 and Toddler 2 programs.

For children participating in the 2.5s, PreK 3s, PreK 4s and Kindergarten programs, a quiet rest time is scheduled daily. Children are given the opportunity to select a book and quietly rest for a brief period.

Nap Time Comfort Items

For children enrolled in the Infant, Toddler 1 and Toddler 2 classes, families are welcome to provide a blanket and one special "lovey" item from home for nap time. The WDS does not provide these items. These items will be stored individually in the classroom. Please launder these items upon return to home.

For infants younger than 12 months, blankets, comforters, quilts, pillows, soft toys, stuffed animals, or bumper pads are not allowed in cribs or rest equipment. Infants may use a pacifier during sleep; however, the pacifier must not be attached to stuffed animals or the infant's clothing by a string, cord or other attaching mechanism.

Please do not send a nap mat from home.

Infant Sleep Policy

Infants 12 months and younger are placed on their backs to sleep on a firm surface manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. Additionally, infants younger than 12 months are not permitted to use infant sleep positioners (devices intended to keep an infant in a desired position while sleeping) unless ordered by a physician. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position. Only one infant is placed in a crib for sleep. Cribs are bare except for a tight-fitting sheet and mattress protector. Blankets, comforters, quilts, pillows, soft toys, stuffed animals, or bumper pads are not permitted for use in the crib for infants younger than 12 months. Infants' heads, faces and cribs remain uncovered during sleep. Infants are not swaddled for sleep or rest. Please note, only sleeveless sleep sacks are permitted for use in the classroom. Infants may use a pacifier during sleep; however, the pacifier must not be attached to stuffed animals or the infant's clothing by a string, cord or other attaching mechanism.

If an infant younger than 12 months arrives to the program asleep or falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (e.g., bouncy chair, swing, stroller, highchair), or falls asleep while being held by an employee or substitute teacher the infant will be moved to a crib at the employee's earliest opportunity.

The WDS ensures that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult. WDS infant teachers and employees actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound. Awake infants participate in supervised "tummy time" several times throughout the day. The WDS is smoke-free. The use of e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers are prohibited.

Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled as part of the WDS's curriculum for the PreK 4s and Kindergarten classes only. Families will be notified at least 48 hours in advance of field trip locations, times, and dates. Class rosters do not change during a field trip. During a field trip, WDS employees ensure that appropriate staff-to-child ratios and class sizes are maintained by implementing the following procedures:

- Bring the field trip class roster (list of children's names who are attending the field trip)
- Count children three times during the field trip (1) beginning (2) middle and (3) end
- Document and record these counts three times on the field trip class roster

Additionally, field trip information will be visibly posted until children have returned from the excursion. The WDS does not offer transportation services. Drivers sign children out of the WDS classroom upon departure and back into the WDS upon return. To ensure the safety of all children, we comply with the following procedures:

- Signed permission slips from a parent/legal guardian allowing a designated driver to serve as the Emergency Contact for their child for the day of the field trip
- Emergency medical consent forms and emergency contact information for each class are always carried by each child's classroom teacher
- A first aid kit accompanies the group of children
- Each child wears a bracelet listing the name and telephone number of the WDS

- All drivers must have a current copy of their driver license and a current copy of their auto insurance on file in the school office
- Each driver and classroom teacher carries a current driver license and a cell phone to be used in case of an emergency
- Each employee is pediatric CPR/First Aid certified

Any substitute teacher participating in a WDS field trip (1) will meet the qualifications of a classroom teacher and (2) will complete the duties assigned to a classroom teacher as outlined in the Transportation/Field Trip section of this handbook.

Safety Seat System Requirements

All children younger than 8 years of age or less than 4 feet 9 inches tall are required by law to be in a child safety seat system. ("Child safety seat system" includes car seats and booster seats, including high-back and backless boosters.)

The law also requires that safety seats be used according to the manufacturer's instructions, including height and weight guidelines.

Classroom Parties

Classroom parties are arranged by each individual class and organized by the room parent and classroom teacher. Parents/legal guardians can sign up for party needs at the beginning of the year. All parties take place on the WDS campus.

Bounce houses, petting zoos, food trucks and water slides are prohibited.

Food/Candy for Class Parties/Celebrations – family provided

The WDS asks families providing food items or candy to the classroom to do the following:

- Inform the classroom teacher of food items prior to delivery to the classroom
- Consider known food allergies in the classroom and either provide alternative foods items or allow the family of the child with an allergy to provide an alternative

Birthday Celebrations

Classrooms celebrate each child's birthday. Please speak to your child's teacher prior to sending any birthday snacks. When providing food for the classroom, please make sure and take into consideration any food allergies that may be present in the classroom. Birthday party invitations may not be distributed at school.

Balloons

Balloons are a choking hazard for children under the age of five. Balloons are not permitted in the Infants, Toddler 1, Toddler 2, 2.5s, PreK 3s & PreK 4s programs.

Balloons are permitted in the kindergarten program with prior classroom teacher approval.

Classroom Visitors

The WDS recognizes the following categories of classroom visitors:

Classroom Guest

A classroom guest is any individual visiting the classroom for a short period of time during school hours. Examples of a classroom guest include but are not limited to class reader, science leader, classroom party attendee. Classroom teachers are the primary caregivers of their classroom. Classroom guests are not considered as part of the WDS ratio. The classroom guest must sign in at the WDS office and wear a Visitor Tag.

Mystery Reader

Please coordinate the date and time of your read aloud with your child's classroom teacher. If an older sibling is going to participate as the mystery reader, please verify this with your child's classroom teacher.

Science Leader

This is an optional classroom activity. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to approve the science experiment/activity prior to use in the classroom. Please make sure to verify the steps, materials and expected outcomes of the selected science experiment/activity with your child's classroom teacher.

Meal Service Practices

The WDS does not provide daily lunches or daily snacks. Daily lunches and snacks must be brought from home. Families are to send water for children to drink. Please provide a reusable cup, water bottle or sippy cup and any necessary eating utensils (fork, spoon) for your child.

No refrigeration is provided, nor can food be heated. Families should pack lunches in containers that can maintain the appropriate temperatures for the food. Water is always available to each child and is served at every meal (snack & lunch) and after active play. The WDS does not provide cow's milk to any age group.

Any food for celebrations, including birthdays, must be coordinated/confirmed with the classroom teacher.

Food Safety Policy for Children in our Care

The WDS protects children with allergies from contact with the allergen to the best of its ability. However, the WDS is not, nor cannot be, free of food items and non-food items that may lead to any allergic reaction. **The parents/legal guardians of a child with severe allergies are encouraged to contact the families in their child's class to share specific details of their child's allergy.**

The WDS does not allow children younger than four years these foods: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas; hard pretzels; spoonful of peanut butter; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. This is a NAEYC requirement and is applicable to food brought from home. The WDS will not wash the fresh fruits and vegetables packed in snacks/lunches brought from home. Families should complete this task prior to packing the child's snack and lunch.

Foodborne illness can multiply rapidly at temperatures between 40° F and 140° F. Perishable food is best kept at a safe temperature in an insulated lunchbox/container with an ice pack.

For children with special feeding needs (including infants), the WDS will document the type and quantity of food the child consumes and provide this information to the family at the end of the school day.

Special Events

The WDS occasionally purchases food items and beverages to enhance key curricular experiences. Families are notified in advance about these special foods/beverages. These food items and beverages are cross-checked with known allergies on class rosters, and the foods/beverages are served according to safe practices. The use of plastic or polystyrene (Styrofoam™) containers, plates, bags or wraps in a microwave oven are prohibited. Liquids and foods that are hotter than 100° F are always kept out of children's reach. WDS employees are instructed to discard any foods with expired dates.

Food/Candy for Class Parties/Celebrations – family provided

The WDS asks families providing food items or candy to the classroom to do the following:

- Inform the classroom teacher of food items prior to delivery to the classroom
- Consider known allergies in the classroom and either provide alternative foods items or allow the family of the child with an allergy to provide an alternative

Food/Candy as Treat or Incentive – employee provided

Employees who choose to provide food or candy as a special treat or incentive have the responsibility to:

- Inform families in writing the details of this practice (type of food/candy; time/reason why it will be given)
- Allow families to opt out of or decline this practice
- Cross check food/candy with known allergies on the class roster
- Add any applicable notes to their substitute teacher plans

Technology in Learning Environments

Technology in Learning Environments

The WDS supports the use of technology in its learning environments to enhance children's educational experiences. Preschool and kindergarten teachers are encouraged to integrate technology use into children's play via developmentally appropriate apps and programs that support collaborative play. Research indicates that technology, including screen time and media time, is most appropriate and offers the most benefit when children are actively engaged with the content they are viewing. Labeling objects, identifying people on screen, and asking questions are all active viewing strategies. Media use and screen time activities are limited to children who are two years (24 months) or older. For children in this age range, these activities are permitted at the WDS if they meet the following criteria.

- Does not include violence or advertising
- Offers relevant content related to planned activities/educational goals
- Does not exceed 30 minutes
- Does not occur during mealtimes (snack and lunch), naptimes, or rest times

The only exception to the criteria listed above are for PreK 4s & K special holiday movie events.

Infant Feeding Policy

The type and quantity of food the child consumes while at the WDS will be documented via the Infant Daily Sheet. This sheet is sent home with the child at the end of each school day.

Per NAEYC guidelines, formula should be sent in factory sealed containers. Parents/legal guardians may bring solid food prepared at home for use by their child. Children are offered fluids from a cup as soon as the families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use a cup. Bottle feedings do not contain solid food unless the child's health care provider supplies written instructions with a medical reason. If staff warm formula or breast milk, the milk is warmed in hot water at no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no more than 5 minutes. WDS staff will discard any unfinished and unrefrigerated formula or breast milk after one hour. Breast milk must be labeled with the infant's full name (first and last name) and the date that the milk was expressed.

For an infant who is not yet ready for table food, written feeding instructions that are signed and dated by the parent/legal guardian must be provided to the infant teachers. This information should be reviewed and updated every 30 days until the infant is able to eat table food.

Nursing/Breastfeeding Policy

The WDS supports breastfeeding by complying with the following procedures:

- (1) The WDS accepts, stores, and serves expressed breast milk for feedings.
- (2) The WDS only accepts breast milk in ready-to-feed sanitary containers.
- (3) Breast milk should be labeled with the infant's full name (first and last name) and date that the milk was expressed. It is stored in a refrigerator for no longer than 24 hours.
- (4) The WDS will gently mix, not shake, the breast milk before feeding to preserve special infection-fighting and nutritional components in breast milk.
- (5) The WDS will discard any unfinished and unrefrigerated breast milk after two hours.
- (6) The WDS staff will work to coordinate feeding schedules with nursing mothers.

Handwashing

Handwashing is an important method in reducing the spread of disease. WDS employees follow the NAEYC guidelines for handwashing. Additionally, children participate in handwashing procedures each day. Children are to wash their hands upon arrival in the classroom. Children also wash their hands before/after diapering or use of the toilet; after blowing their nose; before and after outdoor time; and before lunch and snack.

The WDS utilizes alcohol-based hand sanitizers on occasion. Employees provide direct supervision of children while applying hand sanitizers. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not permitted for use by children 24 months or younger. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers does not replace regular handwashing.

Health Information for Children

Health information and immunization records are maintained in the WDS office. Parents/legal guardians are requested to update their child's health information (allergies, medications, immunizations, etc.) as regularly as possible. By enrolling their child into the WDS, parents/legal guardians give the WDS administrative staff and their child's classroom teacher reasonable access to the child's health information.

Immunizations

Each child enrolled in the WDS must meet and continue to meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of State Services. This requirement applies to all children in care from birth to 14 years of age. All required immunizations for your child's age must be completed by the date of admission. Exemptions for immunization requirements must meet criteria specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services rules 25 TAC §97.62 (relating to Exclusions from Compliance). The recommended childhood and adolescent Immunization schedule is found at www.dshs.texas.gov/immunizations/school/requirements

Immunization schedules are monitored by the WDS. Parents/legal guardians will be reminded to update immunization records throughout the year. Key dates relating to the immunization timeline are found below.

January- overdue immunization records identified, and parents contacted via email.

April 30- current immunization record due to the WDS. This record is for the following school year and accompanies the Enrollment form.

August- overdue immunization records identified, and parents contacted via email.

Please note, children may not attend school until a current immunization record is on file in the WDS office. If your child is under immunized (e.g., delayed immunization schedule or an exemption from immunization requirements), they will be promptly excluded from school activities if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs at the WDS. The procedure for exclusion and the timeline for return to the WDS will be shared with families in accordance with directives from Dallas County Health Department and Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation.

Employees of the WDS work to protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Classroom teachers in the Infant and Toddler 1 program must submit current documentation of the Tdap vaccine. The Tdap vaccine prevents the spread of Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis.

For additional information regarding immunizations visit the Texas Department of State Health Services website at www.dshs.texas.gov/immunizations/school

Vision and Hearing Screenings

Children enrolled in the PreK 4s and Kindergarten programs at the WDS must be screened within 120 days of the first day of school. The requirements for Vision and Hearing Screening apply each year. Please see the Enrollment Form for details.

Illness at School

The WDS will follow the policy below for illnesses. Because the WDS is concerned about the well-being of all individuals present, it is important that everyone take precautions to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses.

If a child becomes ill at school, they will be removed from the classroom and relocated to the WDS office. **When you are contacted and told your child is ill, you are required to make arrangements to pick them up immediately.** If parents/legal guardians are unavailable, the WDS will contact people listed on the child's Enrollment Form.

Children who present with the symptoms listed below will be sent home:

- FEVER - temperature of 100° F or higher
- DIARRHEA
- VOMITING
- RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS - difficult or rapid breathing or severe coughing
- SORE THROAT - painful to swallow or talk, swollen glands in neck
- APPEARANCE, BEHAVIOR, UNUSUAL COLOR – change in normal behavior: unable to participate in classroom routines and activities, unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite, confused, and/or irritable
- RASH - skin rashes affecting the face, hands, abdomen, arms, back, feet or legs
- SORES - sores affecting the face, hands, abdomen, arms, back, feet with or without drainage
- SEVERE BODY ACHES - headache, earache, or stomachache

Runny Nose: The WDS is aware that seasonal allergies can occur in young children. However, when the care of this symptom interrupts the daily routine and activities of the classroom, it becomes a hindrance to instruction. If your child presents with an excessively runny nose, which interrupts daily classroom routine and instruction, you will be contacted by your child's classroom teacher and be asked to pick them up from school.

When to Keep Your Child at Home

The WDS is concerned about the well-being of all children in our care. It is important that everyone takes precautions to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses.

Certain symptoms in children may suggest communicable disease. **Children who have had the following symptom(s) and/or diagnoses within 24 hours should be kept home.** Please see below for information regarding when children may return to WDS attendance:

- FEVER - temperature of 100° F or higher. *Child may attend when they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medication*
- DIARRHEA - *Child may attend when diarrhea has ceased for 24 hours*
- VOMITING - *Child may attend when vomiting has ceased for 24 hours*
- RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS – difficult/rapid breathing or severe coughing. *Child may attend with note from doctor*
- SORE THROAT - painful to swallow or talk, swollen glands in neck. *Child may attend with note from doctor*
- APPEARANCE, BEHAVIOR, UNUSUAL COLOR - change in normal behavior: unable to participate in classroom routines and activities, unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite, confused, and/or irritable. *Child may attend 24 hours after normative appearance, behavior and color have returned*
- RASH (unspecified) - skin rashes affecting the face, hands, abdomen, arms, back, feet or legs. *Child may attend with note from doctor*
- SORES (unspecified) - sores affecting the face, hands, abdomen, arms, back, feet with or without drainage. *Child may attend with note from doctor*
- STREP THROAT - *Child may attend when the following are met: (1) 24 hours after treatment has begun and (2) fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medication*
- PNEUMONIA – *Child may attend when the following are met: (1) 24 hours after treatment has begun, and (2) fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medication, and (3) can participate fully in WDS routines and activities*

Please use Brightwheel to message your child's teacher if they will not be present at the WDS.

Please do not send your child to school if your child cannot play outside or participate in school day routines and activities.

Please notify the WDS office as soon as possible if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, including but not limited to: COVID-19; influenza; pink eye (bacterial conjunctivitis); Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD); Fifth Disease (Human Parvovirus B19); head lice. The WDS office will follow Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation reporting procedures and will establish the appropriate return to school timeline for your child.

Parents/legal guardians will be notified via email from the WDS office if their child has been exposed to a communicable disease. Confidentiality is important to us. The name of the infected individual will not be shared in any communications with the classroom. The WDS reserves the right to determine when an individual who has been diagnosed with a communicable disease can return to school.

Medications

The WDS consults with local health professionals to review our policies and procedures regarding distribution of medications.

Medicine administered to children at the WDS must adhere to the following:

- All medications must be checked into the WDS office
- Parents/legal guardians must give written permission for staff to administer prescription or over-the-counter medication via the Authorization for Dispensing Medication Form
- Medication must be labeled with the child's first and last names
- Medication must include the following information: (1) the date that either the prescription was filled or the recommendation was obtained from the child's health care provider to begin the medication, (2) the name of the licensed health care provider, (3) the expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medication, (4) the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication; and (5) instructions on how to administer and store it
- Medication is kept in the WDS office in a locked cabinet or, in cases of severe diagnosed allergies, inside the WDS Emergency Bag

Medication is only administered by WDS administrative employees*, who have been trained on the five right practices of medication administration set forth by NAEYC program accreditation standards and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Please note, classroom and specials teachers cannot accept medication.

Allergy Action Plans

Children diagnosed with an allergy that requires medication must have a completed Allergy Action Plan on file in the WDS office before attending school. The Allergy Action Plan must be signed by the child's parent/legal guardian and the child's doctor. Please note, children may not attend school until the completed Allergy Action Plan and all medications listed on the plan are checked into the WDS office.

*In an emergency, any WDS employee may administer emergency medication prescribed to a child with an Allergy Action Plan.

Medical/Dental Action Plans

If a physician has ordered a special medical management procedure for a child, the child must have a current Medical/Dental Action Plan on file in the WDS office. This form must be signed by the child's parent/legal guardian and the physician ordering the procedure. Please note, an adult trained on the procedures outlined on this form must be onsite whenever the child is present at the WDS.

Non-prescription preventatives

Over-the-counter (OTC) diaper cream, lotion, lip balm, and sunscreen are not considered medication. Use at the WDS requires written consent from the child's parent/legal guardian. This written consent should be given to the classroom teacher. Please note, the WDS does not provide OTC diaper cream, lotion, lip balm, or sunscreen.

Insect repellent is not administered by WDS employees. If needed, please administer it prior to sending your child to school.

Allergy Recommendations and Guidelines

The WDS protects children with allergies from contact with the allergen to the best of its ability. However, the WDS is not, nor cannot be, free of food items and non-food items that may lead to any allergic reaction. By informing the WDS of a child's allergy, the family gives the WDS consent to post information about that child's allergy in the classroom. **The parents/legal guardians of a child with severe allergies are encouraged to contact the families in their child's class to share specific details of their child's allergy.**

Children with a diagnosed allergy that requires medication may not attend school until the completed Allergy Action Plan and all medications listed on the plan are checked into the WDS office.

First Aid & CPR

WDS employees maintain current pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR certifications. WDS employees will provide reasonable first aid to cuts, scratches, bruises, etc. with appropriate first aid materials. First aid kits are available throughout the WDS.

Injuries

The safety of the children in our care is always of utmost importance. Children requiring first aid will be brought to the WDS office, unless it is best for the child to remain in place. Any incident resulting in an injury to a child must be reported to the Director. Parents/legal guardians will be notified of the incident.

If an incident results in an injury that requires your child to receive treatment by a health care professional, please report it to the office. The WDS is required to contact THHS Child Care Regulation in this situation. A completed Incident/Illness Report will be shared with Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation. Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation will conduct an investigation to ensure that correct protocols and procedures were followed by the WDS. Please see page 2, Texas Administrative Code Rule §745.8415, for details of Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation's investigation process.

Emergency Care for Children in our Care

If your child becomes seriously ill/injured, you will be notified immediately. By signing the Enrollment Form, you have granted permission for WDS employees to take whatever steps may be necessary to obtain emergency medical and dental care if warranted.

If the WDS cannot contact a parent/legal guardian, employees will do any or all of the following. Expenses incurred will be borne by the child's family:

- Call 911
- Give the child first aid or CPR, if needed
- Accompany the child to an emergency room, if needed

If the emergency is such that a child's life is determined to be in danger, 911 will be contacted first before attempting to contact a parent/legal guardian.

Emergency Preparedness Plans

The WDS is required to develop emergency preparedness plans for specific emergency events. Should an emergency arise, the WDS will implement the appropriate WDS Emergency Preparedness Plan. Details of these plans are in the WDS Emergency Bag found in each classroom. Two examples of routinely practiced plans, fire and severe weather, are below.

Fire Emergency Plan

Evacuate the WDS (take the WDS Emergency Bag and your personal phone with you) to the location's designated safe area, count children to verify your class roster. If you are a classroom teacher on a break, proceed immediately to your classroom's designated safe area. Count and supervise children until you receive instructions from the WDS administrators. Return to the WDS when "all clear" instruction is received from WDS administrators.

Preschool & Kindergarten wings: Exit the WDS and evacuate to Smith Park.

During fire drills, these wings practice by evacuating the building and sitting along the sidewalk of Caruth Blvd.

UPUMC Sanctuary: Exit the sanctuary and evacuate to Smith Park.

During fire drills, these wings practice by evacuating the building and sitting along the sidewalk of Caruth Blvd.

UPUMC Basement & Gym: Exit the WDS and evacuate to Smith Park.

During fire drills, these areas practice by evacuating the building and sitting along the sidewalk of Caruth Blvd.

Infant/Toddler wing: Exit the WDS and evacuate to the Colgate Lawn.

During fire drills, this wing practices by evacuating the WDS and gathering in the Colgate Lawn in the area just outside of the Infant/Toddler playground.

Children's Chapel: Exit the WDS and evacuate to the sidewalk of Colgate Ave.

During fire drills, this area practices by evacuating the building and sitting along the sidewalk of Colgate Ave.

Severe Weather Emergency Plan

Relocate (take the WDS Emergency Bag and your personal phone with you) to the UPUMC basement, count children to verify your class roster. If you are a classroom teacher on a break, proceed immediately to the UPUMC basement and join your classroom. Count and supervise children until you receive instructions from the WDS administrators. Return to the WDS when "all clear" instruction is received from WDS administrators. *During severe weather drills, all wings of the WDS, UPUMC Sanctuary, and the Children's Chapel relocate to the UPUMC basement.*

Communications and Emergency Preparedness Plans

WDS employees should have their personal cell phones with them during any evacuation, relocation, or sheltering/lock-down event. As soon as the children, teachers, and staff are safely evacuated or relocated, families will be contacted by WDS staff. Additionally, WDS administrative staff will contact the appropriate local authority (fire, police, EMS and/or health department) and Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation.

Essential Documentation and Emergency Preparedness Plans

The Classroom Binder and WDS Emergency Bag must remain with the children during any evacuation, relocation or sheltering event.

Release of Children and Emergency Preparedness Plans

In an emergency event where children, teachers and staff are unable to return to the WDS, children will be reunited with parents at a designated safe area.

This designated safe area (Smith Park, Christ the King Catholic Church etc.) will be communicated to families via text/email. In an emergency event where children, teachers and staff can remain at the WDS, children will be reunited with families at the WDS.

Key Definitions and Emergency Preparedness Plans

- Evacuation - Children, teachers, and staff leave the WDS and evacuate to a designated safe area away from the school. Designated safe areas away from the school include Smith Park, Colgate Lawn, and sidewalk of Colgate Avenue.
- Relocation - Children, teachers, and staff leave the WDS and relocate to a designated, alternate shelter. Unless directed otherwise, the designated shelter is Christ the King Catholic Church 8017 Preston Road Dallas, TX 75225.
- Sheltering - Children, teachers, and staff move to the UPUMC basement.
- Lockdown- Children, teachers, and staff quietly move to a space with a door that locks and/or a space that keeps children, teachers, and staff hidden from direct lines of sight.

Personal Belongings and Dress

Each child should have a complete change of clothing at the WDS in case of accidents. Items should include shirts, pants, socks, underwear, shoes, and disposable diapers when needed. Each season presents its own challenge for parents and teachers regarding clothing. We encourage you to label all clothing as well as water bottles, sippy cups, lunch boxes, school bags, diaper bags, etc.

Children should be dressed to play when coming to school. Dress your child in clothing that is durable and comfortable. Since we go outside whenever possible, dress your children accordingly. Select closed toe shoes that give support and allow freedom of movement. Children will participate in "messy" activities, such as painting. Although we do take precautions to prevent clothes from getting damaged, accidents do happen. We recommend clothing that will not present a problem to you or your child. The WDS is not responsible for stained or ruined clothing.

Our classrooms and playgrounds are equipped with adequate, age-appropriate toys. Please do not allow your child to bring personal toys or possessions to school. We cannot accept responsibility for lost or broken personal items.

Diapers

Only disposable diapers are permitted at the WDS. Please do not send your child in cloth diapers. Clothing that is soiled by urine or feces is immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.

The WDS does not provide disposable diapers or diaper cream. If your child needs these items, please bring them from home labeled with your child's name. Use of over the counter diaper cream in the classroom requires written consent from the child's parent/legal guardian. This written consent should be given to the classroom teacher.

WDS School Bags

Children enrolled in the 2.5s, PreK 3s, and PreK 4s classes will receive a bag from the school. This bag should be kept year to year. The cost to replace a WDS school bag is \$10.

Children enrolled in Kindergarten may bring their own backpack. Children enrolled in the Infant, Toddler 1 and Toddler 2 classes may bring their own backpack and/or diaper bag.

Records of Children

Per Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation requirements, children's records are confidential. During regular business hours, children's records are immediately available upon request to:

- Child's parents/legal guardians
- Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation personnel
- WDS administrators and teaching staff

By enrolling their child into the WDS, parents/legal guardians give WDS administrators and their child's classroom teacher reasonable access to the child's health information.

If applicable, custody documents must be on file in the WDS office.

Records Request Policy

Any request for records (e.g., a child's academic portfolio, account statement, etc.), must be made by the parent or legal guardian of a child in writing (e.g., email) to the Director of the WDS. The request must specify the following information:

- Name of Child
- Name of Requestor
- Relationship of Requestor to Child
- Records Requested
- How Records should be Delivered (e.g., Email, FedEx, Pick-up, etc.)
- Purpose for the Record Request

The Director will respond promptly to any such requests, typically within 3 business days. Should a Court Order or any other legal document exist that would prevent the dissemination of a child's records to that child's parent(s), such order must be provided to the WDS.

Records Requested for a Legal Matter - Pre- or Threatened Litigation

The WDS strives to balance its need to comply with Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation Requirements, which allow all parents reasonable access to their child's school records, and the desire to remain neutral in any legal matter (regardless of the stage of such matter) concerning WDS families. As such, any records requested pursuant to a potential (whether pre-litigation or threatened litigation) legal matter must conform to the requesting procedures set forth above and the requesting party must also disclose such records are being requested for legal reasons. Upon receiving such a request, the Director will copy the requested material and return it to the requesting parent within 3 business days. Additionally, the Director will provide a copy of the request and the requested materials to the non-requesting parent and any known legal representatives of the requesting parent and non-requesting parent.

Records Requested for a Legal Matter - Pending Litigation

Any documents requested for a use in a pending litigation matter (including pending divorce or child custody proceedings) must be made pursuant to a subpoena to the WDS. The WDS will then comply with the terms of the subpoena.

Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect of Children

Child abuse and neglect are against the law in Texas. If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required by law to report it to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or a law enforcement agency. You are required to make a report within 48 hours of the time you suspected the child has been or may be abused or neglected. Your report is confidential, and your identity is kept confidential.

Employees of the WDS are mandated by law to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect. If circumstances warrant suspicions or questions, an employee is to notify the Director immediately.

Definitions

Abuse is the mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury to a child or failure to prevent such injury to a child.

Neglect includes (1) failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter and/or medical care; and/or (2) leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm.

Contact Information

To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation please call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or file an on-line report at the DFPS website, <https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

Making the Report

Be specific. Provide the name, age, and gender of the child; brief description of the child; current injuries medical issues or behavioral problems; parents' names and names of siblings living in the home. Report exactly what happened and when. Be sure to record all injuries and incidents you have observed, including dates and time of day. Provide any information you have about the relationship between the child and the suspected abuser.

Abuse assistance and intervention

You may contact the following agencies to obtain assistance and intervention for cases of abuse:

- Child and Family Guidance Center 214-351-3490
- Children First Counseling Center 972-264-0604
- Galaxy Counseling Center 972-272-4429
- Jewish Family Services of Greater Dallas 972-437-9950
- Victims Outreach 214-358-5173

WDS Training

All employees of the WDS are required to receive training which address different aspects of abuse, neglect, and the exploitation of children. These topics include:

- Prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children
- Warning signs and contributing factors of abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Reporting incidents of abuse and neglect

Employee Discipline Investigation Policy

This policy provides employees with the WDS's internal processes for managing cases when an employee is accused of inappropriate discipline/corporal punishment, abuse, or neglect of a child in their care. The WDS understands the importance of protecting both the rights of the employee and the children in their care in this situation. To this end, the WDS will cooperate with appropriate state agencies to conduct a fair, impartial, confidential, and accurate investigation, ensuring that the accused employee is informed of allegations, provided an opportunity to respond, and is protected from premature retaliation. Similarly, the WDS will ensure that individual making the accusation is provided an opportunity to participate in the investigation process and is protected from premature retaliation. Please note, the WDS works to keep the identities of individuals involved confidential throughout the investigation to protect the reputations of all parties involved. These investigations are individualized for each employee and circumstance. The results of the investigation will be used to determine if further disciplinary action is warranted up to and including termination of employment.

1. The WDS will contact Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation. If directed, the WDS will contact the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Statewide Intake. State law requires DFPS to investigate reports of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. When there is a report of abuse, neglect, or exploitation at a child care center, Child Care Investigations (CCI) gathers information from a variety of sources to make a fair, impartial, and accurate determination of the report. WDS employees are mandated by law to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect. WDS employees who report legitimate suspicions of child abuse/neglect are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary actions. Per Texas Family Code (§261.110), employers may be liable for taking adverse employment action against an employee who make a report of abuse or neglect in good faith.
2. The WDS will provide direct supervision/support in the classroom where the alleged incident occurred. Supervision may be provided by the Director, ECE Coordinator and/or WDS substitute teacher. **If an employee is directly observed by a WDS employee and/or parent/legal guardian abusing, neglecting, and/or utilizing corporal punishment, the employee will be removed from the classroom until the investigation is closed.**
3. Per instructions from CCI and/or Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation the WDS will notify the appropriate stakeholders of the investigation. The WDS will work to maintain the confidentiality of the individuals involved and will rely on guidance from CCI and Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation and to determine what aspects of the investigation to share.
4. The WDS will cooperate fully in the investigation. A CCI investigator interviews the child or children alleged to have been abused, neglected, or exploited; the individual or individuals alleged to have caused the abuse, neglect, or exploitation; other adults and children who may have witnessed the alleged incident or may have information pertinent to the investigation. If children are interviewed as part of the investigation,

- their parents/legal guardians will be notified by CCI and/or Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation.
5. CCI notifies the accused employee of CCI's findings at the end of the investigation. If the employee is found to be responsible for abusing, neglecting, or exploiting a child, information regarding how to contest the finding through an administrative review of investigation finding (ARIF) and/or due process hearing through the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) will be provided to employee. These processes are confidential to the employee who is found responsible. The WDS may not request an administrative review on the employee's behalf. The WDS will share the investigation results with appropriate stakeholders per CCI and Texas HHSC Child Care Regulation guidelines.