

Children's Academy Staff Handbook

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Section 1 – General Information

Message from the Director

Welcome to Children’s Academy!

Children’s Academy was established in 1981 by Ms. Susana Blake to provide quality care and education to the children entrusted to her. In 2006, Ms. Susana transferred this torch of responsibility to the Sterling Family, who have carried on the tradition of excellence. You are now a part of this rich heritage and have an opportunity to make a difference in a child’s life. This is an awesome responsibility and privilege. You will be expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times, keeping the welfare of the children foremost in your mind throughout your work day.

A great deal of information about the Center is contained in this handbook. This information is of great value to you. I encourage you to become familiar with the content of this handbook. If you have questions, please contact me.

I want you to enjoy your employment here and to realize that your efforts will contribute significantly to the overall success of Children’s Academy.

Philosophy

We believe that children, their families and society all benefit from a high quality experience in the child’s early years; and there is a critical link between their childhood experiences and later successes in life. Our teachers encourage the children to develop their individual interests and strengths through the purposeful utilization of diverse materials, experiences and environments. We strive to integrate families and the community into our activities to fully engage all facets of childhood learning.

Mission

Children’s Academy is committed to providing a safe, nurturing environment where the children’s potential can be fully realized. We achieve this by fulfilling not only the child’s basic needs, but also offering them the gifts of respect, acceptance and love.

Goals

- For the children to feel safe and loved while at school
- For the parents to have full confidence in the care and education of their children
- To instill confidence in the children in order to promote their learning
- For the children to be well-prepared for later schooling
- For the children to positively contribute to their communities as youth and as adults

Curriculum

Children’s Academy combines well-designed and goal-oriented curriculum with teachers’ knowledge of children to guide instruction. Thus, teachers can provide experiences that promote children’s growth across a wide range of developmental and content areas. Having a curriculum

also gives purpose to the daily schedule and includes time and materials for play, child-initiated learning, and creative expression. It also provides opportunities for children to learn individually and in groups to match their developmental needs and interests.

Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of the Center to provide equal employment and educational opportunities for all persons without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, veteran status, disability, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. An integral part of this policy is to administer recruiting, hiring, working conditions, benefits and privileges of employment, compensation, training, opportunity for advancement including upgrades and promotion, and termination of employment including layoff and recall for all employees without discrimination because of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, veteran status, disability, political affiliation, or sexual orientation.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation fringe benefits, job training and other terms, conditions and privileges of employment. A qualified employee or applicant with a disability is an individual who satisfies skill, experience, education and other job-related requirements of the position held or desired, and who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of that position. The ADA does not alter the Center's right to hire the best-qualified applicant, but does prohibit discrimination against a qualified applicant or employee because of his/her disability.

Drug/Alcohol Policy

The unlawful possession, use, distribution, sale, or manufacturing of illicit drugs and alcohol on Center grounds is strictly prohibited. Any violation of this policy will result in immediate disciplinary action. Drugs prescribed by a medical professional and taken for legitimate medical reasons are excluded from this policy.

All Center employees are subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws related to this matter.

The workplace consists of any Center owned or leased property or any site where official duties are being performed by Center employees. Any employee who commits any prohibited act under this policy shall be subject to the full range of disciplinary actions, including termination.

Communications

The Center strives to communicate with all its employees through staff meetings, postings, memos and as necessary, through one-on-one meetings. We expect and anticipate that all communications will be delivered in a professional manner. Professionalism is demonstrated by courtesy, respect, and self control. Should you have any questions relative to a particular policy, procedure, or issue, consult with the Center Director.

Memos, announcements, job postings, and other important information are posted in a central location or placed in staff mailboxes in the main building. Review the posting location and/or individual mailboxes frequently to ensure you are current on Center information. Contact your

Director to secure approval to place an item on the bulletin board.

Staff meetings will be scheduled and conducted monthly. Staff meetings are held for **ALL** employees and are **mandatory**. Staff should advise the Center Director of any requested agenda items at least one day prior to the meeting. A printed copy of meeting minutes will be posted in a central location following the meeting. The minutes should be reviewed by all staff in a timely manner to ensure any assigned action items are completed.

Staff will receive compensation for these meetings. This compensation time is to be documented on the ACH timesheet by the Director. **ALL** staff (as requested) are expected to attend special evening or weekend events (example: Open House, Preschool Graduation Program, Conferences and Parents Events.)

You are encouraged to discuss your problems or complaints with the Center Director. The Center will make a good faith effort to achieve a satisfactory resolution to your issue at the earliest time possible.

Confidentiality

All information (incident/accident reports, illnesses, progress reports,

Family information, etc.) concerning the children is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Do not discuss issues concerning children with other parents or anyone outside of the Center.

All information concerning staff is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**. Do not discuss sensitive issues in areas where it may be overheard. Find a private space for these discussions.

All files kept at the center are confidential. Do not remove files from the Center for any reason.

Staff should bring all concerns, problems and complaints to the attention of the Director. Do not discuss concerns, problems or complaints with parents or others not associated with the Center.

Authorized personnel who have access to the children's files: Director, Owners, Assistance Director and Lead Teachers. Information about children and families is shared only on a need-to-know basis. Staff in the entire center may not need to know about it. Be discriminate about information that you share about other families and staff. We want to provide high quality service, which ensures continuity for children as they move from one classroom to another. If information can assist another teacher in providing services, then it may be shared for these purposes. When sensitive information about children and families or staff is to be thrown away, it must be shredded. No information regarding children and families should be left on desks. Computer screens need timed screen savers. Whenever an employee feels a child needs to be retained or advanced in the program or referred for further screening and testing he/she must consult the director before discussing it with the parents. These decisions need to be made very carefully.

Conflict of Interest

All Center employees should demonstrate the highest standard of ethics during the performance of their assigned duties. Employees should ensure that any external activity does not conflict with their Center duties nor give the appearance of same. Employees should disclose any potential conflict of interest as soon as it becomes known to them to the Center Director.

Section 2 – Employment Policies

Dress Code and Personal Appearance

Every employee contributes to the Center's image. The Children's Academy dress code requires school shirts with logos be worn each day with appropriate pants, skirts or shorts. Shorts and/or skirts must not be shorter than extended fingertip length. Jeans may be worn on Fridays. On designated "no uniform days," staff should dress in the specified theme or follow the standard dress code.

Jewelry and accessories that interfere with job responsibilities and/or pose a safety concern should not be worn. Because staff is expected to engage in activities with children in the classroom and on the playground, athletic shoes are recommended. Flip flops (sandals with strap between the first and second toes) are not permitted.

If your attire or appearance does not meet the personal appearance standards, you will be asked to leave the Center and return, in an agreed upon timeframe, meeting the required standards. The time away from work will be unpaid.

Employee Benefits

The Center's comprehensive benefit program provides: 1) reasonably priced health coverage, 2) paid time off, 3) retirement contributions. Benefit brochures with more detailed information are available from the Center Director. You are responsible for reviewing the information in order to select the package which best meets your needs. You have an opportunity to reevaluate health care options each year. Plan changes may be made during the annual enrollment period. In the case of a qualifying event, you may add or delete dependents, cancel or pick up coverage. Consult with the Center Director for additional information.

Health Insurance

Children's Academy provides comprehensive group medical insurance for its active, regular full-time (32 hrs) employees and their dependents. The center contributes 50% of the single premium cost for staff who have completed ninety (90) days of continuous service. The employee is responsible for the entire premium for selected dependent coverage.

Dental Insurance

Children's Academy offers a group dental insurance program for its active, regular full-time employees and their dependents. Dental coverage is a voluntary plan and employees are responsible for 100% of the cost of employee and dependent premiums.

Voluntary Insurance Plans

Children's Academy offers its employees the opportunity to participate in an array of voluntary insurance plans such as short and long term disability insurance, accident and sickness income protection, cancer, life insurance and other such programs. These plans are voluntary and employees are responsible for 100% of the cost of the premiums. To assist you in paying the premiums, the Center will deduct your premium amount from your weekly paycheck.

Vacation Time

Vacation is granted to active regular full-time (32 hrs) employees and may be taken for any purpose. The rate at which leave is earned depends on length of service.

After one (1) year of continuous service, active regular full-time employees will be awarded the equivalent of one (1) weeks of paid vacation time based on the average of regular scheduled hours worked during the previous year, not to exceed 40 hours. Vacation days are earned at the rate of .42 days per month.

After two (2) years of continuous service and each year thereafter, active regular full-time employees will be awarded the equivalent of two (2) weeks of paid vacation based on the average of regular scheduled hours worked during the previous year, not to exceed 80 hours. Vacation days are earned at the rate of .83 days per month.

After seven (7) years of continuous service and each year thereafter, active regular full-time employees will be awarded the equivalent of three (3) weeks of paid vacation based on the average of regular scheduled hours worked during the previous year, not to exceed 120 hours. Vacation days are earned at the rate of 1.25 days per month.

Paid vacation time will be awarded according to the calendar year and must be taken prior to the following calendar year. Unused vacation may not be carried over to the next year, nor will the Center pay for unused vacation time. If 2 or more employees request vacation during the same period the request will be considered according to seniority. All vacation time must be approved by the Director at least one month in advance. **No more than one employee may be on vacation at the same time.** Vacation days may not be carried over to the next year. In case of termination there will not be a vacation payout. Note that your vacation request may also be denied due to operational necessity.

Upon leaving service you are paid for unused leave up to a predetermined rate when two (2) weeks notice of resignation is provided.

Retirement Plan

Children's Academy has established a 401k plan for its eligible employees. Each year, the managing body of Children's Academy will determine the amount, if any, which it will contribute to the Plan. Eligible employees must be at least 21 years of age, regular full-time employees (32 hrs) and must complete one (1) year of continuous service prior to the plan entry date. You will be credited with a year of service for eligibility purpose if you work 1000 or more hours during the year. After you have met the eligibility requirements, you will become a Participant in the Plan the first day of the next schedule payroll period. You will generally be vested in your Individual Account derived from Profit Sharing Contributions and forfeitures according to the following schedule.

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Vesting Percentage</u>
Less than One	0%
1	0%
2	20%

3	40%
4	60%
5	80%
6	100%

Child Care

Children of staff may attend Children's Academy for 50% of the standard tuition rate. Fees and other miscellaneous charges may still apply. Where possible, staff members will not provide direct care for their own children.

Code of Ethics

1. The teacher values the worth and dignity of every person, maintains a commitment to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and integrity. Essential to the achievement of these standards is the freedom to learn and teach while guaranteeing an equal learning opportunity for every student.
2. The teacher's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The teacher will therefore obtain continued professional development, and will seek to employ the best professional decision with wisdom and integrity.
3. The teacher is mindful of the importance of maintaining the confidence, and respect of their colleagues, students, parents, and other members of the community. The teacher strives to achieve and sustain the highest measure of ethical conduct at all times.
- 4.

Principles of Professional Conduct for Teachers & Administrators

1. The following disciplinary rules shall be established in the Principles of Professional Conduct for teachers and administrators.
2. Violation of any of these principles shall be grounds for termination of the employee's contract and employment or suspension of employment, or other penalties as provided by the law.
3. A Professional obligation to the student requires that the instructor or administrator:
 - a. Make a reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning, or to their mental and physical health and safety.
 - b. Shall not display inappropriate physical affection or contact with a student in an effort to protect the instructor or administrators own professional reputation and the trust and well being of the student and their parents.
 - c. Shall not unfairly restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
 - d. Shall not unreasonably deny a student access to various points of view.
 - e. Shall not purposefully suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
 - f. Shall not purposefully expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or ridicule.

- g. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
 - h. Shall not harass or discriminate against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, physical or mental disability, social and family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination.
 - i. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage of any kind.
 - j. Shall keep in confidence personal information obtained during professional service, unless disclosure of that information serves professional purposes or is required by law.
4. Obligation to the academy requires that the instructor or administrator:
- a. Shall take reasonable precautions to distinguish between secular views and those of our Christian faith with which the teacher is affiliated.
 - b. Shall not intentionally distort or misrepresent facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
 - c. Shall not use academy privileges for personal gain or advantage.
 - d. Shall not accept gratuity, gifts, or favors that might influence professional judgement.
 - e. Shall offer no gratuity, gift, or favor to obtain special advantages.
5. As a mandatory reporter the instructor or administrator must abide by the duty to report as described in Florida Statutes Chapters 39 and 415:
- a. By immediately contacting the Florida Child Abuse Hotline or submitting an online report on the internet.
 - b. By immediately contacting the school administrator or principal by phone or in person to report alleged employee misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.
 - c. By immediately contacting the Revealing Truth Ministries church administrator by phone or in person to report if the school principal or school administrator allegedly commits misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.
6. Obligation to the profession of education requires that the instructor or administrator:
- a. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.
 - b. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, physical handicap if otherwise qualified, or social and family background deny to a colleague professional benefits or advantages or participation in any professional organization.
 - c. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities during non-working hours.

- d. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unfairly interferes with an instructor or administrators performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly processes of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive, or oppressive environment; and, further, shall make a reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.
- e. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.
- f. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgement of colleagues.
- g. Shall not submit any fraudulent statement or fail to disclose a material fact in one's own or another's application for an instructional or administrative position.
- h. Shall provide upon the request of the instructor or administrator a written statement of specific reasons for recommendations that lead to the denial of contract renewal, termination of employment, or significant changes in employment.
- i. Shall self-report within forty-eight (48) hours to appropriate authorities (child abuse hotline; church administrator; school administrator or principal) any arrests/charges involving the abuse of a child or the sale and/or possession of a controlled substance.
- j. Shall report to the appropriate authorities any known allegation of working while under the influence of alcohol; an illegal controlled substance or inappropriate use of any controlled substance.
- k. Shall seek no retaliation or act of vengeance against any individual who has reported any allegation of a violation of child abuse.
- l.

Employee Liability Protections

- 7. An explanation regarding employer immunity from liability and disclosure of information regarding former or current employees under ss. 768.095, F.S.
 - a. An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil rights of the former or current employee protected under chapter 760
- 8. An explanation regarding employer immunity from liability in cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect under ss. 39.203, F.S.
 - a. Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by this chapter, or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the department or any

- law enforcement agency, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability which might otherwise result by reason of such action.
- b. Except as provided in this chapter, nothing contained in this section shall be deemed to grant immunity, civil or criminal, to any person suspected of having abused, abandoned, or neglected a child, or committed any illegal act upon or against a child.
 - c. No resident or employee of a facility serving children may be subjected to reprisal or discharge because of his or her actions in reporting abuse, abandonment, or neglect pursuant to the requirements of this section.
 - d. Any person making a report under this section shall have a civil cause of action for appropriate compensatory and punitive damages against any person who causes detrimental changes in the employment status of such reporting party by reason of his or her making such report. Any detrimental change made in the residency or employment status of such person, including, but not limited to, discharge, termination, demotion, transfer, or reduction in pay or benefits or work privileges, or negative evaluations within a prescribed period of time shall establish a presumption that such action was retaliatory.
9. All instructional and administrative staff members will be required to complete training of the Children's Academy Standards of Ethical Conduct for instructional and administrative staff members annually.

Inappropriate Employee Conduct

The following behaviors are unacceptable and will require corrective action:

- Talking about children in front of other children
- Threatening, bribing or being dishonest with children
- Calling children names or making fun of them
- Rough-housing with the children
- Making a child feel guilty or inferior
- Gossiping and inappropriate conversations among staff

When an aspect of an employee's behavior or performance has become unacceptable or unsatisfactory, the Director may utilize the following process to correct the problem. As a function of the incident involved, one or more of the following steps may be used as corrective discipline.

Corrective Counseling

Step 1

The Director will conduct an informal counseling session with the employee. The Director will identify the area(s) of concern (e.g., unsatisfactory behavior or performance). The Director will identify why the behavior or performance is unsatisfactory. The Director will seek employee input relative to issue. The Director will record the notes from the meeting and maintain a copy. In closing the meeting, the Director will establish a time frame within which performance/behavior is expected to improve and will note to the employee that continuation of said unacceptable behavior or unsatisfactory performance may lead to further discipline.

Step 2

If the employee continues to demonstrate unacceptable behavior or unsatisfactory performance a second counseling session between the Director and employee will follow. The reason why the behavior/performance is unacceptable will be noted. Employee input will be sought and facts collected and verified. The employee will be notified that this meeting is considered a verbal warning and a copy of such warning will be placed in the employee's personnel file. The Director will establish a time frame for improvement and note to the employee that failure to improve will lead to further discipline up to and including termination.

Step 3

If performance/behavior remains at an unacceptable level following steps 1 and 2, the Director will meet with the employee to issue a written warning. Such warning will identify the unacceptable behavior/performance and reference the meetings conducted at step 1 and 2. The Director will again solicit employee input relative to the unsatisfactory behavior/performance. The Director will instruct and include in the written warning that further discipline up to and including termination may follow unless the employee's behavior/performance improves. A copy of this warning will be placed in the employee's personnel file. The employee will be asked to sign the warning and be provided with a copy.

Step 4

In the event steps 1-3 were not successful in correcting the employee's behavior/ performance the Center Director will terminate the employee. Such termination will be in writing and issued to the employee. The employee will be discharged following the delivery of the termination letter or upon reasonable attempts to deliver such notice.

Certain actions may result in the immediate suspension or termination of the employee. They include but are not limited to:

- Physical or verbal abuse of a child, parent or Center employee
- Insubordination or disobeying an order
- Theft, attempted theft, or misappropriating of Center property or funds
- Possession of or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Falsification of documents or records or falsification of benefit claims
- Possession of a weapon on Center property
- Gambling on Center property
- Leaving work area/station without Director's approval
- Failure to maintain confidentiality
- Destruction of Center property, materials, or equipment

Resignation

Any employee wishing to resign his/her position is asked to provide the director with a two week written notice and any employee not providing two weeks' notice prior to his/her resignation will forfeit any vacation or personal time left for the current year. Employees are asked not to resign during the school year or mid-summer for the sake of stability for the children.

Child Abuse and Neglect

All Center staff is required to know procedures to prevent allegations of child abuse and neglect

while at work (as stated in the Center's Risk Management Plan); the best plan is prevention. The following procedure has been established regarding the steps taken if a staff member is suspected of abusing and/or neglecting a child at the Center:

- 1) Whoever has reasonable cause to believe that a staff member may have been abusive or neglectful to a child(ren) will immediately notify the Director.
- 2) The Director must immediately assess the situation and report the suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- 3) The Director will prepare, within 24 hours, a written report of the situation. The report will include dates, times, names of all parties involved (adults and children), places and description of the incident.
- 4) The suspected or alleged employee will immediately be removed from working directly with children until a written investigation has been completed by DCF and is authorized to return as appropriate. The employee will be paid only after an official "unsubstantiated" report is made. The employee will then receive back wages.

Conflict Resolution/ Grievance

In all workplaces, there are times when staff members disagree and/or experience conflict. In such cases, the staff is expected to:

- 1) Calmly discuss the situation in private with just those directly involved in the conflict. An appropriate resolution should focus on doing what's right for the children, families and/or Center.
 - Clearly articulate the causes of conflict – openly acknowledging there will be differing perceptions of the problem(s).
 - Make a clear statement of why you want the conflict resolved and reasons to work on the conflict.
 - Communication of how you want the conflict resolved
 - Address the issues face to face (notes are not a productive way to resolve differences).
 - Stick to the issues. In trying to resolve the conflict, it is tempting to resort to blame or bring up issues from the past. It is important to address specific behaviors and situations if change is to take place.
 - Take time out if necessary. In the resolution of a conflict, our emotions may interfere with arriving at a productive resolution. If this transpires, take a time-out and resume resolving the conflict at another designated time.
- 2) If a resolution cannot be found, the staff members should privately speak with the Center Director for assistance.

Grievances

If the grievance is job related the following procedure should be followed; If the grievance is center or personal related the employee should meet with the director to discuss the problem. A plan for dealing with the grievance is discussed and agreed upon. This will be written up and placed in the employee's file and will be signed by the director and employee. Note: If the grievance is with the Program Director, please speak with the Administrative Director. In turn, if the grievance is with the Administrative Director, please speak with the Program Director.

Section 3 – Employment Practices

Employment At Will

This handbook is not a contract, expressed or implied, guaranteeing employment. Although we hope your employment relationship with the Center will be long-term, either you or the Center may terminate this relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or notice. Work assignments may be modified at any time based on skills, performance, enrollment or any other reason identified by the Director.

Pre-employment Health Screening

Prior to employment with Children’s Academy, candidates will submit a physical completed by a licensed healthcare provider. Employment is contingent upon a physical indicating the essential physical functions of the job can be performed. The physical must be completed every two years.

Changes in Personnel Data

When you change your home address, phone number, emergency contact, marital status, number of dependents, beneficiary, or similar information, you should notify the Director so your personnel records and benefit coverage can remain as current and accurate as possible.

Outside Employment

Employees wishing to obtain a part-time job in addition to their Center position must inform their supervisor. Any such work must not interfere with your duties at the Center. You may not pursue any other employment, business, or profession during the hours you are employed by the Center, nor may you engage in any employment, which may reflect adversely in the Center.

Position Description

The Center maintains a current position description for all positions. You should become familiar with your position description for it is used to define your specific duties. A copy is included in the appendix for your review. It also serves as the basis of the performance expectations for your annual evaluation. Your supervisor will provide you with a copy of your position description during your orientation and will update it yearly as needed.

Performance Evaluation

Formal performance evaluations serve as an effective feedback tool to help employees identify performance strengths and areas in need of further development. It can also enhance communication between employees and supervisors. A sample template is included in the appendix for your review.

The performance review period is an annual cycle. The Director will review job descriptions with each staff member at the beginning of the review period, identifying key job elements as well as expectations that define the acceptable level of performance for each assigned duty. The description must be discussed with you and signed by you to indicate that you have read and understand your supervisor’s expectations. The job description is used as a guide to evaluate

your performance across the entire review period.

The Center Director will observe each staff person while engaged with children at least two (2) times annually. The observations will be documented using the Performance Evaluation Form. The evaluation forms will assist the Director when performance evaluations are being completed.

Your performance will be evaluated toward the end of the review period by comparing actual performance to the written expectations. Prior to the Director's evaluation, you will be asked to review your own performance using the same performance evaluation tool. This information will be incorporated into the Director's evaluation where appropriate. The final evaluation will be shared with you and serve as a basis for the continuation of your employment. Your supervisor will provide you with a copy of your annual evaluation and your signature on the evaluation will be requested.

For additional information on either your job description or evaluation, please consult with the Center Director.

Program Evaluation

In addition to a yearly self-evaluation, each staff member will perform a program evaluation to assess the quality of the Center as a whole. A sample program evaluation is found in the appendix.

Hiring Practices

Children's Academy promotes the hiring of qualified individuals without regard to race; color, sex, age or national origin provided they meet the requirements established for the job.

Prospective employees will be required to fill out paperwork for employment, followed by a screening interview with the director. Personal references will be checked. In compliance with Florida Law, each employee must provide the following information prior to employment:

Background screening & finger printing, and provide a signed statement that he/she read the pamphlet "Child abuse and Neglect in Florida. Security background investigation:

All personnel of the Center are required to undergo security background investigation, which includes fingerprinting, and a health physical. All of the above will be paid by the Center.

Each employee must understand that in order to comply with Childcare Licensing, ECERS & ITERS, and NAC requirements he/she must obtain special training.

Training

Personnel, including the director, head teachers and teachers must complete the 30 hrs Introductory Child Care Training Course and pass the competence test. (Part 1 –20 hour, Part 1-10 hour), 10 hrs, DAP course and 5 hrs Literacy Course. Personnel must begin the course within 90 days of starting his/her childcare career and complete it within one year of date on which training began.

Personnel, lead and assistant teachers must complete 20 hrs of in-service training on an annual basis during the fiscal year beginning July 1st and ending June 30th.

The director must complete 30 hours of in-service training.

The assistant director must complete 25 hours of in-service training.

All personnel must complete a course in Blood Borne Pathogen Training, Fire Extinguisher Training, CPR and First Aid.

VPK teachers at this time are required to have their CDA.

When a non-exempt employee is required to travel for Children's Academy training, the employee will be paid for the actual hours spent in travel if the travel time is outside of normal business hours or during his/her break time.

When a non-exempt employee attends a business-related training session or conference, the individual will be paid per day for the actual hours spent in training or attending work-related conference sessions. Employees will not receive pay for optional training/conference events, such as those not related to the core responsibilities of his/her job.

All business-related travel and attendance at seminars/conferences must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor

Staff Development

When staff development opportunities are identified during formal or informal observation, or the annual performance evaluation, a Professional Development Plan will be created. All staff members are required to obtain 20 hours in training during a licensing year to meet NAC standards. The Plan action items and timelines will be mutually agreed upon by the Director and the staff member. Action items may include: additional on or off-site training, reading, special projects, etc. A sample of the Professional Development Plan can be found on the last page of the Performance Evaluation template included in the appendix.

Orientation Plan and Probationary Period

When you begin employment with the Center, you go through a three-month trial probationary period during which time both you and the Center Director will have a chance to determine your suitability for the position.

On the first day of employment, you will meet with the Center Director to complete new hire paperwork and to review the staff handbook, parent handbook, Center policies and procedures, as well as, the Center's Risk Management plan. Additional activities, such as, tour of the facility, introduction of staff and children, and curriculum review will occur on this day. For a complete list, please reference the Orientation Checklist included in the appendix.

During week one, you will be assigned a mentor and will be given the opportunity to observe within classrooms. In weeks two and three, you will work within the classroom with guidance from a mentor.

Weeks four through six, you will be taking on your full responsibilities. At each stage, your performance will be observed and feedback provided. Week six will include a more formal review of performance and a decision will be made regarding your continued employment. This may include a plan to improve specific areas of performance.

As a condition of employment, all new staff members must begin the 40 hours of training

required by the Department of Children and Families within their first 90 days. They must also complete the five hour Early Literacy training within six months of employment.

If employment continues, weeks seven through twelve will include performance of regular responsibilities, informal reviews of performance and plans to improve as needed. At the end of week 12 (90 days), the Center Director will review probationary period requirements/documents for completion and either provide you with a letter documenting successful completion of probationary period or a letter extending the probationary period. An assessment of the orientation process is conducted by the new employee at the conclusion of the probationary period. A sample evaluation form is found in the appendix.

Nepotism

To avoid conflicts of interest amongst staff members, Children's Academy will not hire family members or close friends of current staff.

Demotion

A demotion occurs when you move from a position in one salary grade to a position in a lower grade. There are four types of demotions: disciplinary, performance, voluntary, and work force reduction. A demotion will result in a salary reduction.

Resignation

You should submit a letter of resignation to the Director at least two weeks prior to the effective date of resignation. An exit interview may be arranged to explain the impact of separation on your benefits and to discuss your employment experience. All exit interview information is confidential and is used to improve employment at the Center. When you resign, you are required to turn in any keys, property, etc. belonging to the Center.

Retirement

When you elect to retire, you should notify the Center Director at least six (6) months in advance so that proper planning can occur. Consult with the Director to determine what benefits you are eligible for in retirement.

Health and Safety

The Center is concerned for and is aware of its responsibility for the safety of the employees. It is essential that you perform your duties in a safe manner and follow all established safety rules. You should discuss with your supervisor the possible hazards of your job and make sure you are familiar with any equipment you operate. If you work with hazardous materials, be sure to ask your supervisor to review the current safe handling procedures with you.

First Aid and CPR Certification

All staff must complete a First Aid Training Course and receive Infant/Child CPR Certification within their first year of employment. Training and Certification records will be maintained in their personnel file. Regular renewal of both is required.

Worker's Compensation

You must report any work-related accident, injury or illness to your supervisor immediately so that a Report of Accident form can be completed. If you fail to properly report an accident and complications emerge at a later date, you may not be entitled to worker's compensation. If an on-the-job injury or illness causes you to seek medical attention or lose time from work, you should notify the Center Director so that your claim can be properly filed and managed.

Section 4 – Hours of Work

Attendance

You should be at work prepared to receive children, not just arriving, at your starting time. The Director will establish your actual work schedule, including lunch breaks, according to the requirements of the job.

To ensure proper ratios and to maintain Hillsborough County Standards in regards to consistency, employees should notify the director as early as possible if he/she is to be absent or tardy. All personnel are expected to maintain regular attendance. Excessive, habitual and unauthorized absences and tardiness cannot be tolerated. If an employee misses three days in a row they may be requested to provide a doctor's note when returning.

If an employee knows he/she needs time off, the Director needs to be contacted so arrangements can be made. **If arrangements cannot be made, it is the employee's responsibility to work his/her shifts.** In the case of illness, the employee is required to contact the Director or the school **at least two hours before scheduled arrival time. If an employee must leave a message on the school answering machine, a follow up message to a responsible individual is mandatory. (Openers and 6:30 a.m. staff that are ill and unable to contact the Director early the night before or prior to the start of his/her shift, must report to work and will be relieved as soon as possible)**

During normal work hours, you should not leave your work area for personal matters (other than lunch or breaks) without permission from the Director or the individual responsible in their absence.

Excessive absenteeism will subject you to progressive discipline. Questions related to discipline regarding attendance should be discussed with the Center Director.

Any employee who is absent three (3) or more consecutive work without notice to the Director shall be deemed a voluntary resignation and terminated from the Center on the close of business of said third day.

Holidays

The Center observes six (6) paid holidays per calendar year. They are:

New Year's Day

Labor Day

Memorial Day

Thanksgiving Day

Independence Day

Christmas Day

After the successful completion of your first 90 days of continuous service all active regular full-time hourly and salaried employees will receive holidays off at their regular rate of pay. To be eligible to receive holiday pay, you must work your regularly scheduled work day before and

after the holiday unless time off has been approved in advance of the absence.

Planning Time

All teachers have daily paid planning time scheduled during the children's nap. As much as possible, this time should be used for lesson planning and preparation. Teachers may also request their Aids assist in planning and preparation during paid work time while the children nap.

Inclement Weather

Decisions to close the Center will be made by the Director and generally follow Hillsborough County schools closure guidelines. In the event the Center is closed prior to the beginning of the workday, you should stay home. You will not be paid for this day unless you use your vacation hours to cover the workday missed. Should the Center close during the workday, you may leave and charge the remainder of the workday toward your vacation hours.

Overtime

Federal law requires the Center employees, except those considered exempt from the law, be paid one and one-half times their usual salary for any hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Employees who are covered by this section of the federal law are referred to as non-exempt employees. Non-exempt employees are paid on an hourly basis. **An employee may not work overtime without prior authorization or direction given by the Director.**

Non exempt employees include teachers, teacher aids and kitchen staff. The Center Director and Associate Director are exempt employees. As exempt employees, compensation is based on the accomplishment of assigned responsibilities rather than working a specific number of hours. Exempt employees are not eligible to receive overtime pay.

Work Week

Full-time employees work a minimum of 32 hours per week. The Center's standard workweek begins 12:00 midnight Sunday and ends at 12:00 midnight Saturday. On Friday of each workweek you will complete your time sheet verifying all hours worked or charged to leave. It is your responsibility to ensure all hours are correctly totaled. Falsification of your time card information is grounds for immediate disciplinary action.

It is your responsibility to call your Center's Director when you expect to be absent or late for work. See the section on attendance for additional information regarding notifying your Director in the event of your absence.

Section

5 – Leaves of Absence

Administrative Leave

Administrative leave may be granted to serve on a jury or appear in court as a witness under subpoena. Advance approval is required for administrative leave and written verification may be required. A maximum of three working days may be paid for qualified leave.

Employee Absences

All planned leave requires prior approval of your supervisor. All leave time must be earned before it can be used. Vacation time is credited at the end of each pay period. Newly hired employees must work one calendar year prior to earning time off credits.

Leave Without Pay

Employees may be granted leave without pay with the Director's approval. Leave without pay may not be granted for more than 12 calendar months, except for unusual circumstances, or for active military duty. Leave without pay may also be granted for personal reasons subject to the operational needs of the Center.

Military Leave

If you are a member of a military unit, the National Guard, Naval Militia, or Armed Forces Reserves, you are entitled to 15 work days of leave per federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) for federally funded military duty. Regardless of whether the duty is fragmented you are still entitled to 15 workdays of leave per federal fiscal year. You must include a copy of your military orders or other official documentation with your request for military leave. If you are ordered to duty because of an emergency, you must supply supporting documentation upon your return to work to verify the use of military leave.

Sick/Bereavement Leave

When applicable you may be granted excused, unpaid time off for illness and/or bereavement. Please notify the Center's Director prior to the beginning of your scheduled work day following the guidelines set forth in the Attendance Policy.

Jury Duty

A staff member will suffer no loss of salary as a result of Jury Duty.

Section 6 - Pay Information

Deductions

The following items must be deducted from your paycheck: Social Security (FICA), Federal withholding tax, State withholding tax.

You may also have the following taken out of your paycheck: health insurance premiums, long-term disability insurance, tax deferred annuities, credit union savings, and United States Savings bonds.

Direct Deposit

You must participate in the Center's direct deposit program. This program provides for your paycheck to be automatically deposited into the financial institution of your choice. On each payday you will receive your pay advise (information about your paycheck). Participation in direct deposit begins by completing the necessary paperwork available from the Director.

Payroll

Paychecks are issued on Tuesday of each week. Contact the Center Director for specific information on payroll distribution. Salaries are always to be kept confidential. (Discussion of salary between employees is a cause for immediate dismissal.)

Salaries are based upon education, evaluation and job responsibilities. Raises are given by the Director with the owner's approval.

Section 6 - General Policies

Personnel Files

Employees have the right to access their personnel files. You must notify the Center Director of your desire to review your file. You will be provided access to your file within 24 hours of the time of request. The file will be made available in the Director's Office. You may not remove the file from the Director's office.

Visitors

Children's Academy has a welcome open door policy for all parents. However, all persons who are not staff, volunteers or parents must sign in. Any visitors of staff, including spouses and family members, can be distracting to the work environment and are discouraged. If you are to have any visitors, please have them check in through the office before entering your room. They must sign the Visitor/Volunteer log and state a valid reason for being on the premises.

Open Door Policy

At Children's Academy we not only allow our parents to come in at any time but we welcome extended family members too. If they would like to come in and observe their child's classroom, volunteer to help, or do an activity they may do so. If there is anything we can do to assist our parents, do your best to accommodate them to the best of your ability. We also have an open door policy to the community agencies with whom we consult. They are welcome to come in at anytime to observe and to help. Our quality should not just happen on days we are expecting visitors but every day we are here. Quality is for our children because they deserve it. In this you should always be prepared.

Phone Use

Calls for you or by you should be conducted before or after your shift, or on a lunch break. Mobile phones should not be used in the classroom or on the playground. They should only be used while on a lunch break. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Family and friends should NOT call employees at work unless there is an absolute necessity.

Hours of Operation & Employment

Children's Academy is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for children. Teachers that are responsible for opening the Center should arrive no later than 6:00 a.m. (See School calendar for list of days the center will be closed).

Each employee will be given a schedule of the time to start and end work upon hiring. Working hours may change if enrollment of the center changes or because of other reasons. If enrollment

decreases, it is possible that the number of hours worked by staff could be reduced. In such a case, the employee would be paid only for the actual number of hours worked.

Sexual Harassment

The Center is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment free of objection and disrespectful conduct and/or communication of a sexual nature and prohibits sexual harassment by all employees. Conduct which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment will not be tolerated. The confidentiality of all parties involved in a sexual harassment charge will be strictly respected in so far as it does not interfere with the Center's obligation to investigate allegations of misconduct and take corrective action.

If you believe you have been the recipient of sexually offensive behavior, you should contact the Center Director or other such appropriate external party. Employees should report such incidents of harassment as quickly as possible after said occurrence. Any employee who has been found, after thorough investigation of the facts, to have had harassed another employee, will be subject to appropriate sanctions up to and including termination of employment.

Smoking/Drugs/Firearms

The indoor and visible outdoor environments, and vehicles used by the program are designated as nonsmoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form, alcohol, or illegal drugs is prohibited in and visible area on the facility premises.

Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited. No guns or other lethal weapons will be allowed on the property.

All childcare providers and staff will maintain sobriety while providing childcare. Caregivers, staff, or other adults who are inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances will be required to leave the premises immediately. Any staff member bringing drugs or firearms unto the premises will face immediate dismissal.

Solicitation and Distribution

In order to avoid unnecessary annoyances and interruptions, solicitation by an employee of another employee is prohibited while either person is on working time.

Key Control

Employees who are issued keys are expected to keep them in a secure area. They may not be copied, loaned, or otherwise misused. Where electronic codes are utilized, such codes shall be treated with confidentiality and not revealed to anyone other than a current Center employee. All issued keys must be returned to the Director at the time of separation.

Opening and Closing the Center

Opening:

Unlock front door, turn on office light and then turn off alarm. Start up computers. Check answering machine for any messages from sick teachers or children. Greet parents and children.

Closing:

The person that closes the Center should be sure all outside classroom doors are locked; all computers, office machines, and lights are turned off. Turn the alarm on and close the main entrance door.

I have read and understand the policies and procedures and agree to follow the policies and procedures contained in the Staff Handbook.

Employee Signature

Date