
Welcome to Children's Place Preschool at Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church!



It is with great pleasure that we welcome you and your children to our program. We hope that this first educational experience will be a positive one that will launch children into a lifetime of learning. We are staffed by a great team who are committed to ensuring your children are well cared for and learning in an environment that is both enriching and stimulating. Our goal is to partner with you during their educational journey. We look forward to our mutual collaboration.

This handbook was prepared to help you learn about us and to clearly communicate our policies and procedures so that our relationship has clear expectations and guidelines. We think most of your questions about how we operate are answered in this handbook. If not, please do not hesitate to ask. We want to make the experience of bringing your children to school a joyful one. We are committed to making the transition from home to school as smooth as possible.

Thank you for choosing Children's Place Preschool. We are happy to serve you and your children.

Brandy Coughlin, Director

* You will see the word "Parents" throughout this handbook. Please know that we recognize and value those who have legal guardianship of our children and include you in our "Parents" designation.

INTRODUCTION

Children's Place Preschool is an outreach ministry of Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church, providing early learning experiences, preschool, and family education opportunities. Our program is licensed by the State of Florida and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Our preschool serves as – Prekindergarten children.

Our main program hours are Monday-Friday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM, with Extended Care hours from 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM for an additional fee, as available.

We strive to excel in meeting our community's needs.

MISSION STATEMENT

"Jesus Christ calls each of us to reach out with God's Love, Hospitality, Hope, and Healing so that all may experience and share the Joy of belonging to him."

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children are by nature curious and eager learners. We believe that children learn best as they experience the environment through play. We plan experiences to promote cognitive, language, social, emotional, and physical development. The teachers provide expert guidance and support for children as they explore and learn about living successfully in the world with self and others.

VALUES

We provide a Christian environment where children and their families feel safe and loved. We strive to deliver exceptional service to earn the trust of everyone with whom we interact. We emphasize diversity throughout our program. Our individualized, developmental approach lends itself to meeting the unique needs of most children, including those with special needs.

CHURCH COMMITTEES

Children's Place receives assistance and input from various decision-making Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church committees, including Board of Trustees, Finance, Staff-Parish Relations, and Church Council. Committee members are nominated and elected each year. They serve on a volunteer basis. The Governing Board of Directors is a committee of the Church Council of GBUMC and the preschool director are responsible for the establishment of the philosophy of the program, and formulating an annual budget.

STAFF

The Director provides leadership, coordination and supervision of the Children's Place Staff. The Director is responsible for hiring, training, retention and evaluation of the teaching, administrative and support staff. The Director is responsible for curriculum selection and oversees the implementation. The Director is responsible for the implementation of the budget, the payroll for all employees, and the approval of furnishings and equipment.

The Children's Place Office Administrator and Lead Teacher assist the Director with the operations of the school. The lead teacher assists with the supervision of staff and the planning/implementation of the curriculum. The Office Administrator maintains the children's records, the teaching staff records, and the financial posting and record keeping of the tuition and related fees as well as helping with prompt communication between the parents and the preschool.

The Teaching Staff are professionally trained and committed to the field of early childhood education. All teachers undergo background checks and require annual early education training. All staff maintain current CPR and First Aid training.

STATE LICENSING

Children's Place Preschool is licensed by the State of Florida through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Annual inspections of the center are conducted by DCF, the Fire Department, the Early Learning Coalition (ELC), and NAEYC.

NAEYC ACCREDITATION

Children's Place Preschool is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. This means the center has voluntarily undergone an assessment procedure that gauges how well we meet NAEYC requirements for a quality early childhood program. The primary indicator of high-quality early childhood programs is the quality of interactions between teachers and children. The physical environment, curriculum, health and safety, and administration are other areas assessed, first by staff, and then by a NAEYC validator. The validator visits the center for verification of the information reported in the self-study.

OPERATING POLICIES

Hours and Days of Operation

Children's Place is open Monday-Friday from 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM. Children's Place Preschool's main program hours are from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. Early and After Care options are based on availability.

Late Pick-up

Children may be picked up at any time during After Care hours, but must be picked up no later than 4:30 PM. There is a \$15 late fee charge plus a \$1 per minute charge for every minute after 4:30 PM (or 1:05, if part time) until the child is picked up.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment for Children's Place will open for current families in February for a period of two weeks. We then open enrollment for church members for one week. In late February, we open enrollment to the public on a first come, first served basis. The enrollment form, registration fee, updated Certification of Immunization (shot record) and School Entry Health Exam form (physical), and Tuition Express form are due at time of enrollment. All enrollment fees and payments are non-refundable.

Waiting List

Children will be placed on a waiting list in the order they are enrolled. No payment is due at that time. We will contact you if a spot becomes available. We have no way of determining how long that will be.

Enrollment Forms

Enrollment forms are available on our website and in the preschool office. Please return the completed forms to the Children's Place office. Turning in a form to the church staff will not ensure that your child is enrolled.

Admission Contact Information

You may contact the Children's Place office by calling 850-932-1647 or emailing childrensplace@gbumc.org. If you would like to contact the Director, Brandy Coughlin, you may call the same number or email bcoughlin@gbumc.org. You are also welcome to come in person at any time Monday-Friday between 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM.

Withdrawal Procedures or Changes in Schedule

We ask that you contact the office and withdraw your child's enrollment in writing. No refunds of any fees paid are given upon withdrawal. If you would like to change your child's schedule, please put it in writing and speak with our school office. If a space becomes available, we will make the change and pro-rate the tuition difference.

CALENDAR

A yearly calendar is available online and in the front office. It is subject to change. The preschool closely follows the Santa Rosa County School Calendar.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In case of severe weather or emergencies, please check our Facebook page, check messages from teachers, watch the TV, or check the Santa Rosa County Schools website for updates on school closings. If Santa Rosa County Schools close, we will be closed. In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgement about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to or pick your child up from school.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

It is important that parents adhere to the procedures for bringing children to school and picking them up, as it ensures their health and safety. **Please Park only in designated parking spaces and do not leave children idling in cars.** Please do not pull up under the overhang of the building. In days of severe rainy conditions, we will utilize our rainy-day procedure and have parents form a pick up line under the overhang of the building. The Director and your child's teacher will assist you in placing your child into your car. We want to ensure safety for all of our children. HOLD HANDS from the parking lot to the building and from the building to the parking lot. There are handicap spaces provided to facilitate those with disabilities. Walk your child to the classroom. Sign your child in with the time of arrival and out with the time of departure. **This is required by state law.** Write down any special instructions for the day. A teacher will greet the children each morning at the door of the classroom. If you arrive before 9:00 AM, you will be directed to the Early Care classroom. At the end of the day, you will pick up your child from the classroom or the After Care classroom or playground. Please check your child's folder outside of the classroom and take all belongings home. Please refrain from using your cell phone during drop-off and pick-up times so that you can ensure your child's safety when entering and exiting the center.

PROGRAMS AND GROUPING

Age alone does not always determine classroom placement. Typically, children are placed according to their age on September 1st to maintain consistency with the public schools in Florida. Transitions

usually occur at the beginning of school in the Fall. The developmental level of the child, availability of space, overall group needs, and the assessment of the professional staff and center Director, determine changes in classroom placements. Each decision is made on a case-by-case basis. Changes in classrooms may be made at other times during the year if professional staff and parents feel that the move is in the child's best interest. Each classroom has a lead teacher who is responsible for the daily operation of the classroom. The teacher develops lesson plans and partners with parents, keeping them informed about the lessons, their child's progress, and planned activities. The lesson plans and other pertinent information are posted on the parent board outside of each classroom. Each child also has a folder outside of the classroom. Please check your child's folder every day for information and special creations.

Goals for your Children

The most important goal of our preschool is that children feel cared for and loved. We want children to become independent, self-confident, curious learners who can work well with others. We teach them HOW to learn, not just in preschool, but throughout their lives. We do this by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in all areas. Our curriculum identifies goals in four areas of development:

Social/Emotional: To develop independence, self-confidence, and self-regulation, follow rules and routines, make friends, and learn what it means to be part of a group.

Physical: To increase large muscle skills such as balancing, running, jumping, throwing and catching, and to use the small muscles in their hands to do tasks like buttoning, stringing beads, cutting, drawing, and writing.

Cognitive: To acquire thinking skills such as the ability to solve problems, to ask questions, and to think logically, as well as to use materials and their imagination to show what they have learned.

Language: To use words to communicate with others, listen to and participate in conversations with others, understand the purpose of print, recognize letters and words, and begin writing for a purpose.

We seek to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school through the activities we plan and the way we organize the classroom, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children.

Infants

At the beginning of the school year, parents will be asked to provide their child's daily schedule for eating and resting. Parents will provide all food and pre-mixed bottles. We will plan activities for infant and toddler stimulation. For example, we play music and do activities for language and muscular development. We will go on walks inside and outside, weather permitting. Most importantly, we will hold, cuddle, and talk to your baby!

Toddlers

Toddlers are proficient in walking and have become curious about their surroundings. We will provide a room with interesting objects to explore. This room will have many soft components, such as foam blocks, bean bag chairs, carpeting, and vinyl mats. We have many duplicates of favorite toys, as most toddlers are not prepared to share. We begin developing play in a simple housekeeping center so that children can act out routines like "cooking" and "sweeping" with which they have become familiar

in the home. We introduce art activities, which include gluing, scribbling, and painting. Beginning manipulatives are used for stacking and matching shapes, etc. Language development is emphasized by using words, in addition to sign language, to describe our actions and feelings. Our teachers provide active music activities and read books to the children each day. They also go on walks and to our playground each day.

Twos

The two-year-old has become much more determined as an individual and needs a safe place to assert him/herself. We provide several more centers, including large cardboard blocks for building, trucks, dress-up, housekeeping, the art easel, and manipulatives (puzzles, blocks, bristle blocks, etc.). We provide enough materials so that children are not continually required to share. We begin to encourage turn-taking, making friends by playing together, and other important social skills. Our art creations are child-centered, meaning that the process of making something is the primary learning activity. We assist with potty training in our 2's classrooms.

Preschool

The three- and four-year-old child has begun mastery of his/her language skills, friend-making, pretend play, and building or creating things. We spend time moving from large group play, small group play, and individual time with the teacher. In group activities, we will practice turn-taking, manners, negotiating, and learning to share ideas. Children will participate in activities to learn literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and technology, in a developmental framework that offers multiple opportunities for children to explore, discover, and grow. The physical space of the classroom is organized into the interest areas of Blocks, Dramatic Play, Music, Movement, Science/Math, Outdoors, Gardening, Cooking, etc. In each area, the arrangement of furniture and the chosen materials involve children not only in learning, but also in caring for the classroom and materials. We focus on helping children develop a healthy self-concept, learn to make good choices, and work to get along with others. We are committed to presenting our program with an anti-bias approach to our materials and activities.

Typical Daily Schedules

Greeting/Arrival: Parents escort children to their classroom. Always sign your child in and out each day!

Small Group Activities/Choice Time: After arrival, children choose from a variety of centers and play areas in their classroom.

Large Group Time: Children meet with their teachers and participate in a variety of activities, such as music, movement, weather, and other skill-building activities, to focus on the specific developmental needs of the group.

Outdoor Activities: Children go outside every day, except in extreme weather conditions. We work primarily on large motor skills, which is why the children MUST wear close-toed shoes, such as sneakers. The children choose from a variety of activities, including climbing, outdoor dramatic play, tricycle riding, sliding, and other large motor games.

Departures: Parents pick up their children from their classrooms and talk with teachers about the day's activities.

The following show a typical daily schedule:

SAMPLE
Infant/Toddler Schedule

7:30-8:45 Early Care
Arrival/Choice Time
8:45-9:00 Clean up, Prepare for main program day
9:00 Arrival/Greeting of all children
9:15 Diaper/Potty Check
9:30 Outdoor Time
10:30 Wash Hands/Diaper/Potty Check/Snack
11:00 Circle Time Stories/Songs
11:30 Choice Time/Art/Play
12:00 Lunch
12:30 Outdoor Time/Free Play
1:00 Parents Pick up or Children go to After Care
1:15 Nap
2:30- 3:30 As children wake up, Diaper/Potty/Free Play
4:30 Close

SAMPLE
Preschool Schedule

7:30-8:45 Early Care
Arrival/Choice Time
8:45-9:00 Clean up, Prepare for main program day
9:00 Arrival/Choice Time
9:15 Small Group Time/Math/Science/Daily Focus
9:45 Bathroom Break/Wash Hands/Snack
10:00 Large Group Time/Story/Music
10:30 Small Group Time/Chapel/Art/Free Choice
11:00 Outside Time
12:00 Lunch
12:30 Large Group Time/Songs/Music
1:00 Parent Pick-up or Children go to After Care
2:00 Nap
3:30 Bathroom Break/Wash Hands/Snack/Free Play
4:30 Close

VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK)

In 2002, an amendment to the State Constitution was approved by voters. It reads: "Every four-year-old in Florida shall be provided by the State of Florida a high-quality Prekindergarten learning opportunity in the form of an early childhood development and education program which shall be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards."

VPK Eligibility Requirements

Your child must turn 4 years old on or before September 1st of the year preceding the Spring semester and reside in the State of Florida.

VPK Application Procedure

As VPK is a State of Florida sponsored and funded program, enrollment in Children's Place Preschool does not automatically enroll your child into the program. The parent or guardian must apply and be certified to enroll through the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County. You will need to submit documentation of your Florida residency and proof of your child's date of birth to the Early Learning Coalition of Santa Rosa County. Once that is complete, you will turn in your certificate for us to keep on file.

Priority for Placement

Children currently enrolled in Children's Place Preschool will take priority in the placement process. If there are more children currently enrolled and eligible for the VPK program than there are spaces available, date of enrollment in Children's Place will determine the order in which placements are made.

VPK Enrollment

Children's Place must receive a Child Eligibility and Enrollment Certificate from the Santa Rosa County Early Learning Coalition for each child to be officially enrolled. Families with children who are four years old, but not enrolled in the VPK program and do not have completed VPK paperwork, must pay tuition fees according to the current fee schedule. They must also follow all policies and

procedures for children who are not VPK enrollees until such time as they are certified. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that all the necessary steps are completed to enroll their child in the VPK program.

VPK Hours of Operation

VPK instructional hours are Monday-Thursday from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM and total 540 hours of instruction.

VPK Program Requirements

To maintain your child's eligibility to participate and to gain the maximum benefit, consistency of attendance is required. The total number of instructional hours paid for by the State of Florida is 540. Your child may not miss more than 20% of these instructional hours (equal to about 27 days).

Preschool & VPK Curriculum

Frog Street Curriculum, a research-based and State of Florida approved curriculum, is the core of the Children's Place curriculum. Our teachers use the Frog Street curriculum as a blueprint for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate educational program within a safe and nurturing environment. Its effectiveness in helping children acquire social competence and the skills they need to succeed as learners, is well documented. Each teaching team incorporates their own interests and teaching styles, as well as information about the children and their families. They develop plans to provide children with a variety of opportunities for learning. Teachers also prepare an engaging learning environment for exploring different themes such as birds, boxes, transportation, artists, and authors. Teachers support children in doing as much for themselves as possible, given the constraints of a part-day, part-year program. Staff members serve as partners, guiding children to practice social skills involved in peer interactions, friendship formation, and conflict resolution. Throughout the day, we engage children in conversation, with extra support for peer conversation during snack and lunchtime. Teachers relate to children in positive ways and help them do the same with each other. The positive social climate helps children feel good about school and learn to the best of their ability.

The physical space of the classroom is organized into interest areas, such as Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys and Games, Art, Library, Discovery, Sand and Water, Music and Movement, Cooking, Technology, and Outdoors. Interest areas offer multiple opportunities for children to explore, discover, and grow. In each, the arrangement of furniture and the materials involves children in both learning and taking care of the classroom.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is naturally integrated into the course of every day as ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development is used to adjust the program to better support group and individual progress. At the beginning of the school year, teachers ask parents to fill out an "Ages and Stages" (ASQ) questionnaire screening tool as one measure of assessment. After the children have settled in, teaching teams meet weekly to identify the group's current interests and needs, and then plan accordingly for the next week's explorations. At times, these reflections indicate the need for altering the classroom environment, shifting the unit focus, or trying new teaching strategies. If concerns about a child's development arise and are not readily remedied via classroom adaptations, teachers initiate a dialogue with colleagues and parents to plan approaches to try at both home and school.

Teaching teams work together to conduct assessments, though the child's primary teacher takes the lead in summarizing the findings. Assessments help teachers obtain information in all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health, and physical development (including self-help skills). Three times per year, the teachers combine informal assessment techniques with more systematic assessment of each child by documenting information. The information gathered along with pictures, selected work, anecdotal notes, and other collections, are put together into an individual portfolio. These descriptions and representations are shared with parents, both in writing and via personal conferences. Preschool children have conferences in the Fall and again in the Spring. Younger children have conferences with parents in the Spring, although assessment and communication with parents happens all year long for all classes.

Children With Special Needs

Children's Place will make every effort to include children with special needs. Staff will assess each child on a case-by-case basis in cooperation with the parents/guardians and other professionals as appropriate. Every effort will be made to make reasonable accommodations and adaptations. Accepting children with life threatening illnesses or disabilities will be made on a case-by-case basis by a review committee composed of parents/guardians, physicians, public health representatives, therapists, and the center Director. Periodic reviews by this committee will assess progress, risks (to self and others), and staff required to take care of the child's needs. If, after inclusion and a review of accommodations and adaptations, the center is unable to meet the needs of the child, the center reserves the right to ask the parents to seek a program that meets the child's needs. Staff are on a need-to-know basis regarding the child's special needs. The parents/guardians will be responsible for any expenses needed for observation and/or testing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Because Children's Place staff work as a team, many adults know and interact with the children throughout the day. Observations and other assessment data may be shared with staff members who are not a child's direct teacher, but will help to meet the needs of each child. Information about family situations, special needs, and other sensitive issues is shared only on an as-needed basis. Student workers, volunteers, and other adults working within the school are only informed of such sensitive issues when they are a part of keeping the child safe, supporting the child's inclusion, or when the information might impact their coursework. All staff members sign the following confidentiality agreement:

"As an adult working, observing, conducting research, and/or regularly volunteering at Children's Place, I may become privy to confidential information regarding children and families. It is of the utmost importance that I realize that all such information is strictly personal and confidential and can only be shared within the confines of Children's Place. I will discuss children's behavior, families, children, and staff for professional purposes only. When I encounter families, children, or staff outside the school, I will be courteous but use discretion. I understand that written authorization is required before disclosing any information regarding a child to an outside agency or individual. I know that confidentiality is an ethical obligation and that it is a requirement for my continued involvement at Children's Place. By signing this statement, I agree to always understand and practice the Children's Place confidentiality policy."

In accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, official written records for each child are kept in files in the Children's Place office or in a locked classroom

closet. They are released only to the individuals working with a child, as described above, or those for whom parents sign a written release. These files include enrollment forms, final conference reports, health assessments provided by physicians, reports of diagnostic assessments released to the school by parents, individual education plans, etc. Staff documentation of children's behavior and development, including specialized records for children whose special circumstances require extra classroom documentation, are kept in classroom locations accessible to teachers, but out of the reach of children and out of sight of classroom visitors. In addition, teachers follow ethical standards with respect to confidentiality of individual data as described above.

CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

Our behavior policy begins with prevention. Center Directors and teachers carefully arrange the physical aspects of the classrooms such that the spatial arrangement helps children interact appropriately. For example, large open spaces are generally avoided to help children save their large muscle activity, such as running, for the playground. Teachers are careful and attentive observers of the children in their classroom and are finely attuned to each child's uniqueness.

At Children's Place, our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective interaction and cooperation. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, "Let's keep the sand in the sand table so that we have a lot to pour." Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area to spark renewed engagement and positive behavior.

Basic Behavior Expectations

Knowing and meeting expectations encourages independent action and fosters self-esteem. The following are examples of tools and rules that we use in the classrooms.

Signals: Lights Off means Stop, Look and Listen; A Bell or Music means Clean Up and Look at the Teacher

School Rules: Each classroom will develop the rules together, depending on the age and developmental level of the children. Each classroom will post their rules.

Rule Examples:

- Be a kind friend.
- Listen the first time.
- Follow the routine.
- Stay in your own space.
- Use words to communicate.
- Use quieter voices inside.
- Walk inside the building.
- Use materials appropriately.
- Put everything in its place.

The students in each class will discuss behavior expectations throughout the year. As appropriate, each class will add specific examples relating to each of the items listed above. For example, one

year for “Be a kind friend,” a Fours class added “Share”, then another added “Respect the rights of others,” and the Threes specified “If you put down your toy and move on to something else, another friend can use it.”

All Children’s Place staff will:

- Provide limits in a calm, consistent, and respectful manner, which allows children to develop self-control and self-esteem.
- Respond to children’s challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of all.
- Help children learn to identify both positive and negative emotions, as well as to express them appropriately.
- Work with children to develop the conflict resolution skills necessary to solve their disagreements in an appropriate manner.
- Help children express and acknowledge their choices.
- Help children describe problems, evaluate their actions, verbalize alternatives, and consider the perspective of others.

Children are guided and supported as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions. This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing supervised quiet time for children to gain control. After a period of quiet time, the teacher invites the child to rejoin the group and reminds the child of the relevant expectations for the activity in progress. Staff shall observe all children and document any problem behavior to help ascertain any patterns in events, activities, and interactions, as well as any precipitating contextual factors. If a child’s problem behavior persists or becomes dangerous to the other children in the class (e.g., punching, kicking, temper tantrums), the child will be removed from the classroom and the teacher will try to calm the child. If additional action is necessary, the teacher will bring the child to the office and call the parent/guardian to come and pick up the child. Such situations are rare at Children’s Place and are discussed thoroughly with the child, the teacher, and the parent to determine positive steps toward resolution. Families are referred to specialists for help with persistent problems that may be linked to developmental issues, with the goal being to support the child’s successful inclusion in the classroom.

Persistent and Reoccurring Behaviors

Occasionally there will be a child whose behavior is excessively disruptive to the classroom environment or who is harmful to themselves or others. If a child becomes a threat to his/her own safety, other children’s safety, or staff safety, a teacher will gently hold the child until the child is able to gain control and feel safe and calm again.

If a child has frequent episodes in which he or she is a threat to others’ safety, the teacher, Director, and the parents/guardians will work together to plan an intervention that will prevent/eliminate the negative behavior. If the behavior persists and the center is unable to meet the child’s needs, the family will be asked to remove the child from the center. A request for withdrawal will be the last option after all other options have been exhausted.

Parents’ Concern About Other Children’s Behavior

If you have a concern about a child other than your own, please discuss your concern(s) with the child’s lead teacher or the Director.

Biting: Although our teachers use best practices to prevent biting, young children occasionally bite each other. When this happens, the area where the child was bitten is immediately washed with antiseptic soap and water. Both children, the child who was bitten and the child who did the biting, are then given care. An accident/incident form is filled out and the parent of the child who was bitten is given a copy. The name of the child who did the biting will be given only to that child's parent or guardian so they can work with staff to eliminate the behavior. The lead teacher and Director will work with the parents/guardians to help them form a plan to reduce any future reoccurrences. If intervention by the lead teachers in cooperation with the parents/guardians does not bring resolution and the problem continues, the Director will be asked to help plan additional interventions. Only after all options have been exhausted will a child who bites be asked to withdraw from participation.

PROHIBITED PRACTICES AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

If any staff member or person from the child's family, while in the vicinity of Children's Place, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director will take necessary steps to ensure that there is no reoccurrence of the practice.

- Corporal or any type of physical punishment is not permitted. This includes hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain.
- Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted.
- Abusive, profane, or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted.
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted.
- Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child is not permitted.

All observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), no matter where the abuse may have occurred. We will follow the direction of DCF regarding completion of written reports. If the parent or legal guardian of a child is suspected of abuse, we will follow the guidance of DCF regarding notification.

A staff member who is accused of child abuse may be suspended or given leave without pay pending investigation of the accusation. Such caregivers may also be removed from the classroom and given a job that does not require interaction with children. Parents or guardians are encouraged to immediately share any concerns they have regarding suspected maltreatment or abuse. If we have concerns or reports of abuse, as mandated reporters we will contact the Florida abuse hotline and notify the parent or guardian of the child or children involved. However, no accusation or affirmation of guilt will be made until the investigation is complete. Caregivers found guilty of child abuse will be summarily dismissed.

HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS

At Children's Place, holidays are viewed as educational opportunities that give us the chance to learn about our diverse school community. As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we encourage children to talk about their family traditions, and we share stories related to the meaning of Christian holidays. We plan age-appropriate activities to involve the children in preparing for simple school celebrations and to help them contribute to family events (e.g., basic cooking, making gifts, and so forth). We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time (typically one day) to maintain our regular school routine, and, as always, are ready to provide extra attention and comfort as needed. Because the children may prepare their own special holiday-related

snacks and because many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to candy and other sweets), please check with the teacher before sending in any food for celebrations. We strive to create meaningful celebrations with the children in an educational context.

Birthday celebrations can be a special time for the child to share with friends at school and, when possible, for families to join in celebrating. Please contact your child's teacher when your child's birthday is approaching to plan the timing of the celebration. For birthdays during vacation time, we can celebrate at another time that is convenient for you and your family. Because of the NAEYC restrictions on food brought from home for sharing with classmates, teachers will consult with the birthday child to choose a nutritious birthday snack that can either be prepared by a group of children in the class or be commercially prepared and packaged in factory sealed containers. We avoid foods with high sugar content, food additives, or highly processed food. We also plan carefully around food allergies. Nutritious snack alternatives include bagels, crackers, cheese, fruit, and frozen yogurt. Families are welcome to come and enjoy the treat. If you plan an additional birthday celebration outside of school, please distribute invitations from home unless the entire class is invited.

FIELD TRIPS

We frequently schedule walking field trips, weather permitting. Parents are required to sign a permission slip for each trip. The daily sign-in sheet serves as this permission slip. Our weekly Chapel field trips will have a separate sign-in sheet located with the daily sign-in sheet. Unfortunately, siblings are unable to join us on our field trips.

SPECIAL EVENTS

We plan many family-friendly special events throughout the year, providing multiple opportunities to participate in our school community. In addition, many adult family members extend their involvement by volunteering for classroom and/or schoolwide activities.

OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Children's Place understands the value of the parent/guardian and child relationship. It is for this reason that Children's Place maintains an open-door policy for all of our families. Parents/Guardians and family members with the security code and/or proper identification have open access to their children who are enrolled in the program. The only exception is if there is legal documentation on file in the center that forbids access. Parents of children enrolled in our programs are not required to call prior to arriving or entering the program and may visit unannounced at any time during center operating hours. Ongoing communication is essential between parents and the program to ensure optimal outcomes for children. This communication can take place via face-to-face conversations, e-mails, the messaging app, or phone calls. Other forms of communication and access include, but are not limited to, parent-teacher logs, parent conferences, parent message boards, and our Facebook group. Conferences can be initiated by parents/family members or by program staff. Sometimes family visits can be stressful for children, especially if they are still learning to separate from parents. If your child finds these visits stressful, we may need to discuss other options.

MOONLIGHTING AND BABYSITTING

Caring for children in a planned environment requires our staff members to be rested, well-read in child development, and refreshed on a daily basis. Often, teachers are approached by families to provide evening and weekend childcare. At Children's Place we discourage employees from accepting recurring additional commitments.

PETS

From time to time our center may include animals as part of the curriculum. If your child has any allergies to pets, please indicate those on your enrollment and classroom information forms, in addition to talking with your child's teacher.

PHOTOGRAPHY IN CLASSROOMS

Parents may not take pictures (still or video) of children in the center without first checking with the classroom teacher or the office to find out if the parents have agreed to allow their child to be photographed.

TUITION AND PAYMENT POLICIES

Tuition is based on an annual fee and divided into ten equal payments. At enrollment there will be an enrollment fee and the first payment will be due August 1st. The remaining nine payments are billed from September through May. Tuition is due on the first of each month and is late after the 10th of the month. A \$15.00 late fee will be added if payment is not made by the 10th of the month. All payments are made through an automatic payment process called "Tuition Express." There is a \$25.00 fee for any payment that is returned for insufficient funds. All payments are NON-REFUNDABLE. Please see our tuition rates page for tuition costs. Additional fees may be incurred if students are dropped off early or picked up later than their scheduled times. There is a flat \$15 plus \$1.00 fee for every minute a student is picked up after 1:00 PM (or 4:30 PM for full-time students). For early drop-off, there is a fee of \$8 for every 30 minutes before the scheduled drop-off time.

VPK

students are allotted 540 hours paid by the State of Florida. Optional Friday and Full-Time care for a flat monthly fee may also be available. Per the policy of the Early Learning Coalition, a student may miss up to 26 VPK Program days (Monday-Thursday). If a student misses more than the number of days allowed, parents will be responsible for paying out of pocket for the program fees.

Tuition Express

is part of our Procure Software program management system and will allow us to process tuition and fee payments safely, quickly, and efficiently with automatic payment from your checking account or credit card. The Tuition Express payment system is mandatory. Please complete a Tuition Express form and choose your payment method at the time of registration. If you choose Electronic Funds Transfer, please attach a voided check. At any time if you need to update your information, you may fill out a new form in the front office or have one emailed to you. If you need an occasional special arrangement for a tuition payment, please request it in writing. Late fees may apply.

Children's Place may terminate the enrollment and enforce the withdrawal of any child at any time due to delinquent payment, ill health, consistent behavior problems, or any other issues as determined by the Director. We will be available to help negotiate difficulties if they arise and to reach mutually satisfying solutions. We will always support you when making decisions affecting your child.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

At all times, health and safety are top priorities at Children's Place. Everyone's vigilance regarding health and safety issues contributes significantly to our effectiveness.

Staff Responsibility

Staff members are responsible for maintaining a healthy environment. We follow the same illness exclusions that are required for children. All staff members submit criminal record and child abuse clearances as part of the employment process. Staff participate in bi-annual pediatric first aid/CPR classes, understand fire safety, and participate in regular drills outlined in the “Security and Emergency Plan” section of the family handbook. Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit, as do the front office and outdoor sheds. All teachers bring a first aid kit with them outdoors. Staff members are responsible for daily checks of the classrooms and shared spaces for hazards. Children’s Place is a smoke-free environment with a safe water supply from the City of Gulf Breeze and Midway Water. The heating, ventilation, and cooling systems are maintained in accordance with national standards. The preschool classrooms and buildings are free from asbestos, and we have periodic checks for other environmental hazards, in addition to monitoring the safety of our equipment and furnishings. We also have an integrated pest management program. We follow NAEYC’s frequency table for cleaning and sanitation throughout the school, including precautions to minimize the spread of infectious disease and store hazardous materials in locked cabinets. We follow parent and/or health professional recommendations regarding children who have allergies, and, except for the occasional visit from a cat or dog, we limit classroom pets to birds, fish, amphibians, worms, and insects. Our outdoor classroom is partially shaded for most of the day, and there is always some shade available in the pavilions and play structures. We ask that parents apply sunblock (minimum SPF 15 with UVA/UVB protection) before bringing their child to school. We will apply sunblock if it is authorized in writing and provided by the family. At this time, our area is not designated by health authorities as high-risk of insect-borne disease; but if that changes, we will use daily application of repellent when parents provide written authorization and appropriate repellent.

Hand Washing

Because hand washing is the most effective measure to avoid the spread of disease, we explicitly teach and monitor hand-washing procedures that follow CDC Guidelines:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands and between your fingers.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds (as long as it takes to sing the ABC Song).
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean paper towel.

We all wash our hands upon entry, before snacks and meals, before and after food preparation, after toileting and diapering, after contact with bodily fluids, after play with other children, and after re-entry from the outdoor classroom, as well as after any messy activities or contact with pets. Adults also wash their hands after assisting with toileting, handling garbage or cleaning, and before and after feeding a child or administering medication.

Diapering

Children’s Place follows accreditation and state licensing requirements for sanitary disposal of soiled diapers. The soiled diapers are kept in a closed container out of children’s reach and the diaper changing area is disinfected after every use.

Potty Training

Children are toilet trained when they need little to no assistance from adults and when they can tell you that they have to go potty **before** they actually go. Children **MUST** be potty trained to participate in our Three-Year-Old, Pre-School, and VPK programs. When children are ready, our staff will provide the support, care, and attention to help them master this important developmental milestone. Please feel free to talk about your child's toileting needs with your child's teachers.

Staffing and Supervision

Birth - 12 months	1:4
One-Year-Old Children	1:6
Two-Year-Old Children	1:11
Three-Year-Old Children	1:15
4 - 6-Year-Old Children (VPK)	1:20

At Children's Place we maintain state mandated staff-to-child ratios, although we strive for smaller group sizes. These ratios are applicable both indoors and outdoors.

Staff members, as a group, supervise preschool children primarily by sight. Of these adults, at least one is a staff member and the other may be a student intern or volunteer. Classroom space is designed so there are no areas where children can hide. Supervision by sound is permissible for short intervals, such as when children go to the children's or private bathroom from the classroom.

Illness and Injury

Please see our Sick Policy form that will be sent home separately with all families.

Staff members observe the children throughout the day and are aware when children are feeling unwell. Children who become sick at school are removed from the group and cared for until parents are contacted for pick-up.

Young children may experience falls or bumps during the day. Usually, they do not result in injury and are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic bandage or ice pack. When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training. They will verbally report the injury to parents, guardians, or caregivers, recommend treatment by a medical professional if appropriate, and complete an injury report within one day. Copies are kept in the child's file and signed by the parent.

Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident and prompt action will be taken by contacting EMS personnel. If necessary, we will accompany the child in an ambulance to the hospital preferred by the family. In these cases, injury reports are supplemented by the EMS reports.

Family Responsibility

As part of the enrollment process, parents must complete an emergency information form and give permission for staff members to administer basic first aid to their child. Review of this emergency information is required every semester, so we typically conduct it when parents are at school for their conferences. In addition, parents or guardians should contact the school any time there is a change in

the emergency contact information. Additional consent forms for field trips, multimedia recording, wading pool use, and sunscreen application may also be required.

Prior to the child's first day of school, parents are required to submit current Florida school entry health and immunizations forms. These are available from your pediatrician or county health department. Thereafter, parents must submit an updated form after the yearly well-child checkup. You will be notified when required immunizations are due and you will need to bring a copy of the updated immunization form to the preschool office. Parents of children with allergies must complete an additional form providing guidelines appropriate to the child's needs, with details regarding provision and storage of special foods (labeled with the child's name and date), necessary adaptations of activities or environment, actions staff should take in the event of an allergic reaction, and any necessary staff training. Parents of children with other special needs should contact an administrator for guidance regarding necessary documentation, medication authorization forms, and advance planning with the staff. All health and safety information files are kept current by updating as needed. Parents of children speaking English as a second language are asked to complete a form detailing the child's level of proficiency, and then are invited to talk with teachers regarding strategies to assist the child's transition as necessary. All files are confidential and are available to administrators and/or teaching staff who have parental consent for record access, to the child's parents or legal guardian(s), and to regulatory authorities, upon request.

Children's Place may terminate the enrollment and enforce the withdrawal of any child at any time due to delinquent payment, ill health, consistent behavior problems, or any other problems as determined by the Director. We will be available to help negotiate difficulties if they arise and to reach mutually satisfying solutions. You will always be supported to make decisions affecting your child.

Sick Children

The Children's Place community relies on the adult family members' thoughtful assessment of each child's health before sending him or her to school. Even if your child really wants to come to school, please keep him or her at home if any of the following symptoms are evident (as any of these may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily spread to other children):

Your child is vomiting and/or your child has:

- any discharge from eyes, ears, or nose
- a persistent cough
- shortness of breath
- a sore throat
- a fever of 100 degrees or above
- diarrhea
- a rash
- pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- lice
- any other sign or symptom of illness

Your child may return to the center:

- 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of fever reducers (Tylenol, Motrin, Ibuprofen)
- 24 hours after the first dose of medication is administered for strep throat
- 24 hours with no loose stools or vomiting

- 24 hours after insecticidal shampoo has been applied and all lice, lice eggs, and egg cases are removed
- when both eye(s) are completely clear (no discharge) after pink eye
- when there is no discharge, no fever, and all sores are scabbed over in chicken pox
- 5 days after the rash in measles
- when there is no fever and 9 days after swelling began with mumps

When your child will not be in school, please call the office to let your child's teacher know. Please let the front office know if your child has contracted a contagious condition or disease so we can notify other families and staff members who might be affected.

In most cases where medication is required, physicians recommend that the child be on medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school. In addition, please keep your child home until he or she is well enough to participate fully in both indoor and outdoor activities because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors. Children's Place prefers not to administer medications at school. If medication needs to be given while the child is at school, please bring the medication in its original labeled container with written directions from the doctor to the office and complete a medication authorization form. Do not send medication in the child's lunchbox or backpack.

Car Seats

Injuries suffered while riding in cars are the number one preventable cause of death in young children. Here are guidelines to follow for keeping your child safe in the car:

The rear seat is the best seat for children 12 and younger. All car passengers must wear a seat belt. It's the law! Florida law also requires children ages 5 and under to be secured properly in a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device. Additionally,

- children ages 0 to 3 must be in child restraint devices of a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child seat,
- children ages 4 through 5 must be in a separate carrier, integrated child seat, or booster seat, and
- the best seat is the one that fits your child's size, is correctly installed, fits well in your car, and is used properly every time you drive.

Never hold a child in your arms or lap while traveling in the car.

Security and Emergency Procedures

We monitor the building with security cameras. We have a silent alarm system in place on campus. Our staff is trained in lock down drills, tornado and severe weather drills, fire drills, and missing child drills. These drills are practiced regularly. Fire drills are held monthly to acquaint children and caregivers with evacuation procedures. Our center is equipped with fire alarms, fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, and smoke detectors. In an emergency or time-critical situation in which the Director or the Assistant Directors are not present, the most senior teachers present will decide collaboratively on a course of action.

CHILDREN'S BELONGINGS

Toys from home

Except for sharing a special “treasure” during circle time, we ask that children not bring toys from home. The toys may be easily lost or broken and young children, developmentally, have not reached the stage where sharing is comfortable. So that we may teach children to cooperate and interact positively, please leave toys such as guns or knives that tend to promote aggressive behavior, at home. Your child’s teacher can recommend toys or treasures that are appropriate for sharing.

Clothing

Comfortable, sturdy clothes are best for active participation. Close-toed shoes are best for safe play. Since children are active learners, “dressy” clothes are likely to get soiled or damaged, so it is best to not wear them to school. Children should always have clothing appropriate for the weather; light clothing in the Spring, Summer, and Fall, and heavier clothing during the short Winter season. All children should have an extra set of seasonal clothing, including socks and underwear. All clothing should be marked with your child’s name.

Lost and Found

Any personal belongings that cannot be identified will be placed in a Lost and Found box. If no one claims any of the items at the end of each semester, they will be discarded or donated.

Napping Accoutrements

All children must have a small blanket or beach towel. Make sure the blanket and pillow have the child’s name marked on them. All should be taken home at the end of each week for laundering. Large bed-sized pillows and blankets cannot be accommodated due the lack of storage, as well as health and safety concerns.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Lunches

Families provide lunches in labeled lunchboxes. Please send balanced meals in appropriate quantities for your child. To facilitate meal planning, the USDA MyPlate resources are available online(<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>)and available in the Children’s Place front office. The school does not have space for refrigerating children’s lunches, so please use cold packs or a frozen juice box to keep items at appropriately safe temperatures until lunchtime. When necessary, the teachers will provide supplemental food from our nutritious snack items.

Food From Home

Food brought from home for sharing among children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers. Families of children with special dietary restrictions should consult with teachers or administrators to develop an individualized plan.

Snacks

Children’s Place provides optional snacks and cooking experiences for children. The staff will make sure that any food allergies are addressed, and snacks and cooking ingredients are posted.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FAMILIES AND CHILDREN’S PLACE

Good communication between families and the center is essential to maintain the vitality and the level of service that it is our intention to offer. There are many avenues for maintaining this connection:

(1) Telephone conversations with teachers/Directors at mutually convenient times.

- (2) Conference appointments with teachers/Directors at mutually convenient times to ensure adequate time to talk over matters of interest or concern.
- (3) E-mail and texting conversations when time constraints limit direct conversations.
- (4) Written notes/letters.

Lesson Plans and Newsletters

Classrooms send home and post newsletters each month. Classrooms post lesson plans each week.

Take-Home Folders

Each classroom has a designated place for communication about the day's activities. When you are signing your child out at the end of the day, take a moment to look at the day's events!

Parents as Partners

A strong partnership between parents and teachers helps us maintain a quality early learning environment for your children. You are your child's first teacher and know your child best. Parent participation is welcome in the classroom. If you are unsure about how you might contribute, talk with your child's lead teacher or the Director. They will be more than happy to share ideas about ways you can contribute. A description of our open door and access policy is detailed in an earlier portion of this handbook.

Children's Place encourages your participation in the many events and activities we have planned throughout the year. Please fill out the Parent Volunteer Partnership form and send it back to the office.

Occasionally, while volunteering in the classroom, you may have a concern about how something is done or about a particular child's behavior. It is best that you do not intervene and, instead, discuss your concern with the lead teacher or Director who will work to find the most appropriate solution.

ANTI-BIAS POLICY

We encourage and support cultural diversity, gender equality, non-violence, and peaceful conflict resolution throughout every aspect of our program. Our goal is to teach children to resist the bias that inundates much of today's popular culture. We believe that children can be empowered to reject negative stereotypes of race, gender, religion, and physical capabilities with the help of their parents and teachers. We ask for your support and your feedback to help us ensure that we are living up to our highest standards.

Surveys are conducted periodically and prior to the NAEYC re-accreditation process (every 5 years). All parents receive a program assessment survey during these times. However, we invite your feedback at any time to help us get better at what we do.

Thank you for choosing Children's Place Preschool! We look forward to partnering with you this year.

Start simple
with MyPlate



Healthy Eating for Preschoolers

Healthy eating is important at every age. Offer preschoolers a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. When deciding on foods and beverages, choose options that are full of nutrients and limited in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Start with these tips:



Model healthy behaviors

Preschoolers tend to copy what parents or caregivers do at the table. If you eat your veggies, they'll eat their veggies. And, it's good for both of you.



Think about their drinks

Sugar-sweetened beverages like sodas and fruit drinks are sources of added sugars that are often high in calories. Beverages with no added sugars like water, unsweetened fat-free or low-fat milk (including low-lactose or lactose-free options), or fortified soy beverages should be the primary choice for children.



Prevent choking

Encourage children to sit at a table for meals and snacks and not wander around carrying food. Check out the [USDA Team Nutrition worksheet](#) for foods that are choking hazards at different ages.



Try new foods

Let children choose a new food to try at the grocery store. Serve something your child likes along with the new food. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.



Get kids involved

Preschoolers can help at mealtimes by washing produce, tearing lettuce, stirring mixes, scooping ingredients, or setting the table.



Offer choices

Like adults, preschoolers like to have a say in what they eat. "A pear or an apple?" "Whole-wheat toast or some crackers?" You offer the healthy options, but they get to choose.



Go to [MyPlate.gov](#) for more information.
USDA is an equal opportunity provider,
employer, and lender.

**The benefits of healthy eating
add up over time, bite by bite.**

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