

Mission Statement

“To meet the needs of the community by providing quality child care that encourages individual development in a safe, nurturing environment.”

Foreword

Recent brain research points to the increasing importance of the years between birth and four years of age. These early years form the basis for the learning for the rest of our life. The developmental levels your child receives at this tender age are crucial to success and happiness during their teen and adult life. Realizing this importance, The Children’s Center continuously strives to offer a well-rounded program that offers growth in all areas... cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. The Children’s Center boasts of a safe, secure, healthy environment for your child and all others entrusted to our care. Components of our programs, such as a pre-school curriculum, USDA food program, field trips and special events make for a tremendous experience.

The Children’s Center is an independent, not for profit organization. We are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of a variety of occupations and backgrounds. Our staff is professionally trained and fulfills annual staff development requirements. We are a very professional organization providing a professional service... quality child care and education to young children. By making a commitment to families and children, we in turn make commitments to our staff and vendors. We appreciate the teamwork and rapport our families show the Center. Without you, many elements of our community would be affected... employers, families and professionals.

We believe that our mission and our philosophy speak for themselves. We are an organization dedicated to children and families. Communication is also a vital part of our operation. Please be sure to talk and meet often with your child’s teacher and other administrative staff. We have an open door policy and provide families with newsletters, daily and weekly posting of curriculum, and semi-annual conferences. On behalf of the Board of Directors, professional staff, and many volunteers, we hope the experience your child gains with us will offer both personal attention and a strong educational and social experience.

Philosophy

The Children’s Center believes each child is a very special and unique person. The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. Learning isn’t just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world in which we live.

History

In the fall of 1969, a dream was realized when The Albert Lea Community Child Care Center, Inc. opened its doors for 20 children. A concerned group of volunteers noted the need for child care. In response to a survey conducted at the Skyline Mall in February 1969, 62% interviewed stated they would use a child care center. The community based Board of Directors then founded the Center. The Albert Lea Community Child Care Center opened its doors at Christ Episcopal Church on September 2, 1969.

The Albert Lea Community Child Care Center is now called The Children’s Center at 2 separate locations in Albert Lea. An idea sparked over four decades ago, is now a successful and very unique reality for nearly 200 children in our community every year. Dedicated staff, Board members and volunteers are *responsible* for the Center’s on-going viability. Children are our *reason*.

Licensing and Site Information

Licensing

All of The Children's Center sites are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 651/296-3971. We serve families without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, religion, sex or source of assistance.

The Children's Center is mandated to follow the procedures outlined in the Minnesota Department of Human Services Division of Licensing DHS Rule 3 (Child Care Centers), parts 9503.0005 to 9503.0170. A copy is on file in each classroom.

Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing

1-651-296-3971

State of Minnesota, DHS

Human Services Building

444 Lafayette Road

St. Paul, MN 55155-3842

Ratios

Our teacher to child ratios are equal to or better than the state requirements listed below:

Infants	1:4
Toddlers	1:7
Pre School	1:10
School Age	1:15

Days of Operation

The Children's Center operates Monday through Friday January through December.

The Children's Center will be closed to observe the 6 major holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. A fall teacher prep day where all sites are closed is planned the Friday before Labor Day each year. When the holiday falls on a weekend, The Children's Center will be closed to observe that holiday on either the previous Friday or the following Monday.

Licensed Locations and Capacity

James Avenue Site

- telephone number is 507-373-7979
- Kindergarten and school age children are bused to and from the schools.
- School age care is provided before school, after school and non-school days, plus an enriched summer program.
- licensed capacity: 157 – which includes infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school age (K-4th)
- Hours: 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

St. John's Site

- Located at St. John's Lutheran Home
- Telephone number is 507-379-9505
- Licensed capacity: 48 – which includes 8 infants, 16 toddlers, and 24 preschoolers
- Hours: 5:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Registration and Enrollment

Eligibility

Children between the ages of six weeks and 4th grade are eligible to attend the Center. Our license is for a total of 200 children between the two sites. Each location is licensed for a certain number of children. *See Site Information for more details.* All children enrolled are provided with quality care in a safe and loving environment regardless of race, creed, religious affiliations or individual needs.

The Children's Center does reserve the right to terminate, refuse, or restrict care to a child if behavioral and/or social issues may affect the safety, health and general well being of the child, peers, parents or staff. Though we offer special needs care, we are not a skilled nursing facility and do reserve the right to evaluate children prior to or in consideration of continued enrollment at the Center. *See Behavior Guidelines for more information.*

Enrollment Procedures

Before a child is enrolled in our program we invite the family to tour our facilities. If the family chooses to attend our program we ask for a \$50.00 deposit for a part time child or a \$100.00 deposit for a full time child. A maximum of \$100.00 will be made per family. The deposit will be applied to your first week of care. If families are in the Child Care Assistance Program with the Department of Human Services, no deposit is needed.

Once a deposit is made you will determine a start date. We will give you enrollment paperwork to be filled out and returned. We ask that the paper work be filled out and returned as soon as possible. We will need at least 24 hours to process your paperwork.

Enrollment forms are required by The Minnesota Department of Human Services. *See tuition Policies and Procedures for more information.*

General Policies and Procedures

Arrival and Departure

Transportation to and from the Center is provided by the parents with the exception of bus transportation for the school aged children who are transported between the School Age program and their respective schools.

Parents must accompany their child into the building AND to their classroom where our staff will assume responsibility for care. Please allow adequate time in the morning to check your child in and give any needed instructions to your child's teacher. When a child leaves for the day, please remember to check your child out and inform your child's teacher that your child is leaving.

If a parent/guardian has not picked up their child by closing time or they have not informed the center of their tardiness, the staff will attempt to contact the parents first and then emergency contacts. If unable to reach any of the responsible parties within 30 minutes after closing, the police will be notified of the situation and may pick up your child.

Schedules – Daily and Weekly

Be sure to communicate, clearly and regularly, your child's anticipated schedule each week. This information is the basis for staffing, meals and supplies. The more accurately parents and teachers can manage each child's schedule helps keep fees and expenses low. Any schedule changes must be made through your child's teacher.

Please notify the Center as soon as possible if you know your child will not be in attendance that day.

Daily Classroom Schedule

The daily classroom schedule supports our goals for children. We want your child to feel secure and independent, to move from one activity to another as easily and confidently as possible. And we want to provide a variety of learning experiences for a well-rounded education. So we plan a daily schedule that takes all these goals into account. Children are happier with a set routine so we try to follow the same schedule each day.

Program Plan

Program plans are posted in each room and available for parents to review.

Site Changes

Due to occasional low attendance, the Center may choose to combine sites. Parents will be given adequate notice of any such changes.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special events when you've only had a few! You are invited to join your child for lunch on the 'special day'. If your child wishes to bring a special treat, it must be pre-packaged and sealed from the store. This requirement is a Minnesota Department of Health regulation.

Field Trips and Special Events

Educational field trips and special events are planned year round. These are planned to coincide with significant events and, at times, with the monthly theme. We try to choose events and/or speakers that are not only fun and educational, but also specialists in their respective fields. Many of these events are free, but some may include a nominal fee. Parental permission will be obtained from each child's parent before the event is to take place.

Occasional walking excursions will take place as follows:

James Ave.:	Academy Park; tennis and basketball courts on James; Frank Hall Park and the Blazing Star bike trail
Kids Klub:	Academy Park; tennis and basketball courts on James; Frank Hall Park; Blazing Star bike trail; Public Library; Fire Department and Police Department.
St. John's:	Circle Drive Park; Lakeview Park; Shorland Park; Shoff Park and St. John's Luther Home.

Staff will take emergency information and first aid supplies on all field trips. At least one person will be trained in CPR and first aid during these events.

Toys and Personal Items

We encourage the bringing of 'security items' that help your child's transition from home to the Center. However, to prevent broken or lost toys and unhappy children, we discourage the bringing of other toys from home. Please be sure that your child does not have small, potentially dangerous objects in pockets, such as pins, nails, and money. Teachers may set limitations within rooms as to the type of toys allowed.

The Children's Center does not accept responsibility for any lost, stolen, damaged, or broken personal property brought to the center.

Nap Time

The Center's program includes scheduled nap or quiet times each day for children infant through pre-school. This provides your child the opportunity to spend time alone to get the needed rest they require. Infants are allowed to nap throughout the day.

Supervision

All children will be supervised by qualified staff at all times while the children are in our care, as per the MN Dept of Human Services requirements. All personnel in direct contact with children are required to pass the Background Study Check by the Department of Human Services.

Staff and Personnel

All teaching staff, head teachers, assistant teachers, aides, and substitute teachers meet or exceed the Minnesota Department of Human Services requirements. In addition to the educational requirements, The Children's Center staff is also required to either meet or exceed additional in-service hours and training.

Outdoor Play

We plan to go outside each and every day the weather permits, even if it's just for a brief time. A child well enough to be at the Center will participate in outdoor play. Please have scarf, mittens, cap, warm jacket, snowpants or suit, and boots available and well marked.

Pets

There may be small pets in the classroom – fish, gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, a canary or parakeet. Pets will be properly cared for and inoculated in accordance with local health ordinances and codes. Any visiting pets will be in a cage or on a leash and will have prior approval.

It is not recommended that children be allowed to participate in pet care or maintenance. In the event a child is bitten by any animal while in the care of the Center, staff will follow our first aid procedures. *See Health Information for more details.*

Clothing

- All children should have an extra supply of clothes available. They should be labeled and changed with the seasons.
- Think of your child's comfort and provide simple clothing that is free of complicated fastenings, especially when your child is in the process of bathroom training.
- Please provide your child with easy to wash and wear clothes.

Infant and Toddler Needs

Diapers and wipes need to be provided by the parent. A package of each can be brought and left in your child's cubby as well as a day's supply of bottles and nipples, if applicable. Bottles, nipples and pacifiers will be sanitized daily.

Research and Publicity

The Children's Center may occasionally interview children, photograph or videotape children for publicity or public relations type events. The Children's Center could also be approached to participate in research projects. If you do not approve of your child being part of such publicity materials, please notify the Family Services Coordinator.

United Way of Freeborn County

The United Way funds a sliding fee scale for income eligible families in our care. As an agency of the United Way, The Children's Center will not participate in or originate any fundraisers that would interfere with the Freeborn County United Way Campaign.

Early Intervention and Referrals

If needed, our teachers and Executive Director will work directly with District #241 when a Special Needs Coordinator is needed to observe, screen, or refer children for additional assessment. Individual planning, remedy strategies and implementation of goals are coordinated with the teachers, parents, Executive Director, and Special Needs Coordinator.

Enrichment Programs

From time to time, The Children's Center is proud to be able to offer our families and children a variety of enrichment programs such as Spanish, swimming lessons, etc. Any information regarding these programs and related fees will be communicated to all parents. We are always open to new and creative suggestions that parents may have.

Year-end Account Statements

By the end of January of each year, The Children's Center will be pleased to provide, upon request, a summarized 12 month statement of each family's child care costs for tax purposes. Contact Accounts Receivable at the Main Site for more information.

Section 125

The Children's Center will be pleased to provide account information for families who use a Section 125 dependent care plan. Contact Accounts Receivable at the Main Site for more information.

Parental Visits

Parents are welcome to visit their enrolled children.

Firearms Policy

The Children's Center bans firearms on its property. Possession of firearms on or near property controlled by The Children's Center or at The Children's Center sponsored events is prohibited.

Preschool Curriculum and the Learning Environment

Children learn by doing. Through active involvement with their environment, children attempt to make sense of the world around them. They learn by observing what happens when they interact with materials and other people. They spontaneously engage in activities such as block building, painting, or dramatic play, adding pieces of information to what they already know and thereby generating new understandings. Children learn simple concepts and then use these concepts to grasp more complex ideas.

The Children's Center teachers plan an environment and curriculum that will stimulate your child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. We follow The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood planning system. Each classroom is designed with the following play experiences:

Creative arts and crafts foster creativity and build skills that lead to reading, writing and seeing beauty in life.

Construction play (block, building sets) helps children learn about science and numbers, fosters creativity and builds muscle strength and coordination.

Dramatic and pretend play helps children use their imagination, explore and understand the world, learn how to work together, practice new behaviors and imitate grown-up behaviors.

Books and recordings help children appreciate literature and music, and develop intellect.

Sand, water, playdough, etc. provide sensory stimulation, and opportunities to understand more about math and science; explore properties of matter.

Table toys (cognitive toys, games, fine motor toys) provide hand-eye coordination, intellectual stimulation, and present opportunities for cooperation and problem solving.

Active play equipment builds strong muscles and confidence to meet physical challenges, and promotes healthy minds and bodies.

Health and Nutrition helps children build skills to promote positive mental wellness, dental health, physical health and safety awareness.

Reading, Writing, Numbers and Language skills are built into all the activities we provide each day, children will build kindergarten readiness skills through both teacher directed and self directed activities.

Physical Activities The Children's Center's objective is to increase strength and endurance by improving muscular coordination, helping to control bodily function and promoting safety rules.

Cognitive Activities The center's objective is to teach children to listen and follow directions so projects can be completed. These cognitive activities will also help increase attention spans. Children learn to formulate information and converse intelligently. They also develop skills that help them recall information for problem solving.

Emotional Activities The Children's Center strives to establish a positive self-concept. The child will learn to moderate withdrawal or aggression, increase self-control, and channel emotions.

Social Activities Children will participate in group activities and learn to share and take turns. They will master appropriate behavior as a leader and follower and will learn to respect the rights and property of others.

Behavior Guidance

Behavioral Policy

Guiding children in a positive manner is imperative to ensure the safety, health, and development of each child. Staff provide a positive role model for acceptable behavior, and have daily communication with parents.

Perceptive staff will intervene and redirect before a negative situation happens. However, if negative behavior occurs:

1. Staff will discuss options with the child for a more constructive playtime.
2. If behavior persists, the child will be directed to another activity; if the child continues to be unable to function in an acceptable manner, the child will be removed from the group within the room for a length of time appropriate for the developmental age.
3. If the total group is disrupted, the child will be removed from the room to a quiet place with a staff person until the child gains self control (in extreme circumstances, for the safety of the child and peers, it may be necessary to physically restrain the child by holding.)
4. Teachers will log any time a child is separated from the group for inappropriate behavior.
5. A special conference with parents will be called if separation from the group happens three times in a day, five times in a week, or eight times in a two week period.
6. A guidance plan will be developed with parent and staff. Professionals may be requested by staff and parents to assist in devising a plan based on previous documentation for the child. This may include the necessity of parents picking up the child if the unacceptable behavior is a continuing problem.
7. The Children's Center will make every effort to provide a program that meets the needs of each child. However, at some times it may be impossible to meet the needs of a child and family. If after working with the child and family, we do not believe it is in the child's best interest to remain at the program, we will ask the family to make other arrangements. Behavior or health issues that may affect the safety, health, and general well being of other children at The Children's Center may result in limited exclusion or termination of enrollment.

Discipline Beliefs

-No child will be subjected to corporal punishment, which may include rough handling, shoving, hair or ear pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, hitting, or spanking.

-No child will be subjected to emotional abuse, which may include name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks or using threatening language that humiliates or frightens the child.

-No child will be punished for lapses in toilet habits.

-No child will have food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care withheld as a punishment.

Communications

Newsletters and Menus

Parents/guardians will receive a menu and newsletter which covers news of the Center, individual classroom happenings, important messages, upcoming events, etc.

Conferences and Meetings

Head Teachers will schedule parent conferences twice a year. Parents will receive a notice to sign up for a conference. Teachers complete a written developmental assessment of each child that they will share with the parents at these conferences. From these conferences, teachers and parents gain insight into such areas as:

- Cognitive development
- Motor development
- Personal/social development
- Adaptive development
- Communication development
- Fundamental development

Other meetings between staff and parents may be called from time to time. Individual conferences/meetings are available whenever children need additional support from parents and teachers alike. Willingness to get a child any added assistance for any identified concerns is a key to a strong working relationship for everyone. Our goal is to help the child.

Announcements

Weekly postings of curriculums will be available in each classroom. Occasional daily postings of activities and news will also happen. Additionally, critical information such as health warnings, etc. will also be posted in each room. Lastly, infants and toddlers will receive daily correspondence noting individual attention given to their child each day.

Affirmative Action Statement/USDA

This facility is operated in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture, our policy does not allow discrimination in hiring, or enrollment procedures because of race, creed, color, religious affiliations, sex, disability, public assistance status, national origin, age, sexual preference or individual needs. This policy applies to all phases of enrollment, recruitment and selection. Any person who believes they have been discriminated against should write to the Secretary of Agriculture – USDA Programs, Washington D.C. 20250.

Grievance Procedure

Parents are invited to address concerns at any time. Concerns should not be discussed with the children present. Remember... the only way to address and respond to concerns is to share them with the appropriate people. Voicing your concerns to family, friends and neighbors will not help to make a better situation for your child.

So that you may receive the best and most timely response, please make your concerns known to the following persons in the following order:

1. Head Teacher in your child's classroom

Please share your concern immediately with your child's Head Teacher.

2. Lead Teacher

If you are still concerned after discussing the problem with your child's Head Teacher, please feel free to discuss the matter with the sites Lead Teacher. The Lead Teacher will try to solve the problem within two

weeks following direct contact with concerned parent/guardian. The Lead Teacher or parent/guardian should feel free to request a conference.

3. Executive Director

If the parent/guardian feels the problem has not been resolved after following the above procedure, please call or meet with the Executive Director of The Children's Center.

Working together, parents/guardians and staff will meet to resolve your concerns and ensure the best action for your child.

The Center will attempt to honor the concerns and wishes of families and children, but reminds families that the Center cannot be put into any compromising situation due to stressful or strained family relationships. Our actions need to reflect the well being of children, families, and the overall status of the Center. Families are asked to keep this fact in mind when making day to day arrangements at the Center.

Health Information

A physician or health care provider's opinion is **NOT** an acceptable or legally binding reason for a child to remain or return to the Center.

The Children's Center staff reserves the right to make any health exclusion decisions.

Health Policies

Upon registration, a medical record including a Health Care Summary and an Immunization Record of each child must be submitted to the Family Services Coordinator. It **must** include a current physical examination and be signed by the family's health care source or provider. A record of a physical examination is again required yearly for infants and toddlers up to 33 months of age and whenever the child advances to an older age group. Documentation of updated immunizations **must** be submitted as each child has a change in their immunization record.

Illness

We are **not** licensed to care for sick children. It is important for you to make arrangements for substitute care when your child is ill.

Please keep your child home if your child...

1. Has vomited, had abnormally loose stools or a fever in the last 12 hours.
2. Has skin sores, eye drainage, strep or bacterial infection. He/she may return to the Center when medication has been administered for 24 hours and signs of healing are evident.
3. Has an infectious disease or a rash of undiagnosed origin. A physician's release may be required before returning to the Center.

If your child becomes ill at the Center...

If a child should become ill during the day, they will be isolated from the other children and allowed to rest quietly until their parent/guardian is able to come and pick them up. The parents will be notified of their child's condition and asked to come and pick their child up. If the parents cannot be reached, then we will notify the emergency contacts. If the condition warrants, staff reserves the right to contact the child's health care source or call 911 for emergency assistance.

Exclusion of Sick Children (MN Dept. of Human Services Division of Licensing Rule 3 Guidelines) A child with **ANY** of the following conditions or behaviors is a **sick child** and must be excluded from a center **NOT** licensed to operate a **sick care program**. If the child becomes sick while at the center, the child must be isolated from other children in our care and the parent/guardian be called immediately to make other arrangements. A sick child must be supervised at all times.

As a license holder, The Children's Center **must** exclude a child:

- A. who has a contagious disease and the physician determines has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the health risk to others; *ex. measles, hepatitis*
- B. with chicken pox until the child is no longer infectious or until the lesions are crusted over; *(Children with the varicella 'chicken pox' vaccine may get chicken pox and are still considered contagious. Pox generally appear in crops. The process for each crop of pox to crust over may take up to a week.)*
- C. who has vomited since admission that day;
- D. who has had abnormally loose stools since admission that day; *(This includes stool that cannot be contained in a diaper, side effects to medicines, and teething reactions.)*
- E. who has contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye; *(Children must be excluded until a diagnosis is made and appropriate treatment administered for the appropriate length of time.)*

- F. who has a bacterial infection such as streptococcal pharyngitis or impetigo and has not completed 24 hours of antimicrobial therapy;
- G. who has unexplained lethargy; (*Unexplained lethargy may be a sign of a deeper concern.*)
- H. who has lice, lice nits, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others;
- I. who has a 100 degree Fahrenheit axillary (*underarm*) or higher temperature of undiagnosed OR diagnosed origin BEFORE fever reducing medication is given;
- J. who has an undiagnosed rash or a rash attributable to a contagious illness or condition;
- K. who has significant respiratory distress;
- L. who is not able to participate in child care program activities with reasonable comfort; *ex. physical play, outdoor activities*
- M. who requires more care than the program staff can provide WITHOUT compromising the health and safety of OTHER children in care.

Communicable Disease

Parents are asked to notify the Center within 24 hours if their child contracts a communicable illness. A note posted prominently in the room will notify parents if their child may have been exposed to a communicable disease at the Center. Information regarding the communicable illness, incubation period, symptoms and exclusion recommendations can be obtained from the Lead Teacher upon request.

Freeborn County Public Health and the regional medical center are our consultants. For additional information, you may refer to the Department of Health's list of reportable diseases. Additionally, each site maintains a current copy of *Infectious Diseases in Child Care Settings, 5th Edition*.

Administration of Medicine

Non Prescription Medications (over the counter)

Written permission from the child's parent is necessary before administering medicine, sunscreen, lotions, insect repellents and diapering medications. Non-prescription medicines will be administered according to the manufacturer's instructions, unless there are instructions provided by a physician or dentist. If the manufacturer's instructions do not allow for dosage to certain ages, the Center will NOT administer the medication without a physician's written order. A physician's written order must be obtained for each illness/incident.

Prescription Medications

For prescription medications to be administered, The Children's Center will follow the written instructions from a physician or dentist before administering the medication. A signed permission slip from the parent must also accompany the prescription. Medications must be properly labeled for the child intended and in the original container with the current prescription information clearly printed. Medications that have expired will not be given and any unused portions of medication will be returned to the child's parents or be destroyed.

All medications will be kept out of reach of the children. Staff is instructed to read labels carefully to ensure proper dispensing and storage. Staff will record the date, time and dosage. Once the form has been completed or the prescription has been finished this documentation will be maintained in the child's file and is available to the child's parents at their request.

Injury/Accident/First Aid

Staff is informed of emergency and accident policies at their time of employment and these policies are reviewed annually. Head and Assistant Teachers are required to have First Aid and CPR certification. Prevention is the most important aspect with regards to promoting a safe environment. All staff is directed to identify and maintain a safe environment, both on premises and on field trips.

If your child sustains an injury during the day, you will receive this information on an Injury Report Form. Your signature will be required after reading the details and treatment of the injury. Because of our commitment to protect the privacy of each family, we are unable to release the name(s) of other individuals involved in the incident.

Minor Injuries

For a minor injury, first aid such as cleaning with soap and water, applying ice and a band-aid will be administered.

Major Injuries

For a major injury, first aid will be administered by the first person on the scene and 911 will be notified for emergency care. After calling 911, the child's parents and physician will be contacted. If an ambulance is necessary, a staff member will accompany your child in the vehicle to the emergency room at the hospital or clinic. Appropriate reporting to the Minnesota Department of Human Services will be conducted in a timely manner.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Who should report child abuse and neglect?

- Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect.
- If you work with children in a licensed facility, you are legally required or mandated to report and cannot shift the responsibility of reporting to your supervisor or to anyone else at your licensed facility. If you know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years you must immediately (within 24 hours) make a report to an outside agency.

Where to report?

- If you know or suspect that a child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
- All reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect of children occurring in a licensed facility should be made to the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division's Maltreatment Intake line at (651)431-6600 (Maltreatment Fax line (651)431-7601).
- Reports regarding incidents of suspected abuse or neglect of children occurring within a family or in the community should be made to the local county social services agency at 377-5400 or local law enforcement at 377-5215.
- If your report does not involve possible abuse or neglect, but does involve possible violations of Minnesota Statutes or Rules that govern the facility, you should call the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division at (651)296-3971.

What to report?

- Definitions of maltreatment are contained in the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556) and should be attached to this policy.
- A report to any of the above agencies should contain enough information to identify the child involved, any persons responsible for the abuse or neglect (if known), and the nature and extent of the maltreatment and/or possible licensing violations. For reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect occurring within a licensed facility, the report should include any actions taken by the facility in response to the incident.
- An oral report of suspected abuse or neglect made to one of the above agencies by a mandated reporter must be followed by a written report to the same agency within 72 hours, exclusive of weekends and holidays.

Retaliation Prohibited

An employer of any mandated reporter shall not retaliate against the mandated reporter for reports made in good faith or against a child with respect to whom the report is made. The Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act contains specific provisions regarding civil actions that can be initiated by mandated reporters who believe that retaliation has occurred.

Failure to Report

A mandated reporter who knows or has reason to believe a child is or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused and fails to report is guilty of a misdemeanor. In addition, a mandated reporter who fails to report maltreatment that is found to be serious or recurring maltreatment may be disqualified from employment in positions allowing direct contact with persons receiving services from programs licensed by the Department

of Human Services and by the Minnesota Department of Health, and unlicensed Personal Care Provider Organizations.

The reporting policies and procedures must be provided to parents of all children at the time of enrollment in the child care program and must be made available upon request. The Division of Licensing recommends that parents with children currently enrolled in your child care program are informed of the development of the reporting policies and procedures, and provide them with an opportunity to request the information.

Safety and Security Information

Missing Person

If, in an extreme emergency, a child cannot be accounted for after a thorough search of indoor-outdoor, 911 will be notified to assist in the search. Parent/guardian will be contacted immediately.

Identification

Children must be dropped off and picked up by parent/guardian or designated person at the room and contact MUST be made with the teacher. A child will be released only to the parent/guardian, unless we are specifically informed by the parent that someone else will pick up his or her child. They may be asked to show proof of identification to a staff member. Upon any signs of danger, 911 and parent/emergency contacts will be called. These measures are taken to ensure the safety of all children and staff.

Confidentiality

As per licensing requirements, pertinent information must be kept on file for each child. Access to children's files is limited to program staff and parents. Written parental permission is needed to release information to anyone else with the exception of the MN Dept of Human Services licensing personnel and our program health consultant.

Building Evacuation

Should a site need to be evacuated because of power failure or other emergencies for a period of time, the James Avenue site will evacuate to the community room at the Trailside Apartments and the St. John's site will evacuate to their community room. Parents would then be notified as to where to pick up their children.

Fire Drills and Procedures

Evacuation drills are performed and recorded on a monthly basis. Egress plans are posted in each classroom. Fire Department personnel visit and review procedures on an annual basis.

Staff is fully trained on fire drill preparedness and evacuation procedures. Fire extinguishers are checked on an annual basis. Appropriate reporting to the Minnesota Department of Human Services will be conducted in a timely manner.

Tornado Drills

The Sheriff's Department will call if a tornado has been sighted or is approaching. Children will be confined to designated inner rooms until notification by the Sheriff's Department is received that the threat of a storm is over. Monthly tornado drills are practiced and recorded April through September. Emergency plans are posted in each room.

Disaster/Severe Weather

In case of severe winter weather such as blizzard, ice conditions or community disaster, please listen to KATE Radio 1450 AM or KAAL Region 6 News for information on sites operating for that day. At least one site will remain open for those who need child care in extreme conditions.

Food Program

Meals and Snacks

The Center follows the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We provide breakfast, lunch, and a snack. The meals are served 'family style' and consist of meats, fruits and vegetables, bread, and milk. Staff, who encourage conversation and teach proper table manners, supervise all meals and snacks. Teachers also stress the importance of hand washing and food safety.

Infants are also a part of this food program. The Center provides 2 brands of formula- **Similac Advance and Isomil**. As children grow, baby food, milk and solid food will be provided according to the USDA food program guidelines.

Children are not to bring food to the Center. Exceptions will be made for medical reasons, religious reasons, and commercially prepared food used for treats and/or birthday parties. Please consult your child's teacher if you will be bringing treats for the classroom to determine the number you will need to bring for the children.

Food Allergy Information

Food allergies and food intolerances should be communicated by the child's parents and supported by a signed physician statement. Foods that cause allergic reactions can be eliminated from the diet.

Reimbursement from State of Minnesota

Once a year, families are asked to complete a confidential family size and income data sheet to help determine reimbursement rates for the following year. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

If you have questions about the Child and Adult Care Food Program, please contact:

Food and Nutrition Service
MN Dept. of Children, Families & Learning
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113-4266
(651) 582-8526 or (800) 366-8922
fns@state.mn.us

Civil Rights Information

In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382(TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Tuition Policies & Procedures

Sliding Fee Scale

A sliding fee scale is available for income eligible families and is funded by the United Way of Freeborn County. Applications are included in the registration packet and can also be obtained at the Main site office.

Reservation and Registration Fees

- A non-refundable registration fee will be collected annually. \$20.00 per child, or \$30.00 per family.
- Reservation fee- a non-refundable reservation fee of \$100.00 per child is required to hold a slot for all new enrollments. The slot can be held for up to 30 days. For expectant mothers, the slot can be held for up to 90 days from the child's date of birth. No slot is guaranteed without a Reservation Fee. The Reservation Fee will be credited to your child's account during their first week of care.

Contracts and Child Care Rates

- By committing to a contract, you are guaranteed a slot for your child and, in turn, guaranteeing a payment for that slot to The Children's Center, regardless of actual attendance.
- Our contract is a legal and binding contract of exchange of money for services.
- Contract changes must be submitted in writing at least one week prior to the requested change and will be subject to the approval of the Executive Director.
- Overages will be charged at the hourly contracted rate if you go over contracted amount.
- Contract terminations will be allowed through a written request received two weeks prior to termination.
- All child care rates will be clearly posted and communicated to parents. Rates are subject to change at anytime upon a 30 day notice from The Children's Center.
- A sibling discount will be applied to the oldest child's rate only and to only one child per family, attending any site managed by The Children's Center. A sibling discount applies to contracts over 30 hours at a 10% discount and to contracts over 40 hours at a 20% discount.
- The Executive Director must authorize any other arrangements or rates.

Daycare Assistance Programs

- Assistance is provided for eligible families through the Department of Human Services.
- Assistance does not always cover the entire tuition cost, and the family will be responsible for the difference.
- Registration fees may be covered through the Department of Human Services.

Billing and Payment

- Parents will be billed weekly based on their contracted amount for the current week of care. Any overage charges and vacation credits will appear on the following week's statement. Any overpayments will be applied to their account balance.
- Payment is due no later than Friday 12:00 Noon. Payment can be made at any site managed by The Children's Center. A late payment fee of \$10.00 will be added if payment is not received by Friday noon of the current week.
- Deposits are made weekly on Wednesday and Friday.
- Additional charges may be incurred for special events, field trips, and special programs. Any charges for optional services incurred are due upon presentation of a statement from the Center.
- The Executive Director must authorize any other billing and payment arrangement.

Past Due Accounts

- Any account in which payment has not been received within 2 weeks will be considered a Past Due Account.
- All Past Due Accounts require a written Past Due Payment Agreement with The Children's Center.

- The Past Due Payment Agreement will include an 18% APR financing fee on all accounts that have fallen 30 days or more past due.
- The Executive Director must authorize any other arrangements.
- The Children's Center reserves the right immediately to cease providing services under contract for any child enrolled under a Past Due Account. If your account is Past Due, your child may be denied access to the center.
- Violation of a Past Due Payment Agreement may result in cancellation of that agreement and submission of the Past Due Account to a collection agency under the Collection Policy, below.

Late Pick-up Fees

- Late fees will be applied for children staying beyond the Center's closing time. A late fee of \$5.00 will be charged for each child picked up after 6:00pm at the James Avenue site, 5:30pm at the St. John's Sites. An additional \$1.00 per minute will be charged for each child after 6:05pm at the James Avenue Site and 5:35pm at the St. John's Sites.
- Consistent late pick-ups after center closing time can result in termination of child care contract.

Vacation Credit

- Since The Children's Center is financially committed on a daily basis to care for your child, refunds and/or credits are not given for absenteeism. We are a professionally staffed facility and we guarantee your family a daily service. Thus, we expect payment regardless of absenteeism.
- Vacation credit is available for contracts over 20 hours. Contact the office for the specific number of vacation credit available. Vacation credit is prorated for those who enroll or terminate after the Session begins. Families who terminate after using unearned vacation credit will be billed for that time. There will be no refund for unused vacation credits.
- You can request a vacation day by contacting the office or by simply indicating on your child's timecard the day you would like to use vacation credit. All vacation day requests must be made by 5:00pm Friday of the week you wish to have them applied. It is your responsibility to notify your child's teacher when your child is going to be absent.
- How vacation days are calculated: Your weekly contracted dollar amount is divided by 5 days. That is the dollar amount you would be credited for each vacation day requested. For example, if your contracted weekly dollar amount is \$164.00 and you want to use vacation days this is how we would calculate your credit. We would take the \$164.00 divide it by 5 days to come up with a daily amount. In this case the daily amount would be \$32.80. We then take that daily amount and multiply by the number of days you wish to apply vacation credits. That is the amount that will be credited to your account. This is the process used no matter how many days your family normally uses in a week.
- Any other arrangements or exceptions must be authorized by the Executive Director.
- No tuition credit is given when the center is closed the following dates, however vacation credits can be used: New Years Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, the Friday before Labor Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Non-Sufficient Funds/Returned Check Charge

- There will be a \$25.00 fee charged for all checks returned, dishonored or unpaid for any reason.

Collection Policy

- The Center is financially committed on a monthly basis to care for children, therefore we have implemented the following collection policy. The Center will refer to a Collection Agency any account which has fallen more than 30 days past due unless a Past Due Payment Agreement for that account has been approved by the Executive Director and followed without violation by the debtor. All charges for collection fees, attorney fees, court costs, or any other expense involved in the collection of these charges may be borne by the parent.

Drop-In Policies and Procedures

- Before The Children’s Center can provide care for your child, all registration materials must be completed, signed and received by our staff at the 605 James Avenue site, Albert Lea. Additionally, parents must attend a brief orientation. These actions are a licensing requirement of the Department of Human Services.
- Call to check on availability. You may be referred to another site if necessary. The availability of care may not be known until the last minute.
- Identify yourself and state you are a “drop-in contract holder”. Each classroom maintains a list of drop-in contract holders.
- Care is provided on a space-available basis only to drop-in contact holders. Drop-In contract holders must call the day before or day of that care is needed. Care will not be guaranteed before this time.
- The Center will be closed on the following days ...New Years Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, the Friday before Labor Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.
- The Children’s Center is not licensed to provide sick child care.
- After securing availability and upon delivering your child to the appropriate site, clearly identify yourself and your child to a staff member. They will direct you to the appropriate room. The teacher in that room will greet you and offer further direction.
- Tuition will be billed to you the week after care. Payment is due upon delivery of statement. Payment drop-boxes are located at each site. (see page 20 for Tuition Policies and Procedures)
- Non-Sufficient Funds/Returned Check Charge –
There will be a \$20.00 fee charged for any returned check.
- Collection Policy
The center is financially committed on a monthly basis to care for children; therefore we have implemented the following collection policy. Any account not collected within 30 days will be turned over to a collection agency and may affect your credit rating. All charges for collection fees, attorney fees, court costs, or any other expense involved in the collection of these charges may be borne by the parent.