

PARENT HANDBOOK



605 James Avenue
Albert Lea, Minnesota
507-373-7979

Dear Families,

Welcome to The Children's Center! We are excited for the opportunity to provide quality care and education to your family. The first years of a child's development are crucial to their success later in life. The investment you are giving your children will make a difference!

The Children's Center provides a well-rounded, safe, and nurturing experience to all our children six weeks old through 4th grade. The time your children spend with us will enhance their early learning while providing them with the skills they need to learn and grow.

During the time your child spends with us they will be offered:

- Creative Curriculum
- Communication with parents through monthly newsletters, daily and weekly postings of curriculum, and parent teacher conferences
- USDA food program
- Professionally trained teaching staff
- Enriched summer program
- Field trips, special events, community projects

We welcome you to use this handbook as a reference regarding programming, policies, procedures, and general information.

On behalf of everyone in The Children's Center organization, we want to thank you for putting your trust in us!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dani Clevenger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

Dani Clevenger
Executive Director
The Children's Center

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Mission Statement

“To meet the needs of the community by providing quality childcare and education 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 learning for the rest of our life. The developmentally appropriate guidance your child receives at this tender age is 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 prides itself on having a safe, secure, healthy environment for your child and all others entrusted to our care. Components of our programs, a pre-school curriculum, USDA food program, field trips and special events make for an educational experience.

The Children’s Center is an independent, non-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 professional organization providing quality childcare 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 childcare. In response to a survey conducted at the Skyline Mall in February 1969, 62% interviewed stated they would use a childcare 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 in Albert Lea. An idea sparked five decades ago, is now a successful and very unique reality for nearly 150 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

The Children's Center is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, 651-431-6015. 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

1-651-431-6015

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
Preschool	1:10
School Age	1:15

Days of Operation

The Children's Center operates Monday through Friday, year-round.

The Children's Center will be closed the following days:

1. New Year's Day;
2. Memorial Day;
3. Independence Day;
4. Labor Day;
5. Thanksgiving Day;
6. Day After Thanksgiving;
7. Christmas Eve;
8. Christmas Day;
9. Floating Holiday; to be determined at the beginning of each year.
10. One day each fall The Children's Center is closed for a teacher prep day which is based on the Albert Lea School District 241 school schedule.

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed on the preceding Friday. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, it will be observed on the following Monday. If both Friday and Saturday are holidays, Saturday will be observed on Thursday. If both Sunday and Monday are holidays, Sunday will be observed on Tuesday.

The Children's Center will also be closed one day each fall for a teacher prep day based on the Albert Lea School District 241 school schedule. We may occasionally need to shut down for an unknown cause, but will notify families as soon as we are able.

Licensed Location Information and Capacity

605 James Avenue

- 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: 147 – which includes infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school age (K-4th Grade)
- 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 Kids Klub classroom is only for those who have started Kindergarten. Our license is for a total of 147 children. 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 one week's non-refundable tuition for the deposit. 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 paperwork 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.*

Custodial and Non-Custodial Parent (referenced on enrollment form)

Custodial Parent – A custodial parent is a parent who is given physical and/or legal custody of a child by court order. A child-custody determination means a judgement, decree, or other order of a court providing for the legal custody, physical custody, or visitation with respect to a child.

Non-Custodial Parent – A non-custodial parent is a parent who does not have a physical custody of his or her children. It should be noted, however, that it is possible for a non-custodial parent to have legal custody, even though he or she does not have physical custody. In addition, many non-custodial parents enjoy liberal visitation rights, pay child support, and are actively involved in their children's lives.

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.

Parent Access

- One key fob will be given to all families.
- During operating hours (5:30am – 5:30 pm) families will always have access to the entry way. The key fob will be used to open the inner front door.
- If someone does not have a key fob but still needs access to the building, they will simply press the call button in the entry way to identify themselves and we can unlock the door for them.
- Each family may get up to two more additional key fobs. You will be charged the cost of the key fob.
- If a family loses a key fob, they need to notify the Center as soon as possible so it can be deactivated.

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.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special events when you've only had a few! You are invited to join your child for lunch or snack 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: Academy Park; tennis and basketball courts on James Avenue; Frank Hall Park; Blazing Star bike trail; Public Library; Fire Department, Police Department and the City Pool

Staff will take emergency information and first aid supplies on all field trips. All staff are 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/Quiet Time

The Center's program includes scheduled nap or quiet times each day for children infant through school age. Children ages 1 year old through preschool are required to rest for 30 minutes on a cot. If they don't fall asleep within the 30 minutes, they will have quiet time until nap time is over. 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 is 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, snow pants 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.

- We also provide a private mommy and me room for breastfeeding mothers that is made possible through a S.H.I.P. (State Health Improvement Plan) grant.

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 Executive Director.

Early Intervention and Referrals

If needed, our teachers and the Executive Director will work directly with Albert Lea School 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, the 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 each year, a summarized 12 month statement of each family's childcare costs will be emailed to all families for tax purposes. We would be happy to provide a printed statement, upon request. Contact our Executive Director 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 our Executive Director 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 healthy eating habits to include healthy food projects, 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. Structured large muscle activities are planned daily.

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. Much of this information can also be found on our website (www.alchildrenscenter.org).

Conferences and Meetings

Head Teachers will schedule parent conferences twice a year. Parents will receive a notice of their 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 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 curriculum 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. Lead Teacher in your child's classroom

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

2. Site Coordinator

If you are still concerned after discussing the problem with your child's Lead Teacher, please feel free to discuss the matter with the Site Coordinator. The Site Coordinator will try to solve the problem within two weeks following direct contact with concerned parent/guardian. The Site Coordinator 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 wellbeing 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 based on guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Children's Center's health policies.

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 new Health Care Summary is required when a child turns 1 year, 2 years, 3 years and when they enter Kindergarten. 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 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
2. has skin sores, 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 will 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 appears 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 two or more times since admission that day; (*This includes stool that cannot be contained in a diaper, side effects to medicines, and teething reactions.*)
- E. who has a bacterial infection such as streptococcal pharyngitis or impetigo and has not completed 24 hours of antimicrobial therapy;

- F. who has unexplained lethargy; (*Unexplained lethargy may be a sign of a deeper concern.*)
- G. who has lice, lice nits, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others;
- H. who has a 100 degree Fahrenheit axillary (*underarm*) or higher temperature of undiagnosed OR diagnosed origin BEFORE fever reducing medication is given;
- I. who has an undiagnosed rash or a rash attributable to a contagious illness or condition;
- J. who has significant respiratory distress;
- K. who is not able to participate in childcare program activities with reasonable comfort; *ex. physical play, outdoor activities*
- L. 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 (www.hennepin.us/childcaremanual)

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. All Children's Center staff 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.

Surgeries

Anytime a child has had a surgery, a doctor's note stating that the child has no restrictions will be required before a child can return to The Children's Center.

Health Consultant

The Children's Center is visited monthly by a health consultant from Freeborn County Public Health to review our records and offer guidance regarding issues related to health and safety.

Handwashing

Proper handwashing is encouraged and taught to all children.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

All classrooms and toys are cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis.

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)431-6015.

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 childcare program and must be made available upon request. The Division of Licensing recommends that parents with children currently enrolled in your childcare 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 we need to evacuate because of power failure or other emergencies for a period of time, we will evacuate to the community room at the Trailside Apartments. 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 and Procedures

Once a Sheriff's warning has been issued or the civil defense sirens have sounded everyone immediately goes into their designated area until the all clear is sounded. 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, KAAL Region 6 News or visit The Children's Center's Facebook page for information on sites operating for that day. Every effort will be made to stay open for those who need childcare in extreme conditions.

A copy of The Emergency Planning & Procedures Guide is available at any time upon request.

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 an afternoon snack. We encourage family style meal service as much as possible. Our meals consist of meats, fruits and vegetables, bread, with whole or 1% 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. Water is regularly offered to the children and is available at any time upon request. Water will be available to all preschool and school age children through a self-serve station.

Infants are also a part of this food program. The Center provides Enfamil Gentlease, iron fortified infant formula. 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. Individual Child Care Plans (ICCP) will be filled out for any child with an allergy by the classroom teacher with help from the parents.

Reimbursement from State of Minnesota

Once a year, families are asked to complete a confidential household income statement 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 Education, 400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413 mde.fns@state.mn.us, 651-582-8200.

Civil Rights Information

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) **email:** program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Revised Jan 2024.

TUITION POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Deposit and Registration Fee

- **Registration Fee** - A non-refundable registration fee of \$25.00 per child will be collected at enrollment and annually.
- **Deposit** - A non-refundable deposit in the amount of contracted weekly rate for the child's age group is required for each child 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. Families are required to give a start date when giving the deposit. In event that a start date given for child needs to be changed, families are required to pay 50% of the weekly tuition until the child starts. A start date is required after a child is born. No slot is guaranteed without a deposit.

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.
- Overages will be charged at the hourly contracted rate if you go over the contracted amount for School Ageds during the school months only. School Age care is on a weekly, full time contract in the Summer months and will not be charged overages.
- Contract terminations will be allowed through a written request received two weeks prior to termination.
- All childcare rates will be clearly posted and communicated to parents. Rates are subject to change at any time upon a 30 day notice from The Children's Center.
- The childcare rate will increase a minimum of 3% every year.
- The Executive Director must authorize any other arrangements or rates.

Childcare Assistance Programs

- Assistance is provided for eligible families through the Department of Human Services (DHS).
- Assistance does not always cover the entire tuition cost, and the family will be responsible for the difference. Co-pays given by the Department of Human Services will be billed weekly.
- Registration fees may be covered through the Department of Human Services.

Billing and Payment

- Parents will be billed weekly based on the age group of their child/ren for the current week of care. Any overage charges for school year, School Age contracts 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 for cash and checks. Online payments need to be made by the end of the day Saturday. A late payment fee of \$20.00 will be added if payment is not received by Friday noon of the current week.
- Payment options available include check, cash, ACH, credit or debit card and online. (ACH debits are an automatic withdrawal out of a savings or checking account.) Credit card or debit cards payments will be charged a 3% finance fee.
- 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.
- It is the parent's responsibility to pay for the contracted hours agreed upon regardless of their child's attendance. Parents will continue to pay the weekly contract if The Children's Center needs to shut down for an unknown cause. Families using Child Care Assistance are still responsible for their contracted hours with us and any balance that is not covered by the Assistance.

Past Due Accounts

- Any account in which payment has not been received within 2 weeks will be considered a Past Due Account.
- Any account falling 2 weeks behind will be suspended until payment in full is made or a strict written Past Due Payment Agreement with The Children's Center is determined with the Executive Director.
- Suspended care means no childcare, until full payment is made – or an agreed upon Payment Agreement is established. Payment Agreements may require ACH payments moving forward, immediate partial or full-payment of past due balance, and/or other agreed upon short-term (less than 45 days) payment agreement with the Executive Director.
- Past Due accounts will incur a \$20.00 weekly charge during the duration the account is past due.
- Failure to adhere to the terms of a Payment Agreement will result in cancellation of that agreement and submission of the past due balance may be sent to a collection agency under the Collection Policy (below).
- The Executive Director must authorize any other arrangements.

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 5:30pm. An additional \$1.00 per minute will be charged for each child after 5:35pm.
- Consistent late pick-ups after center closing time can result in termination of childcare 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.
- Every family will receive 5 days of vacation credit to use from January to the end of December every year. Contact the office for the specific number of vacation days 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. 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.
- 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 Year's Day;
 - Memorial Day;
 - Independence Day;
 - Labor Day;
 - Thanksgiving Day;
 - Day After Thanksgiving;
 - Christmas Eve;
 - Christmas Day;
 - Floating Holiday; to be determined at the beginning of each year.
 - one day each fall The Children's Center is closed for a teacher prep day which is based on the Albert Lea School District 241 school schedule

Non-Sufficient Funds/Returned Check/ACH Charge

- There will be a \$30.00 fee charged for all checks or ACH debits 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 or Small Claims Court 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. In the event that an unpaid balance is placed for collection a fee of no less than 33% of the unpaid balance will be added to the total amount due. This amount shall be in addition to any other costs incurred directly or indirectly by The Children's Center to collect amounts owed under this agreement such as court cost, service charges, interest, late fees, etc. The authorized fees and the additional costs and charges listed above reflect the actual costs incurred by The Children's Center to collect accounts owed under the agreement and a corresponding decrease in expected revenue resulting from the parents' failure to pay as specified in their agreement.

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. These actions are a licensing requirement of the Department of Human Services.
- Call to check on availability. 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 Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and one floating holiday that will be determined each year, in January. When the holiday falls on a weekend, The Children’s Center will be closed to observe that holiday on either the preceding Friday or the following Monday. The Children’s Center will also be closed one day each fall for a teacher prep day based on the Albert Lea School District 241 school schedule.
- The Children’s Center is not licensed to provide sick childcare.
- After securing availability and upon delivering your child to the Center, 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 the week after care was used based on hours attended.
- Drop In Contracts require ACH for payments.
- Non-Sufficient Funds – There will be a \$30.00 fee charged for all ACH debits 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. 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.

The Children's Center Board of Directors

2025

Dani Bakken

Joel Knutson

Jen Levisen

Sue Loch

Aaron McVicker

Noelle Viktora

Shari Zamora

1/14/25



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

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 Joel Knutson Noelle Viktora
 Jen Levisen Shari Zamora
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 Brenda Reed

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 Taysha Sternhagen

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 Amanda Culbertson
 Lori Fleming
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 Linda Wayne
 Alexys Williams

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 Lizzy Olson
 Morgan Sencer

Experienced Aides
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 Alexandria Jensen
 Mercedes Stenseth
 Kim Williamson

Aides
 Ella Clevenger
 Elli Ericksen
 Maizee Flattum
 Taylor Klocke
 Caydence McVicker
 Stella Skogheim
 Cora Stenseth

Substitute/Seasonal Teachers

Kaitlyn Hanson
 Taylor Larsen
 Bev Lombardi
 Leah Ravenhorst
 Madisyn Retterath
 Rhonda Streckert
 Faith Wedin
 Teanna Wiertzema

THE CHILDREN'S CENTER DIRECTORY

website: www.alchildrenscenter.org

605 JAMES AVENUE

Phone Number: 507-373-7979 Fax Number: 507-377-8664

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF EMAILS

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Family Services Coordinator

Brenda Reed

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OFFICE MANGER

Melissa Wangen

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JAMES AVENUE CLASSROOM EMAILS

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Rainbow Room:

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Starlight Room:

starlight@alchildrenscenter.org

Moonbeam Room:

moonbeam@alchildrenscenter.org

Blue Sky Room:

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Sunshine Room:

sunshine@alchildrenscenter.org

School Age Program Email

Kids Klub Room:

kidsklub@alchildrenscenter.org