



FAMILY HANDBOOK of Policies and Procedures

SOUTHWEST CHILD CARE EARLY LEARNING CENTERS
FAMILY HANDBOOK OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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Welcome to Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers are nationally accredited, locally owned and operated early care and education programs dedicated to providing excellence in the care of children.

We have been serving the families of Albuquerque with reliable, quality care and education since 1986. We have received multiple business awards including, but not limited to, the *Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce Maxi Anderson Small Business of the Year Award* and the *Quality New Mexico Piñon Recognition*.



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Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers has three locations to serve you:

- **Lomas Blvd.** near Juan Tabo Blvd.
- **Texas St.** near Menaul Blvd. and Pennsylvania St.
- **Wyoming Blvd.** near Montgomery Blvd.

Each of our centers boasts large, well-equipped classrooms. We are proud of our beautiful, over-sized playgrounds with plenty of shade.

It is our desire to exceed your expectations in providing quality care and education for your child. Being a well-informed parent helps make this happen. Please read this handbook carefully and refer to it throughout your family's time at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. It is full of information for you regarding our policies and procedures as well as helpful tips for making your family's time with us a joyful experience.

Please bring questions, suggestions or problems directly to the Center Director; not to your child's teacher. In the absence of your Center Director, please contact one of our other Center Directors for assistance:

11800 Lomas Boulevard NE, 87112 (505) 294-2233

2626 Texas Street NE, 87110 (505) 293-2626

4802 Wyoming Boulevard NE, 87111 (505) 296-3121

www.southwestchildcare.com

Our Mission

At

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers,

we are committed to nurturing

a love of learning in all forms at all ages

by providing children, families, and teachers

with a constant source of support

in a loving, safe and educational environment

where every child is welcome, wanted,

and worthwhile.



"Research on early childhood education shows that high-quality child care experiences support the development of social and academic skills that facilitate children's later success in school. There is also mounting evidence that close relationships between teachers and children are an important part of creating high-quality care environments and positive child outcomes." **Jacqueline Zeller, PhD.**



Quality Defines Us

In keeping with our mission statement, we have a documented commitment to quality. In addition to earning multiple business awards and recognitions, we also maintain the highest standards of the State of New Mexico's Star Rating System with a 5-Star rating and are nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA).

High-quality early childhood programs have the following features:

Low adult-child ratios

As part of our accreditation standards, our ratios are kept below the state requirements.

Developmentally-appropriate curricula

We use the HighScope Curriculum and Conscious Discipline. Please see pages 19-22 for more information.

Positive relationships between children, caregivers, and families are a priority.

In addition to daily interactions, we offer several opportunities for staff and families to gather throughout the year.

Highly-trained Staff

All of our staff have completed the state-required classes. Although the state requires our staff to have 24 hours of continuing education per year, we require 36 hours per year. We close our centers three days per year for full-day trainings. We also encourage and provide financial support to staff members who are working towards an Early Childhood degree.

Written Policies and Procedures

Please read about these in this handbook.

National Accreditation

We have been nationally accredited since 1997.

Licensing and Professional Affiliations

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers comply with all New Mexico rules and regulations governing child care facilities. A copy of the New Mexico Child Care Regulations is available in the center's office and online at www.newmexicokids.org.

We are nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA). COA is an independent, international organization that ensures all our programs and services are being delivered at the highest possible standards. As part of our accreditation, COA reviews all aspects of our program's services which provides you with the confidence that our services are among the best in the state. Please let us know if you have any questions or comments.

We are an official New Mexico Pre-K Site and offer New Mexico Early Pre-K and/or Pre-K to eligible children at all three of our locations.

Our owner is the founder and past president of the New Mexico Child Care & Education Association (NMCCEA). NMCCEA contributes leadership, professional development, advocacy, and public-private sector initiatives to New Mexico's early care and education programs. This organization is the state chapter of the Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC). Southwest Child Care continues to be a member of this and other professional organizations.



Helpful Hints

The following tips will help you and your child build a successful relationship with Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers:

- **Introduce your child to our center.**

It is important to us that your child experiences an easy transition into our center. We encourage you to bring your child in to visit their classroom and meet their teachers before their first day. Every child adjusts differently to new situations. If your child needs extra support with the transition, our teachers are experts at comforting them and getting them settled into the daily routine. We appreciate any insights you have about your family that will make the transition smooth for your child. We ask that you bring in a small poster containing photos of your child's loved ones to post in his/her classroom. Your child is also welcome to bring a special blankie or cuddly for nap time.

- **Stay informed!**

Read this handbook and be aware of our policies and procedures. Each center has a 'parent board' located near our check-in area that contains important information. We post notices of upcoming events, center closings, etcetera, on the front doors and near the check-in area. Watch for new notices as you enter and leave the building. A monthly parent newsletter is available in the front office and by email. In addition, our website is a great resource for you: www.southwestchildcare.com.

- **Communicate!**

Communicate with your child's teacher and the Center Director about any changes occurring in your child's life that might affect his/her behavior,

mood, or health. Pick-up and drop-off times are great opportunities to exchange this information. State licensing regulations require that you immediately communicate to us any changes in your contact information. This ensures we can always reach you in case of illness or emergency.

- **Let us know how we can help.**

If you are experiencing a hardship or have concerns about your child's well-being, please speak with your Center Director or a member of the Administrative Team. They will honor your privacy and help in any way they can. If they are unable to help you directly, they are familiar with many different agencies and resources that may be able to serve your needs.

Philosophy

According to child development experts and brain development researchers, what children need most in an early child care and education program is a stable relationship with a caring, well-trained adult. Meaningful relationships play a critical role in a child's development including the development of a positive self-concept.

At Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, our highly trained staff strives to develop positive relationships with each child and his or her family. They provide a warm, nurturing, and responsive environment so that all children will feel free to explore and discover at their own pace.

Our classrooms and curriculum promote imagination, creativity, and exploration. Children are encouraged to learn and develop through play and other hands-on experiences. We place an emphasis on the process of an activity rather than the product, and we encourage children to be as independent as possible. All of these components work together to foster intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and language development.

We put tremendous effort into making Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers a place where every child is welcomed, wanted, and worthwhile. Building positive, trusting relationships with our families is an important part of this effort. We have an open-door policy; we invite you to drop in unannounced at any time.

We also welcome any ideas you may have to make Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers the best program in New Mexico. We value your feedback as a key component of our continuous quality improvement. Feel free to leave suggestions and comments in our suggestion boxes, on our website, or by speaking



To maintain a quality program and proper staffing, you must notify your center's Administrative Team if your child will be absent on a scheduled day of attendance or if you need to change your established enrollment schedule.

Your individual child care needs **must** be arranged in advance with your center's Administrative Team and are based on space availability. Attendance on an unscheduled day is not permitted. If you need child care on a day that your child does not normally attend, you must speak to the office staff **in advance** to discuss availability and additional charges. We will make every effort to accommodate you. In situations where your work schedule changes weekly, you might be required to provide a written copy of your work schedule each week.

New Mexico State Law requires that all children be properly immunized. Proof of immunization **MUST** be presented prior to or on the first day of a child's attendance. Parents must provide Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers with updated immunization information whenever new shots are received.

Continued enrollment at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers is contingent upon the parents', the emergency contact persons', and the child's adherence to the policies and procedures of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition, and adherence to our Family Code of Conduct (see page 11).

Parents are required to notify Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers immediately should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment, or any time thereafter, change. Failure to do so may result in the child being disenrolled from the program and forfeiture of any fees. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

In the event you must *disenroll* your child for any reason, you must provide a two-week written notice to your Center Director. Failure to give a two-week written notice will result in you being charged for two weeks' tuition. Tuition refunds are not given for unused time upon withdrawal.

Enrollment and Application Process

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers admits children from 6 weeks through 12 years of age. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability; and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability.

Parents can apply for enrollment of their child in Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers by completing the Enrollment Application. Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the completed enrollment application packet, immunization records, signed Family Handbook receipt, registration fee, and initial tuition payment. The packet contains several forms that must be filled out completely, dated, signed by each parent or guardian, and submitted before your child can be admitted to any of our centers.

If you are enrolling in Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers solely for the purpose of attending our NM Pre-K program, you are required to fill out our entire enrollment packet as well as a few additional forms required by our NM Pre-K program. All records and personal information are considered confidential and are treated as such.

We offer a variety of programs including full- and part-time schedules. The state of New Mexico prohibits children from being left onsite for more than twelve consecutive hours. Because we are not a custodial care program, children may stay no more than 50 hours per week. See your center's Administrative Team to establish an enrollment schedule.





Enrollment/Registration Fees

A registration fee is due upon enrollment. This bi-annual registration fee is due June 1st and September 1st of **each year**. Registration fees are non-refundable. The registration fee is transferable should you need to transfer your child to another Southwest Child Care Early Learning Center.

At the time of enrollment, you will be issued a key fob for our secure entry system. You will be required to leave a deposit which will be partially refunded when the fob is returned in good condition upon disenrollment from the center.

Children who will be napping or resting at the center must purchase a sleeper mat from Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. These mats are yours to keep at time of disenrollment.

Tuition

All tuition is due and payable in advance. Upon registration, you may choose to pay either monthly or weekly. Choosing to pay monthly provides a discount to you. Monthly tuition is due in full on the first day of each month and is considered late after the 3rd of each month. Weekly tuition is due on the first day of each week and is considered late after Tuesday. Any changes in payment arrangements must be submitted in writing, approved, and signed by the Center Director prior to taking effect. Unpaid balances will be referred for collection.

Due to fixed costs averaged over a calendar year, there is NO reduction in tuition for holidays. Tuition charges for these holidays will be calculated as though the child will be present if it is the child's regularly-scheduled day of attendance.

All tuition and fees include meals, transportation to and from public school during the school year, and FlexCare™ transportation. Tuition DOES NOT include occasional fees for field trips, special projects, and extracurricular activities.

There is no credit given for vacations, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or for closings due to emergency situations, inclement weather, or acts of God. However, each family is eligible to receive a one-week vacation credit per year after your child has attended Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers for four (4) months. This credit will reflect the child's normal attendance week. This credit may not be carried over and must be used during the year it is accrued. Children enrolled for summer only are not eligible for vacation credit. You must notify the center **in writing** at least one week in advance in order to receive this credit. Attendance on credited vacation days is not allowed.

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians are required to sign a Fee Agreement at time of enrollment of their child in Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Parents are required to indicate to whom all billing information and correspondence are to be addressed.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers reserves the right to revise its fees and/or policies.

Before- and After-School Program Charges

If you are enrolling your child in our before- and after-school program, your child will receive care before and after school. Not all schools have the same hours of operation. Please check with your center's Administrative Team if you have questions about the hours of your child's before and after care.

When an elementary school is closed for any reason (i.e. holidays, snow days, teacher conference days, in-service training days, spring break, etc.), you may make arrangements with the office staff to bring your child for extra time. These arrangements must be made in advance in order for us to schedule additional staff. **There will be an additional charge for the extra child care provided.** Check with the Center Director for current rates.

In the event you must *disenroll* your child for any reason, you must provide a two-week written notice to your Center Director. Failure to give a two-week notice will result in you being charged for two weeks' tuition. Tuition refunds are not given for unused time upon withdrawal.

Late/Missing Payments

Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. A late fee of \$10 **per day** plus tax will be charged for past-due accounts. If you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Center Director immediately. You will be asked to make your request in writing. If alternative arrangements for payment are approved, you will be notified by the Center Director. Your child will not be accepted into the center if your account is more than three days past due. Repeated late payments will result in disenrollment. Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. If it becomes necessary to submit an account for collection and legal action, all court and collection fees will be added to the balance owed on the account.

Families Using State Subsidies

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers accept families on state-subsidized contracts. All contracts must be full time – a minimum of 30 hours per week and a maximum of 50 hours per week. Families are responsible for a co-payment which is determined by their state caseworker, as well as registration fees and all applicable taxes. All tuition policies stated above apply.

Parents of a subsidized child must complete all required paperwork on time to continue enrollment at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Parents of subsidized children are also required to sign a fee agreement agreeing to be personally responsible for the payment of tuition in the event they become ineligible to receive child care subsidies.



Discounts

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers offers a multiple-child discount for one or more siblings. The youngest sibling pays the full tuition rate and registration fee, and each additional child's tuition and registration fee is discounted. Discounts are only applicable when tuition payments are made on time. The full tuition rate, plus any additional late fees, will be charged when tuition payments are late as per the late tuition policy stated above.

Forms of Payment

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers accepts cash, MasterCard, Visa, Cashier's Check, and Money Orders. All cash payments must be handed directly to the Center Director or Assistant Director. Receipts must be given for tuition payments made by cash or credit card. It is your responsibility to save your receipt in case of discrepancy. **Do not pay cash without receiving a receipt.**



Confidentiality

Within Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers who have a “need to know” in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child.

Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents, and/or children will not be shared with parents as Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers strives to protect everyone’s right to privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, health-related information, and behavior/discipline information regarding anyone associated with Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers.

Outside of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law.

You may observe children at our center who have varying abilities or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

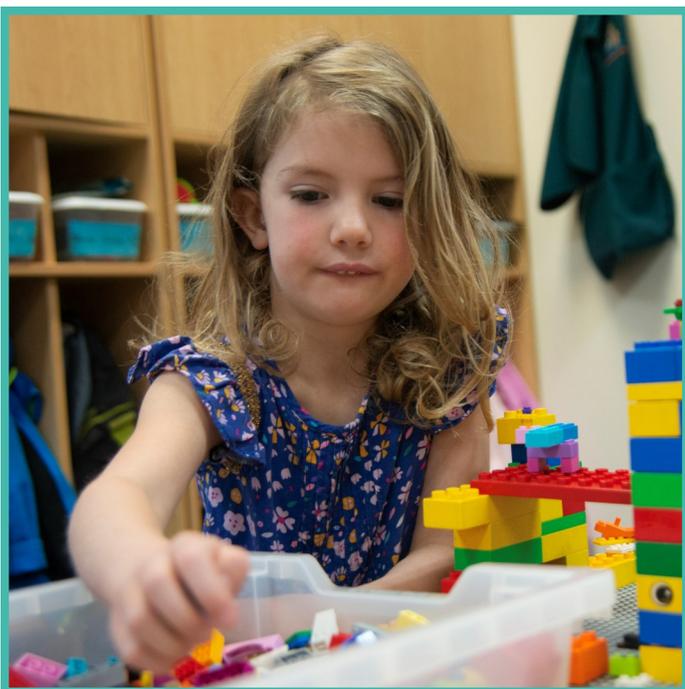
Any parent who violates this Confidentiality Policy will not be permitted on center property thereafter. This may require an alternate pick-up person or disenrollment of your child.



Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

The employees of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers are considered mandated reporters under the Child Protective Services Act. Mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in “good faith.”





Confrontational Interactions with Employees, Other Parents or Adults, Or Children

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are strictly prohibited. Additionally, threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All family members must be responsible for, and in control of, their behavior at all times.

Smoking

For the health of all employees, children, and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on center property. State laws prohibit anyone from smoking in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Parents who are smoking in their cars must dispose of the cigarette **in your car** prior to entering the parking lot. **Do not** dispose of your cigarette butts in our parking lot. The wind blows these onto our playground, and the youngest children pick them up and put them in their mouths. Thank you for your cooperation.

Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Child or Other Children

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers practice Conscious Discipline™. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures. At no time is physical or verbal punishment of a child allowed.

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner, or become concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is expected that the parent will direct their concern to the Center Director.

Family Code of Conduct

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers requires the families of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect at all times. At Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, we provide a high-quality environment to promote a child's growth, learning and development. Maintaining this environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, but it is also the responsibility of everyone who enters the center. It is our expectation that the staff treat all children and families with respect and courtesy. It is also our expectation that family members treat our staff, children, and other families with respect and courtesy. **Anyone who violates this Code of Conduct will not be permitted on center property thereafter and may require an alternate pick-up person or disenrollment of your child.**

Prohibited Items

Cell phones, smoking, tobacco or nicotine use, firearms, or weapons of any kind are prohibited on center property at all times. Photographing or video-taping on school property is prohibited.

Swearing/Cursing/Raising Your Voice

No one is permitted to curse, use other inappropriate language, or raise their voice towards another on center property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such behavior is offensive and will not be tolerated.



Furthermore, it is wholly unacceptable for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the Center Director's attention. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the Center Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All families enrolled in Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers have privacy rights and are protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your family with another family.

Safety Procedures

Families are required to follow all safety procedures at all times. These procedures are to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees and families of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Please be particularly mindful of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers' secure entrance procedures. **Do not** allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you is polite; however, that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Be alert and mindful. If the person behind you does not have a fob of their own, please do not use your fob. Instead, ring the buzzer for a safer entrance. Immediately report any breaches to the Center Director.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments with the Center Director and are allowed in the child care facility only at the discretion of the Center Director. An employee of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will accompany visitors throughout the center at all times.



Violations of the Confidentiality Policy

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers takes the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the company very seriously. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families, and employees associated with Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential or pressures employees or other parents for information which is not necessary for them to know, will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy. Please see page 10 for the full policy.

Family-Teacher Relationships

Families are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Employment refers to any relationship outside of the centers' services which involves an employee of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers to interact with a current or former client of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Such relationships include, but are not limited to: babysitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny, and carpooling, regardless of whether those services are voluntary or paid. Our teachers are prohibited from fraternizing with clients.

Littering

The staff works to maintain a clean, safe learning environment for your child. Please help us keep the centers clean, inside and out, by not littering on center property. This includes, but is not limited to, cigarette butts (often thrown down while still lit which poses a huge safety issue), snack wrappers, paper cups, and other miscellaneous pieces of trash. We have trash bins inside and outside the buildings. Please dispose of unwanted items in the bins provided.





Parents' Right to Immediate Access

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access to their child, without prior notice, whenever they are in care at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, **both** parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Dismissal

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers reserves the right to dismiss any family at any time with or without cause.

The Center Director or designee will gather your child's belongings at the time of dismissal. Parents are required to leave center property in a calm and respectful manner immediately. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative.

A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the Center Director if they wish to return to center property following a dismissal. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Center Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent.

Following a dismissal, any family member who harasses, threatens, or in any manner causes harm to anyone affiliated with the company by calling, writing, or any other means, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law by Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers.



Daily Arrival and Departure Procedures

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers have a secure entry system that utilizes a key fob to control access to our buildings. This allows enrolled families to have the ability to enter the buildings freely. Without a key fob, visitors and families must ring the doorbell and be ‘buzzed’ in. We ask that you do not allow anyone to enter the building while you are coming or going. Please allow them to use their own fob or be ‘buzzed in’ by the Center Director. This will help prevent unauthorized visitors and protect the safety of all the children and staff. Any breaches of security should be immediately reported to the Center Director. Key fobs are issued at the time of enrollment. Please see page 13 for more information.

Children may not enter or leave the building without an adult. **Upon arrival and departure**, the adult dropping off or picking up the child must sign the child **into and out of** care using our ProCare Touchscreen or alternative provided by the center. This is a state licensing regulation. If you need assistance with this requirement, please speak to the Center Director.

State regulations require children to be supervised at all times while in the child care facility; do not send your child to his/her classroom alone. State regulations also require every person to wash their hands upon entering a classroom. Therefore, parents must help children put away their belongings, wash the child’s hands as well as their own, and help the child get settled for the day. This same procedure must be followed if a child is picked up and returned in the middle of the day.



Some children exhibit separation anxiety when it is time for their parent to leave. Early childhood research shows it is best for you to tell your child upon arrival that, after all of their things are put away, you will kiss, hug, and say goodbye to them. This will prepare your child for your departure. You are encouraged to leave after saying goodbye; the longer you stay, the more anxious your child is likely to feel. Your child’s teacher will comfort and assist through this anxious time. Our professional staff are available to discuss other options if the child does not settle into the arrival routine after a reasonable period of time.

When departing for the day, children must wait with their teacher until you come to the classroom or playground to get them. Sometimes children see their parent and excitedly run to meet them at the door; this is a safety concern as children may not be supervised once they’ve left their teacher. Please help us keep our center safe by not allowing your child to leave his/her teacher without permission. Additionally, once you’ve signed your child out for the day, you are solely responsible for supervising your child while still on the center property.

We ask all adults to refrain from using their cell phones during the few precious minutes of arrival and departure. Not only is this a matter of safety, these times of the day are very significant transitions for a young child, and your child deserves your undivided attention. It is also an important time for you and center staff to exchange information important to the continued quality care of your child.

Parents are required to notify the Center Director of any special instructions or needs for the child’s day. For example, if you are picking them up early or sending someone else to pick them up. In addition, please notify us of any concerns of which we might need to be aware in order to best meet your child’s needs throughout the day.



disease information will be shared. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. Parents are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school.

Persons Appearing to be Under the Influence at Time of Pick-Up

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will contact authorities if we suspect anyone picking up a child to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The staff of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will attempt to notify someone from your emergency contact list to come pick up your child. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers to deny a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is, or appears to be, impaired. However, Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers staff will delay the impaired adult as long as possible while contacting the local police and/or Child Protective Services.

Emergency/Alternate Pick-Up Forms

At enrollment, parents will be presented with an Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form. New Mexico State Regulations require two emergency contacts other than household members. Each contact must have a separate, local phone number. Parents are encouraged to include on this form any and all persons who, in the course of events, might at one time be authorized to pick up your child. In an emergency, the child's parents will be called first. If they cannot be reached, staff will call the persons listed on this form until someone can be reached.

Should the staff contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child within one hour, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the emergency list. Failure of the parent to make such arrangements will result in dismissal from the program.

Parents do not need to be listed on the Emergency Contact Form. The nature of the parental relationship affords the parents (in the absence of a prohibitive court order) the right to pick-up their child.

The persons on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form will be required to provide a government-issued photo ID and/or code word verifying their identity prior to the center releasing the child. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

Late Pick-Up

It is your obligation to have your child picked up promptly at your contracted pick-up time. If your child is not picked up, we will contact your Emergency Contacts to pick up your child. **A late fee of \$1.00 per minute per child will be assessed past closing time.** The late pick-up fee is not an agreement to provide after-hours service. Excessive tardiness will result in disenrollment of your child. Legal authorities will be contacted for children left at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers longer than one hour past closing time.

Notification of Absence

Parents are required to inform the center as soon as possible if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to more effectively maintain appropriate ratios and help the classroom teacher effectively plan for the day.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the center director not only of the absence but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our staff to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the Center Director so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable

All changes and/or additions to the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form must be made in writing and be dated and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

If last-minute circumstances require you to phone us with the name of another person to whom we should release your child, you must provide your code word to verify that it is actually you calling. The code word should be known only by the parents and guardians of the child. In the case of divorced parents or parents with specific custody arrangements, it is important the registering parent indicate on the application who has legal custody and who may pick up the child. Supporting legal documents must be provided.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the Emergency/Alternate Contact Form for any reason, including but not limited to violations of the policies/procedures contained herein. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s) to inform each person on the Emergency/Alternate Form of our policies/procedures.

Transportation

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers provide transportation to and from certain schools in the centers' surrounding neighborhoods. On occasion, we also provide transportation for center-approved field trips.

If your child is participating in our transportation program, you must notify the Center Director of any schedule changes, including absence, **before the bus run begins**. This is especially important as it relates to picking up children after school. Our buses often pick up children from more than one school on a strict time schedule. If a child is not at his usual bus stop, it can cause great stress and alarm if the bus driver has not been notified of changes. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers cannot be held responsible if the Center Director has not been notified of changes. Repeated failures to notify us may result in the disenrollment of your child.

Children requiring child safety seats according to New Mexico state law must provide their own seats for use on the bus. Because our buses come equipped with lap belts only, all child safety seats provided by parents **MUST** be compatible for use with a lap belt. If you are unsure, please consult the owner's manual/installation instructions for your particular safety seat.

While our buses meet all federal safety standards, they are not equipped with shoulder belts and are therefore incompatible with booster seats. Children who are old enough to ride in a booster seat will be buckled in using the existing lap belts on the bus. If you have questions about your child's safety seat, we suggest calling **Safer New Mexico Now** toll-free at **1-800-231-6145**.



School Calendar

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers are open year-round except for the following major holidays (or the day on which the holiday is observed):

- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- Easter Sunday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday thereafter
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

We are also closed for three full-day in-service trainings for our staff – typically President's Day, the Friday before Memorial Day, and Veteran's Day.

Please watch for posted information and check with your Center Director to see how any closings will affect your unique schedule.

Special Events

Throughout the year, we offer special events for our children and families. These range from community service projects, parent nights, special breakfasts, monthly lunch invitations, holiday celebrations, school pictures, and more. Be sure to read postings, front door notices, parent newsletters, and check our website at www.southwestchildcare.com.

Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather Information

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers reserves the right to alter our normal hours of operation in the event of an emergency, inclement weather, or under any circumstances where we deem it to be in the best interest of the children and staff. Parents will be notified of the change/closing by phone, email, social media, posted signs, and/or local radio and television stations.

Should the center need to close in the middle of the day, the school staff will attempt to reach the child's parents first to arrange for pick up. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the persons listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick up arrangements can be made. At the time of the call, staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person of the pick-up location should the children need to be evacuated from the child care center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.



Hand Washing

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), hand washing is the absolute, number one way to prevent the spread of communicable disease. We take hand washing regulations very seriously. Quality standards require our staff, children, and **any adults present** to wash their hands at the following times:

- upon arrival into the classroom
- before/after food handling
- before/after toileting and diapering
- after coming into contact with any bodily fluids
- after handling pets or other animals
- upon re-entering the classroom from outdoor play
- after messy play

Our staff members are highly trained in proper hand washing techniques using guidelines provided by the CDC.

Communicable Diseases/Illness

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics Model Health Policies and Procedures Manual.

As mandated by New Mexico's current Child Care Regulations, Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers cannot provide childcare for sick children. Your child may not come to the center if he/she:

- is feverish or has had fever within the past 24 hours (100°F or higher)
- has a bad cough
- has vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- has pink eye or symptoms that might be pink eye
- has a sore throat
- has a chronic runny nose
- has been on an antibiotic for Strep for less than 24 hours
- has head lice or nits (eggs)
- has other symptoms of illness determined by the Center Director
- is too sick to play outside

Parents are required to pick up an ill child immediately after notification by phone. If a parent is reached, but cannot immediately pick up their child, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form. The staff will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff will call the people listed on the emergency contact form until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

Children excluded from the program due to a fever of 100°F or higher may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever-reducing medication, for 24 hours.

Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occur three or more times in a 24-hour period. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Parents might be required to present a doctor's note stating the child is no longer contagious. Southwest Child Care Early



Learning Centers reserves the right to refuse a child's return if the Center Director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

If your child is exhibiting symptoms of illness, and you wish your child to attend anyway, you will be required to present a doctor's note stating the child is **not** contagious.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the Center Director. This enables our staff to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the Center Director. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will take all measures necessary to protect your child's privacy. Any information shared will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. We might also notify parents of children in the school that a communicable disease is present, but we will not release any identifying information; only the communicable disease information will be shared.

Children with Severe Allergies

If your child has any allergies that cause adverse reactions, please be sure you have completed the following:

1. noted the allergy and reaction-type on your child's enrollment form
2. notified the Center Director
3. notified your child's teacher

Parents must provide a copy of any physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child's allergy. Any medication

required to treat an allergic reaction, including Epi-pens, must be provided by parents and will be administered in accordance with our Medication Policy detailed herein.

If your child has a food allergy, we will post this in our dining room/kitchen area. Additionally, teachers will keep a list of children's food allergies in their classroom and on their emergency clipboards.

Some of our classrooms do have pets in the Science Center; if your child has a pet allergy please notify the Center Director immediately.

Medication Policy

State of New Mexico Child Care Regulations require that we only dispense over-the-counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers, and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. We are only allowed to give medication to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given. Medications are dispensed once a day during the noon hour.

Parents are required to complete a Medication Form giving permission to dispense medication to the child. Medication Forms can be found in the main office. Medication Forms, doctor's notes, and medication must be given directly to the Center Director or Assistant Director.

All medications are kept in the office in the cabinet specifically designed for this purpose or in the refrigerator, when necessary, in the container marked "medicines." Parents are not allowed in the kitchen, so please give the medicine needing to be refrigerated to the Center Director and ask a staff member to get it for you at the end of the day. **Under no circumstances may parents enter the kitchen.**

Medications must **not** be left in the child's cubby or diaper bag. All medications must be taken home every Friday, and parents will need to fill out a new form each week. Exceptions can be made for emergency medications such as Epi-pens and rescue inhalers. Parents are responsible for ensuring that all prescription medication is properly labeled by a pharmacist and replaced prior to the expiration date.

Incident/Accident Reports

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. This form simply states the child's name, a brief explanation of the incident/accident, and the actions that were taken by the staff to remedy the situation (first aid, phone call, etc.). This form will be kept in the office and the Center Director can give it to you at pick-up time. You might be asked to sign the form acknowledging you received it. The Center Director will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting with the teacher, you will need to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom.

Emergency Procedures

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers' staff members are required to hold a current CPR and First Aid certificate. In case of an accident or emergency involving a child, parent, or employee, a staff member will administer first aid. Each of our centers has first aid kits readily available. The accident or emergency will be reported to the Center Director and appropriate actions will be taken.

Each center has a disaster control plan in place which is accessible and available for review. In case of fire, storm, natural disaster, lock down, or other emergencies, our basic emergency plan is as follows:

- A. In the event of an evacuation, children will be taken to a pre-arranged meeting point. This location and phone numbers will be posted on the parent board at each center and is most likely a nearby church facility. Staff members will have each child's emergency contact forms with them to allow for parent notification.
- B. In case of an emergency that would require us to stay in the building, we have lockdown and shelter-in-place procedure plans.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers conducts regular fire, shelter-in-place, lockdown, and emergency evacuation drills. Parents, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to



sign their child into/out of the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe-zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, the director or designee will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. Parents already on site will be asked to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all staff and children and given the staff permission to release children. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. Children must be picked up immediately after receiving the telephone call. It is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

Alternate Safe Location

As stated above, should the Administration of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the child care center to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to a pre-determined location. This location is likely a nearby church facility. Once the children are assembled here, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up immediately.

In case of an emergency, children with disabilities will be treated the same as all other enrolled children. They will be taken to a pre-arranged meeting point and the staff will have their emergency contact information.



Our Curriculum

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers uses the HighScope™ Curriculum. HighScope™ is a research-based, developmentally-appropriate curriculum that maximizes opportunities for preschool children's learning through play and other hands-on activities.

The HighScope™ classroom follows a consistent daily routine which incorporates a *large amount of time for children to engage in natural play* while adults interact with them to challenge their thinking and further their development. To this end, most of our classroom activities are designed for children to focus on the experience and not the end product.

Lesson Plans for each classroom are created weekly by the teachers with their children's developmental stages in mind. They are posted weekly on the parent board near the front office and on the parent board in each classroom. Your child's daily schedule is posted on the parent board in your child's classroom.

The following sections will explore HighScope™ in more detail according to each age group.

Infants and Toddlers

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers provide care for infants and toddlers starting at 6 weeks of age. We take great pride in the professionalism of our caregivers. Adults play a vital role in the positive development of your baby. We place a great emphasis on building warm and nurturing relationships with our infants and toddlers as well as their families. The strength of that relationship is critical for the healthy growth and development of your child.

The HighScope™ Daily Routine in the infant classroom focuses on smooth transitions between home and school, and a daily schedule customized to meet each child's individual needs. In the toddler room, there is a slow transition to a more common routine such as shared meal times, nap times, small group activities, and large group activities.

We understand that infants and toddlers learn by experiencing their environments through their senses. We ensure a safe and clean environment for them to explore freely. Mobile toddlers are exposed to new and interesting experiences such as water play, climbing, puzzles, painting, and other exploratory activities to promote brain development.

Our classrooms are rich in multi-lingual language experiences including songs, fingerplays, conversations, and books. Additionally, our Infant and Toddler Teachers use Baby Sign Language to interact with children. Research suggests that Baby Sign Language can be an effective communication tool for infants and young children. It allows our youngest children, who are still developing their verbal skills, to communicate their needs, wants, and feelings with minimal frustration. Additionally, learning and practicing Baby Sign Language with your child can be a fun bonding time! Please see the Parent Board in your child's classroom and ask your child's caregivers which signs they are using with your child.

As infants and toddlers are always striving toward autonomy, we provide ample opportunities for children to practice newly acquired skills, such as sitting up, crawling, walking, talking, etcetera, and to build a positive self-image while doing so.

Our detailed diaper-changing procedures are posted in each classroom. Diapers, wipes, and diaper creams are provided by parents. If you have any questions or special requirements, please ask the Center Director.

For infants, we accommodate individual schedules and needs for feeding and sleeping. Each infant at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers has his/her own assigned crib. Linens are washed daily. You are encouraged to bring a special blanket from home for which you are responsible for laundering. We follow the recommendation of the American Academy of





Pediatrics' "Safe to Sleep" campaign to minimize the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). We place babies to sleep on their backs on firm mattresses with no soft materials, loose bedding, or toys in the sleep area. Things you can do at home to decrease the risk of SIDS are: have infants sleep in the same room as the parent (but **not the same bed**), breastfeed, and prohibit smoking in the household. For more information about SIDS, we recommend visiting the website www.sidscenter.org.

Toddlers have a regularly-scheduled lunch and nap time. Please refer to "Nap Time" for more information.

Be sure to check your child's cubby every day for artwork, notes from the teacher, and/or soiled laundry.

Two-Year-Olds

We take great care to offer a sensory-rich environment to enhance the two-year-olds' need to explore. This HighScope™ classroom environment is structured with interest areas that are age-appropriate, organized, and clean. The egocentric two-year-old is just beginning to understand the idea of sharing, so each area is supplied with ample materials and several of the same toys. The classroom environment is an essential tool to monitoring and guiding a two-year-old's behavior. Children at this age feel protective and uncertain about the behaviors of their peers and can act aggressively. We maintain appropriate staff to child ratios.

The HighScope™ Daily Routine in this classroom includes all the essentials such as meals, nap time, and bodily care, in addition to well-planned activities that take place in small groups, large groups, and individually. A large portion of the day is spent in "Work Time" which is self-directed play—because play is a child's work!

Language is developing quickly at this age and must be encouraged. Daily experiences are filled with language rich experiences that include, but are not limited to singing, reading, and 'hands-on' activities. Physical development is also rapidly maturing, as well as new feelings of independence. Two-year-olds are confident walkers, they are potty training, and they are beginning to communicate their individual and unique developmental needs. They are encouraged to try new things and have new experiences.

Two-year-olds have a regularly-scheduled nap time which typically begins right after lunch. Please refer to "Nap Time" for more information.

When a child is ready for toilet learning, our teachers and Center Directors work closely with the parent and child to ensure a positive experience for all. Please see our policy on Toilet Learning for more information.

Be sure to check your child's cubby every day for artwork, notes from the teacher, and/or soiled laundry.

Parents may request a conference with their child's teacher at any time.

Early Pre-Kindergarten/Three-Year-Olds

Preschool-aged children are beginning to develop new cognitive skills and are more able to concentrate and remember. They can recognize objects by color, shape, and/or size. They are developing basic math concepts and showing an interest in written language. Language has expanded and thoughts and emotions can be communicated.

Our three-year-old classroom environment safely fosters these new developmental achievements without stifling the natural ability to create and investigate. It is a classroom with clearly-defined interest areas that are well-stocked with fantastic learning materials. It is an ideal place for your three-year-old to learn.



The HighScope™ Daily Routine in this classroom includes all the essentials such as meals, nap time, and bodily care, in addition to well-planned activities that take place in small groups, large groups, and individually. A large portion of the day is spent in “Work Time” which is self-directed play—because play is a child’s work!

Three-year-olds have a regularly-scheduled nap/rest time which typically begins right after lunch. Please refer to “Nap Time” for more information.

If your three-year-old is still mastering potty training, be sure to communicate regularly with his/her teachers and **supply more than one complete change of clothing every day** in case of accidents. Three-year-olds can get very busy with their play and don’t realize they need to use the bathroom until it’s too late! Please see our policy on Toilet Learning on page 25 for more information.

Be sure to check your child’s cubby every day for artwork, notes from the teacher, and/or soiled laundry. Parents may request a conference with their child’s teacher at any time.

Pre-Kindergarten/Four-Year-Olds

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers offers pre-kindergarten programs to help prepare your child for kindergarten. We are an official NM Pre-K site.

Four-year-olds are close to mastering most of their physical development; they can run, climb, jump, and play with ease. Fours are full of questions and ideas; they want to explore and create. Our HighScope™ curriculum includes a consistent daily routine including times for large groups, small groups, and plenty of “Work Time” (self-directed play) in a carefully-planned classroom environment. Our pre-kindergarten classrooms are arranged with clearly-defined, well-equipped interest areas such as Science, Math, Art, Writing, Music and more. Teachers receive extensive



training on lesson planning and preparing four-year-olds for success in kindergarten. Children in our pre-kindergarten classrooms have opportunities to participate in developmental and health screenings, field trips, and other unique experiences.

If your child is enrolled in one of our NM Pre-K classrooms, please check the exact class times with your Center Director. If you need extended child care beyond the class hours, please make those arrangements with the Center Director. Our regular tuition rates will apply.

Nap/Rest Time takes place after lunch. Please refer to “Nap Time” for more information.

Our four-year-old teachers hold three parent-teacher conferences per school year. They are typically held in Fall, Winter, and Spring, but all Southwest Child Care parents can request a meeting with their child’s teacher at any time.

Be sure to check your child’s cubby every day for artwork, notes from the teacher, and/or soiled laundry.

Nap/Rest Time

All children ages toddler through four years have a daily nap time that takes place after lunch. At the time of enrollment, you are required to purchase a sleeping mat at a reasonable fee from Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. This nap mat will belong solely to your child. We encourage you to also provide a special blanket or “cuddly toy.” All personal items need to be marked clearly with your child’s name and need to be taken home for laundering at least once a week. (We recommend Fridays.)

A few children do not need a daily nap, but all children benefit from a daily rest period. We provide our ‘resters’ with quiet activities they can engage in while resting on their mats.





School-Agers (5 years—12 years)

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers provide care for elementary-aged children before and after school and when school is not in session. We transport children to and from a select number of public schools in each of the unique areas around our three locations on 14-passenger school buses with seat belts.

During the school year, our school-age children start their day with a healthy breakfast before heading off to school. After school, they are greeted with a healthy snack and opportunities for different activities depending on their age, interest, and needs. Games, art projects, outside time, homework time, and other activities are available daily.

During the summer months, school-age children have a dependable daily schedule in keeping with our HighScope™ curriculum. Throughout the day they have opportunities to join in large groups, small groups, self-selected play time, special projects, field trips, and even special unit studies. Trip to Ancient Greece anyone?!

School-age care is a perfect option for ‘tweens’ who want to have fun and interesting experiences with their friends but are not quite ready to stay home alone.

Educational/Personal Care Supplies Needed

All children at the center need to keep at least one complete change of clothing in their cubby. A complete change includes underwear and socks! Several

things can happen during the day that would require your child to change clothes such as a toileting accident, an extremely messy activity, or a spill during a meal. (If your child is potty-training, please provide more than one change of clothing.) We will not leave children in soiled clothing at any time, so if none have been provided, you will be called to immediately bring clean clothes or pick up your child. Soiled clothing should be taken home and replaced with a fresh set the next day.

All children at the center have Outside Play Time every day. It is important that they have appropriate clothing for the current weather. In the colder months, please provide a coat, hat, and mittens. In the warmer months, state law requires sunscreen and a reusable water bottle. The sunscreen should be applied at home while dressing for the day, but teachers will help your child reapply it as necessary throughout the day.

Please remember to label all personal items with your child’s name. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

Class Assignments

Children are assigned to classrooms based on which classroom will best meet their individual needs. Our classrooms have fun names and are filled with children of similar age. We do not move children from room to room based solely on their birthdates but rather based on which room will provide the best environment for the child’s individual needs. If you have questions about your child’s placement, please visit with your Center Director.

Toilet Learning

When a child is ready for toilet learning, our teachers and Center Directors work closely with the parent and child to assure a positive experience for all. Before a child is ready for toilet learning, two things must occur together:

1. Physiological ability

They must have control of their bowel and bladder muscles. Most children develop this control between the ages of 2 and 3. One sign that this is developing is the child being aware of when he/she is soiling the diaper (stops playing, points to diaper, and/or asks to have the diaper changed).



2. Desire on the part of the child

Some signs that the child would like to learn are sitting on the toilet with clothes on, trying to change his/her own diaper, and possibly using 'potty words' such as "pee" or "poop."

Attempting to potty-train children before they are ready often leads to bedwetting and pants-wetting later. On the other hand, beginning the process when children are ready usually results in a pleasant, naturally-easy learning experience. Our HighScope™ Curriculum uses a Daily Routine which allows for regularly-scheduled 'potty breaks.' This helps children at all levels of toilet learning.

Disposable underpants (such as Pull-Ups®) are not permitted. While they are a convenience for adults, they do not help the toilet learning process and, in most cases, prolong it. Disposable underpants feel and act like disposable diapers, and children cannot feel when they are wet. If a child isn't uncomfortable in wet pants, he/she will not see the reason to use a toilet. Faster, more effective toilet learning takes place with "real" underpants and lots of extra clothes!

Our staff will **never** pressure, nag, threaten, or bribe a child to use the toilet, and will **never** scold, shame or punish a child for not using the toilet. We have additional resources on toilet learning available; please ask your Center Director.

Biting

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the infant through three-year-old classrooms. We set up our classroom environments with purpose; keeping all areas visible and keeping

enough developmentally appropriate materials for children to be engaged. However, despite our best efforts, biting does occur. Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bitten or will bite another child.

The staff understands that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember this is a developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the staff is working to identify situations which provoke or elicit this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The staff will not punish or harshly discipline children in the younger classrooms for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior.

Children older than 3 years of age may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. For children in this age group who bite, the staff will use the discipline procedures outlined in the discipline section of this handbook as well as observe the child to determine what provokes or elicits this inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to cooperate with staff to help their child control this behavior.

Parents will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the day. The staff may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is confidential and cannot be disclosed.

If you have questions about biting, please speak with the Center Director, your child's pediatrician, and/or child care licensing.

Discipline

At Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers, we know the best way to discipline is for teachers to:

- be well prepared and organized,
- keep children challenged and engaged in fun activities,
- provide classrooms with developmentally appropriate materials,
- help children learn to express their emotions verbally by teaching the children acceptable vocabulary to express anger, annoyance, happiness, sadness, loss, etc.

When this is accomplished, the need for discipline decreases automatically.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers also uses Conscious Discipline™ company-wide to address the social-emotional needs of children, families,

Southwest Child Care, Inc.



and staff. Conscious Discipline™ is a whole-school solution for social-emotional learning, discipline, and self-regulation which ties in directly with our mission.

You can learn more about Conscious Discipline™ at www.consciousdiscipline.com.

When situations requiring discipline do arise, we use positive discipline with firm but fair guidance and clear, consistent limits. Expectations are clearly communicated. The age and individual needs of the child are always considered.

Our positive discipline techniques include distraction or redirection, private talks, direct or indirect praise, and teaching by example. The teacher may bring the child to the office if their behavior continues to disrupt the group. We strive to give the child a sense of responsibility for his or her own actions, and give logical consequences when appropriate. Any time a child's behavior causes another person to require first aid, the child will be sent home for the remainder of the day. In the event a child damages property during an act of misbehavior, the child/family will be expected to pay to have the property repaired or replaced at the discretion of the Center Director.

When a child exhibits repeated acts of aggression and/or other unsafe behavior, we have a detailed Behavior Management Policy which is part of the enrollment packet you completed. This policy requires parents to work with our staff to resolve the inappropriate behavior. We strive to come to a positive resolution for all, but repeated unsafe behavior or lack of parent cooperation may result in your child being withdrawn from the program.

Toys/Electronics from Home

At no time are children allowed to bring personal electronic devices into the center. This includes cell phones, cameras, tablets, smart watches, game consoles, and other technological devices. Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, misuse, and loss, children are not permitted to bring these items or toys from

home unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child and are encouraged to consult the classroom teacher should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy. If the parents fail repeatedly to enforce this policy with their children, the staff will confiscate the item and notify the parents. The item may then be picked up by the parent.

Children in classrooms with nap/rest time are permitted to bring one plush/non-musical toy with which to nap/rest. This toy is to be kept in the child's cubby except during nap/rest time.

All toys brought in for use as part of the curriculum, and/or for nap/rest time will be inspected by a staff member for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. Toys which are specifically brought for Show-and-Tell must be kept in the child's cubby before and after the Show-and-Tell period. Toys that are particularly meaningful, sentimental, or delicate should not be brought to school. Southwest Child Care Early Learning Center accepts no responsibility for damaged or missing items brought from home.

Sometimes young children are so intrigued by a toy or object from the classroom that they want to take it home. We lose many classroom materials as they make it home in pockets and backpacks. Please help us keep our operating costs down by checking your child's pockets and backpacks each day for toys that belong to the center. **It is important not to punish your child for this normal developmental behavior, but instead to use the opportunity to lovingly teach your child that it is wrong to take things that are not his or hers.**

Field Trips

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers occasionally supplements the in-class curriculum with off-site field trips. Parents are required to give written permission for their child to attend each field trip. Notification of a field trip will be sent home in advance of the trip with all pertinent trip information including destination, date, time, reason for trip, cost, and mode of transportation. Accompanying the notification paper, teachers will include a permission slip to be filled out, signed, and returned to the teacher prior to the date of the trip. The field trip permission slip must be filled out completely and accurately, and all trip costs must be paid in advance for your child to attend.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers typically provides all required supervision for field trips, but certain field trips require additional volunteers. If the teacher extends an invitation to attend a field trip, and you wish to do so, please discuss the individual details with the teacher and/or Center Director. Parents will not be permitted to transport any child, other than their own, on a Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers sponsored trip, and all policies regarding family code of conduct will apply.

If your child is not scheduled to attend on the day of a field trip and you wish for your child to participate in the trip, please discuss this with your Center Director at least three days prior to the date of the trip.

Parent Participation/Volunteers

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child's school activities. There are many ways in which parents can participate and volunteer at the child care center. Parents may volunteer to attend field trips, read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events.

Any parent who volunteers in the classroom on a regular basis will be required to pay for and secure all criminal background checks, as required by our licensing regulations. Any person, including parents, with felony convictions, sex offender convictions, and/or open investigations into any criminal activities will not be permitted to volunteer in the classroom or on field trips.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order. For example, if a parent is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that parent will only be able to volunteer on those days. Parents with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted to volunteer with the express written permission of the custodial parent.



Family-Style Meals and Dining

We are very proud of our meals and dining program here at Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers. We participate in the USDA's Federal Child and Adult Care Food Program. We maintain a nutritious and well-rounded meal program that includes breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. We also provide supper for children at our Uptown location. Breakfast is served between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. Lunch is served between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30. An afternoon snack is served between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. Supper is served at 5:30 p.m.

Each location has a full-time professional cook who takes great care to serve nutritious, well-balanced, made-from-scratch food. This enables our children to develop healthy minds and bodies. The meals served are 'Home Cooked.' We bake our muffins from scratch, hand dip our French toast, layer our own lasagnas, and much more. We use whole grains and an abundant variety of fresh foods. We explore a different ethnic cuisine each month. Our menus are posted on our Parent Board near our check-in location as well as on our website.

Our meals are served 'Family Style' in a dining room with a strong emphasis on table manners, social skills, and independence. Our serving bowls, pitchers, and utensils are all sized for children's small hands so they can serve themselves, developing motor skills and self-sufficiency. Our teachers sit down at the table and eat with the children at every meal. They lead quiet, meaningful conversations with the children during this time.



We will make reasonable accommodations for children with special dietary requirements. Any special food necessary for medical reasons must be provided by the parents and additional documentation may be required. Weekly menus are posted in advance on the front bulletin board and are available on our website (www.southwestchildcare.com). Please speak with your Center Director if your child requires a special diet.

Infant feedings follow the individual baby's schedule as provided by parents. Parents are responsible for notifying us of your baby's changing schedules as he/she grows. Table foods are introduced as requested by parents. Formula, baby food, and table foods are provided by the center except for special dietary restrictions. Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. Appropriate, private feeding locations will be made available. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the classroom teacher. If you are providing breastmilk for your baby, please prepare one more feeding than you think your child will consume in a day to assure that your child won't be hungry. Prepared bottles will be stored in the designated refrigerator and will be warmed in a water bath prior to feeding. No bottles will be microwaved. Staff will complete a daily chart for each child detailing for the parent what the child ate, when, and how much.

Children may not bring food to school. This restriction may not apply to field trips where parent-furnished lunches may be required. On special occasions such as birthdays, holidays, and multi-cultural celebrations, we appreciate parents who bring special snacks. We strongly encourage you to send nutritious snacks such as fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese and crackers, etcetera, and keep sweets and cakes with lots of icing to a minimum! Please inquire about any special food allergies in your child's classroom. If you

would like more ideas for nutritious treats, please ask your Center Director.

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide notification, in the form of a doctor's note, of any allergies (food or otherwise), with instructions for treatment should a child have an allergic reaction. Please refer to the Health and Safety Policies contained herein for further information.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in meal or snack time for behavior reasons.

Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers will provide a healthy afternoon snack for all children. Daily snacks are included in the weekly menu posted on the parent board near the office. Water is available to children at any time of day.



THANK YOU

For choosing Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers.

We value your friendship and appreciate your business.

We appreciate referrals,
and free registration credits can be earned by referring families to us.
Please speak with your Center Director for details.



Every child at
Southwest Child Care Early Learning Centers
is
welcomed, wanted, and worthwhile.



WYOMING

4802 Wyoming Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111
(505) 296-3121

LOMAS

11800 Lomas Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112
(505) 294-2233

UPTOWN

2626 Texas St. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
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