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# **WELCOME TO THE CHILDREN'S CENTER AT CALTECH**

## **Introduction**

We aspire to make your time at the Center enriching for you and your family. This Parent Handbook contains important information that will assist in guiding you through this important journey at the Center. Please read it carefully. As a parent you are welcome and encouraged to participate in your child's daily care and education here. Parent involvement will greatly enhance your child's experience and foster continuity between home and Center. If you have any questions, please feel free to discuss them with your child's Teacher or the Director. You are welcome to visit the Center at any time.

## **Mission Statement**

The Children's Center at Caltech (CCC) is a non-profit organization providing high quality early education and care for children ages six months through six years for the Caltech, JPL and Pasadena communities. Caring, nurturing and qualified educators, trained and experienced in child development and early childhood education, staff this outstanding program. The Center has resources to support child, staff, and parenting development. In addition, the Center provides training in the form of practical development for students from surrounding colleges and universities who are pursuing a career in the field of early childhood education.

To accomplish all this, every effort is made to build and nurture relationships of mutual respect among the children, families, community and early childhood education professionals.

## **Philosophy and Goals**

The philosophy of the Children's Center at Caltech has its basis in a humanistic view of the child as an independent and individual learner. The aim of the program is to respond to the needs of every child as s/he develops awareness of the world and readiness for learning. Each group provides developmentally appropriate materials and activities for every child in the areas of social/emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development, while fostering a positive self-concept.

Following long-term and current research on how children learn, the Center offers planned and emergent activities where children are encouraged to explore their world, solve problems, ask questions, reflect, and work collectively with teachers and peers. Teachers nurture a sense of competence and self-worth in every child through appropriate levels of scaffolding. The emphasis is on active, hands-on learning with a balance of child-centered and adult-directed activities that addresses the needs of the whole child.

## History of the Children's Center at Caltech

The Children's Center at Caltech opened in 1972 in a former home that had also been used as a dormitory, at 293 S. Chester. It was founded with the approval of Caltech by a group of Caltech wives and students, plus several non-Caltech Pasadena women. Like most child care centers, it has experienced growing pains and changes. In the early years, the Center had low enrollment and high staff turnover. More than once it appeared that it might have to close.

In 1988, a second classroom at 303 S. Chester was opened. A third house at 296 S. Chester, opened in 1990. In July of 1998, a Toddler Option with portable classroom adjacent to 296 S. Chester was added. This environment cultivates a home-like atmosphere. The latest addition is the office/training room in the house on the southeast corner of Del Mar and Chester.

In the early years, the Center was financially independent, paying all its own operational expenses. Gradually, Caltech increased its support of the Center, and now aids substantially in terms of free rent, utilities, maintenance, repairs, and gardening. However, the Center remains separate as a private non-profit corporation with its own governing Board of Directors. CCC Parents make up the majority of the Board of Directors.

Families of differing social and ethnic backgrounds, from Caltech and the community at large, are accepted on a non-discriminatory basis. There are six classroom groups. The Center serves as a lab school for nearby colleges and universities and helps train many child development students each year.

We foster a close relationship between home and school. Parents are welcome to visit the classroom, accompany the children on field trips, and participate in planned classroom activities. The low adult-child ratio allows for the individual needs of every child to be met in a comfortable, supportive setting. The Center first achieved accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children in 1993 and has been re-certified every year since then.

Children from six months to six years are accepted in the two, three, or five-day enrollment. They are grouped by age as follows:

- Bunnies (6-24 months)
- Dolphins (18-36 months)
- Penguins (2-3 years)
- Koalas (3-4 years)
- Raccoons (3.5-4.5 years)
- Beavers (4-5 years)

Our operating budget is based on tuition income alone. Monies from fundraising activities are spent on major acquisitions or special items. In addition, a Tuition Assistance Fund has been established. Contributions to these funds or the program in general, are welcome. Contributions made to the Center are tax deductible.

## **Board of Directors**

A Board of Directors governs the Children's Center. The Board consists of CCC parents, staff, and members of the community who are elected by the general membership of the Children's Center. The Center Director is hired by The Board and is the sole employee of the Board. The Board has full legal responsibility for the Center. The officers are voted in once a year and parent participation hours are waived for those serving as officers.

The Board meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Monday of each month at an announced location on campus. Meetings are posted each month on the Center website and are open to any members of the Center community wishing to attend. There are seven standing committees of the Board: Finance, Fundraising, Strategic Planning, the Committee on Trustees, and the Committee for Parent Communication, Personnel, and Facilities.

## **Staff**

The Children's Center staff consists of highly qualified educators trained in Child Development and/or Early Childhood Education. Many of our teachers hold Associate, Bachelors and/or Masters Degrees. Our low teacher/child ratios allow for the staff to plan and provide a high quality program in each of our classrooms.

The CCC is committed to maintaining staff who are consistently on the cutting edge of the Early Childhood Education field. Our teachers are provided myriad opportunities for professional growth. All staff are encouraged to continue education in Child Development and/or Early Childhood Education and to participate in staff development opportunities. All staff are required to be First Aid and CPR certified as well as complete other Health and Safety trainings.

## **Curriculum**

The Children's Center uses a constructivist approach, that is children constructing knowledge based on real experiences, adapted with other various educational approaches such as the Project Approach, Emergent Curriculum, Maria Montessori's Practical Life and Game Shelf, Reggio Emilia, and Froebel Gifts to build a learning environment that tells children they are respected, trusted, capable, and competent in their own learning. In whole, our goal is to emphasize and nurture the process, not the product. Our inquiry-based curriculum can last anywhere from two months to a year. We use broad science concepts such as form and function, change, systems and interaction, stability, force and motion, simple machines, cause and effect, just to name a few, to build our curriculum around. Science uniquely qualifies for such an integrated approach.

Children, like scientists, need multiple opportunities to explore, ask questions, make predictions, experiment, test their ideas, collect information, document, reflect, and draw conclusions. We believe that children are scientists by nature. On a daily basis we watch our children use science inquiry to formulate ideas and test them. Whether they are playing with water of different temperatures, or observing cocoons in the lab, or experimenting with the physics of the incline plane, their curiosity make them natural scientists.

To understand how to facilitate children's learning and set up an environment for such learning, teachers are required to attend monthly professional development trainings of which many involve curriculum development. They also meet with the Science Curriculum Coordinator to thoughtfully brainstorm and plan curriculum. Weekly curriculum activities are posted on the bulletin boards in each classroom. We believe that while curriculum should be meticulously planned, good teaching also involves being ready and able to catch the teachable moments to further enhance children's learning experiences.

Young children learn through play. All materials they play with, all ideas they play with, they are learning from. Some of the various activities and experiences that children receive weekly are on art, carpentry, gardening, wire working, block building, and origami. Within each area, various mediums are provided, such as in art, there are natural materials, clay, wire, beads, paint, oil pastels, chalk, crayons, markers, etc. Whether indoor or outdoor, children investigate big concepts piece by piece in earth, physical, and life sciences. Keeping in mind that science is inclusive of all other areas as math, language and literacy, history, art, and creativity.

## **How the CCC Curriculum Evolved**

*Scientifically Valid Research* – Children's Center at Caltech high quality comprehensive early childhood care and education services will be founded on a birth to five constructivist approach, which is children constructing knowledge based on real life experiences. The Preschool Pathways to Science: Facilitating Scientific Ways of Thinking, Talking, and Working curriculum has been implemented for 12 years in the CCC preschool classrooms and adapted for the infant and toddler classrooms. The curriculum is research-based through the Constructivist theories of Jean Piaget. The Preschool Pathways to Science was prepared and supported with funds from NASA (Grant No. NCC-2826, entitled "Advancing the Science Experiences of Young Children 2-5 Years' and a UCLA Dean's Grant to R. Gelman. The current CCC Director, Susan Wood, was a Program Coordinator and a Collaborating Writer for the development of the Preschool Pathways to Science curriculum. Ms. Wood, who had researched and developed preschool science curricula, was brought to the CCC by the board to provide expertise and leadership to establish the CCC as a center of excellence. Her thesis, *Methods of Teaching Scientific Ways of Thinking to Young Children* served as a vehicle for leading the way from theory to practice at the CCC. Utilizing STEM curriculum as an initial foundation for the instructional component of the program, the center became recognized over time as a model of early science innovation and education.

The Preschool Pathways to Science curriculum developed over a decade of training and mentoring the teaching the staff to include all aspects of an early childhood STEM curriculum. Some aspects of this expanded STEM curriculum include ramps and incline planes, explorations of water and air, building and construction, scale and structure, and growth and elements of change. The curriculum is further based on current work in the field by researchers and practitioners such as Karen Worth, Betty Zan, Douglas Clements, Osnat Zur, Lilian Katz, and Linda Clinard. This group of distinguished early childhood professionals from across the country has conducted training and workshops for the CCC teachers.

The Preschool Pathways to Science and STEM curricula serves a diverse population of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; birth to five. The Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers (PITC) approach will be used to help meet the specific needs of dual language speaking families with special attention to cultural continuity and linguistic diversity. The CCC teachers have been

trained and certified in PITC since 2006. This approach includes studies in Cultural Sensitivity which are practiced as part of the CCC responsiveness to the unique international backgrounds and cultures of the Caltech/ JPL community. This approach is well suited to meet the needs of the population of infant and toddler children served who are approximately 75% dual language learners.

## Curriculum Evaluation

On an annual basis, the CCC will look at any needed updates for the curricula based on the State of California Prekindergarten Learning Foundations and State of California Infant Toddler Foundations as well as any changes from the Common Core State Standards and expectations for Kindergarten. The evaluation of all curricula will be done systematically on a schedule of program monitoring and accreditation.

## Center Operating Policies

**Sign-in, sign-out:** Each day your child(ren) must be brought into the classroom by an adult. As mandated by State Law, the adult must sign his/her full name on the sign-in sheet. The same is also required at pick-up time. Only adults who are authorized on the emergency cards will be allowed to pick up any child. **Please make sure that a teacher knows when your child has arrived or is leaving.**

**Hours, late fees:** The Center hours are 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The doors remain locked during the day except for the hours of 8:30 – 10:00am, and 4:00 – 5:30pm, which is when most drop off and pick up's occur. The center uses a key card entry system for the hours when the door is locked. Families receive 2 cards upon enrollment, and can request an extra if needed free of charge. Lost cards can be replaced at a charge of \$25 each.

It is important to consistently pick-up your child(ren) before 5:30 pm as the staff need time to clean up and prepare for the next day. **If you have not entered the center by 5:30 p.m., you will be charged \$10 for any portion of the first five minutes, and \$2 per minute thereafter.** This **late fee** will be used for staff development. Families with two children will need to pay late fees for both children, if arriving at the Center after **5:30 p.m.**

If you will be late, the courtesy of a phone call is appreciated, both by your child and the staff; however, the late charge will still be assessed. Persistent and excessive tardiness will result in doubled late charges.

**Parking:** There is a one-hour parking zone in front of the Center. Please refrain from parking in these spaces for longer than 15 minutes during drop off and pick up times, as there are often many parents waiting to park as well. Parking is also available in the lot directly south from the CCC and in the underground parking structure; however, these spots require Caltech parking permits. Daily permits can be purchased at pay stations throughout the campus. Remember to **MOVE SLOWLY**, as children are always present!

**Gates:** It is **imperative** that all doors and gates be **closed and latched** behind you when you enter or leave the center. Children may not enter or exit the program without an adult in attendance.

**Annual Calendar:** The Center is open year round. The Center will be closed based on National Holidays that are scheduled in conjunction with the Caltech calendar. A typical Holiday calendar will be:

Martin Luther King Day  
President's Day  
Memorial Day  
Independence Day  
Labor Day  
Thanksgiving Day  
Day after Thanksgiving  
One week for Winter Holiday Break (between Christmas and New Year's)

Additionally, there will be two scheduled closures each year to facilitate staff development trainings. These closures will be announced on the Center website and on bulletin boards, well in advance.

**Communication:** There are many lines of communication available between staff and parents. All lead teachers and administrators have **email addresses** for direct communication; information is frequently posted and updated on the Center **website**; and each family has a **mailbox** in their child's classroom. Because each "child" is assigned a classroom mailbox you may have multiple mailboxes in more than one classroom attended by your children. (Therefore you may receive multiple copies of announcements.) Please check your classroom mailbox and your email daily for information from the Center. Classroom staff can be reached by calling the main office and requesting to transfer the call to the rooms directly.

The **bulletin boards** in each classroom have news and information regarding events at the Center. Please check them frequently. The following forms are also found on the bulletin boards:

- Medical Dosage Forms
- Sign-in/sign-out sheets. Parents are required by law to sign their child(ren) in and out each day. You must sign in with your full legal signature and the time.
- Snack menus
- Notice of any contagious illness within the Center
- Upcoming events
- Daily schedules
- Staffing schedules
- Curriculum plans

Another source of information regarding the Children's Center is the CCC **website**: [www.childrenscenteratcaltech.org](http://www.childrenscenteratcaltech.org). The website provides contact information, driving directions, a center-wide calendar, a copy of this parent handbook, the latest snack menu, the newsletter, as well as other pertinent information about the Center.

**Visiting:**

Parents are welcome to visit their children during the day. Lunch time is often the best time to do so, and we often hold family picnics at lunch for this purpose. If you have questions about visiting the classroom and your child during the day, please connect with your classroom teacher.

***Child Assessment Practices:*** At the CCC we meet with parents a minimum of 3 times per year. Our first meeting is referred to as an intake/orientation when we take in information about your family and your child. We also share information about our program and the specific classroom your child will be joining. This first initial meeting is conducted with the executive director and the classroom teacher. An intake will take place every time you transition to the next classroom, and is only conducted with the new lead teacher for each subsequent transition.

After your child has been in attendance for 3-6 months, the lead teacher or primary caregiver will conduct a mid-year progress review to share successes your child has made and goals moving forward. This is an opportunity to ask specific questions about your child's growth and development, and to learn more about the curriculum shared in the classroom.

As your child prepares to transition into the next classroom and age level, teachers prepare a digital Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and shares this with you in an exit meeting. The DRDP was developed by the California Department of Education and is a standard assessment tool for early childhood education programs. There are two versions, one for infant and toddler ages, and one for preschool ages. While the traditional format is completed as a form, the CCC has transformed this assessment tool into a PowerPoint presentation using images and video to highlight your child's development and learning experiences at school. Designed specifically to show where a child is at in their development and to follow progression over time, this tool is key in helping to set goals and not when they have been achieved. You can be provided a copy of the DRDP by request if you provide a flash drive to download the content. Copies of the DRDP are passed to the next classroom teaching team to allow them to learn more about their new friend and help to set new goals for the new school year.

Impromptu parent teacher conferences can be scheduled in between these meetings as needed or requested. Informal information about your child's daily experiences are shared via email, documentation in classrooms, and brief conversations at drop off and pick up. Please note that the teachers must tend to the children in the classroom and in depth conversations should be reserved for time away from the classroom or yard.

If our assessments lead us to believe your child's development is delayed or needs specific support beyond the center's capacity, we will communicate this information to you directly and confidentially. As we are constantly documenting children's progress, we will monitor individual growth and development and present our concerns and suggestions for next steps and resources that may prove helpful. As is always the case, should you have concerns about your child's development, please reach out to your teacher or the director at any time.

***Confidential Information:*** The CCC follows the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Code of Ethics which provides that: "We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life." This includes not mentioning a child by name away from the CCC, either to persons not on the CCC staff, or in public places.

Access to children's official files is limited to administrative staff and teaching staff in direct contact with the child, and is locked during off business hours. Classrooms keep informal files for art and anecdotal notes only. In the event that we need to share information about your child



to any outside resource, such as an occupational or physical therapist, or any other agency for any reason, we will obtain written consent from the parent or legal guardian first.

Family directories are provided in hard copy only, and email addresses are not shared electronically except for school purposes only (to send memo's and program information quickly). Children's files are kept for three years after they have left the program (per CA State licensing requirements) and are shredded thereafter. If you have any questions about how your family's information is kept confidential, please connect with the administrative staff directly.

## Admission and Waiting List

Parents who wish to apply for admission are encouraged to make an appointment to tour the Center. Applications for the wait list are available in the office or online at [www.childrenscenteratcaltech.org](http://www.childrenscenteratcaltech.org). Upon receipt of the application, the child's name is added to the wait list. Caltech, JPL and our own Center staff families are added to the Caltech affiliates wait list. Within the wait list, siblings of children already at the center receive priority. As openings occur, age-appropriate children are selected from the wait list based on application date to fill any vacancy in a class. Tenured and tenured track Caltech professorial faculty will ordinarily have priority over all other groups on the waiting list. Center staff and families with currently enrolled siblings may also be given priority. There is also a separate Community wait list for applicants who are not affiliated.

The Children's Center at Caltech supports the value of inclusion—the right of all children, regardless of their diverse abilities, to participate actively in natural settings with their peers. At the Children's Center, this means that we will, on a provisional basis, accept children with special needs who meet the waiting list criteria stated above. Depending on the nature and extent of the disability, continued enrollment will depend on frequent and on-going staff-parent communication, and on careful and continuous assessment of the viability of the arrangement for all concerned.

**Admission Procedure:** Parents will receive a notification of an opening available via email or phone call. You will have 48 hours to accept and secure the spot for your child. Once the spot is accepted, the admission packet may be picked up from our office or downloaded from our website at <http://childrenscenteratcaltech.org/admissions/enrollment-packet/>. Once the enrollment packet is complete, please call the office to schedule an intake orientation with the Executive Director and Lead Teacher.

## Tuition

**Deposit and Payment Contract:** The initial non-refundable deposit of \$500.00 is due upon enrollment. This deposit may be credited to the last month's tuition with 30 days-advanced written notice. Monthly tuition is paid in advance and is due on the **first** of each month. Please make a written request to the office to receive a monthly receipt. Thereafter you will receive the receipts in your family classroom mailbox. **There is no tuition credit for vacation or sick days.**

**Tuition Payment:** “Tuition is Due” reminders will be posted in the classrooms every month. To assure proper credit for payments, please submit your monthly payment to the Center’s office or in the office mailbox in your child’s classroom.

**Tuition Modification:** The center will provide at least 30 day advance notice of tuition rate changes to families.

**Tuition Late Fee:** If payment is received after the 10th of the month, a late fee of \$35 will be charged to your account. The Director has the authority to negotiate whatever payment plan is appropriate to bring the account up to date. Late payments received after the tenth will have an additional late fee of 5% of the outstanding balance assessed. The only exception will be if the 10th falls on a weekend; the condition will apply on the following Monday. If a child’s tuition is two months in arrears, his/her enrollment will be terminated. If a child’s account has been delinquent after the tenth four times during the school year (October to September), enrollment may be terminated.

**Attendance and Extra Days:** Children may attend only those days that are reserved for them at the time of enrollment. Re-scheduling and exceptions may be arranged with the Lead Teacher and/or the Assistant Director. Parents are requested to inform us in advance if a child will not attend regularly scheduled days. This way spaces are freed for other parents’ needs. As spaces become available, additional days may be used if a Lead Teacher or the Assistant Director gives permission. For these non-reserved **Extra Days**, the fees vary depending on the child’s age group. You will be required to pay the Teacher on that day at drop off time. For families attending the Center part-time, there are no “make-up days” for absences.

**Tuition Assistance:** Our overall goal is to offer tuition assistance to Caltech and JPL families in financial need. Tuition assistance is dependent on the basis of monies available and is designated for qualified Caltech and JPL families. Tuition assistance is reserved for the cost of childcare when custodial parent(s) are employed and/or enrolled in school. Contact the office for further information and an application for tuition assistance.

**Schedule Changes:** Schedule changes or reduction/increase of the number of days per week enrolled requires **30-day written notice** to the CCC office (just informing your child’s Lead Teacher is not sufficient). If requesting a change with less than 30 days notice, the \$500 deposit will be forfeited.

**Transitions and Matriculation Fee:** As your child makes transitions into different rooms or you request a schedule change, please complete a new tuition contract. Usually, as your child moves into an older classroom your tuition decreases.

**Termination:** Withdrawing your child from the Children’s Center at Caltech requires a 30-day termination notice to the CCC office. If the withdrawal notice is received less than 30 days, your initial deposit will be forfeited and put into our Student Family Tuition Assistance Fund. This fund is used to offset costs for young Caltech families.

## Nutrition

**Snacks:** The Center provides nutritious morning and afternoon snacks prepared by the cooks/housekeeper of the program. Milk is provided with snacks and lunch. Snack menus are posted on the website and in each classroom.

**Lunches:** You must provide lunch for your child daily. If your child's lunch contains perishable items, please place the **labeled container** in the refrigerator. Remember to **label lunch boxes, bags, containers and lids**. Uneaten lunch foods will be left in the child's lunch box unless the food is very messy. This allows you to determine the amount/types of food that fit your child's appetite. Only microwave safe containers will be warmed up; lunches in containers that are not microwave safe will not be warmed. Please remember to use a small, compact lunch box to ensure all lunch boxes can fit into the refrigerators.

Healthy eating habits are part of the Center's policy. Please **do not send** items such as chips, fast food, candy, gum, chocolate, soda pop, high sugared fruit punch or drinks, high sugar cupcakes and other pastries, or marshmallows to the Children's Center. As a guideline, if the first ingredient listed on the container is a form of sugar, please leave it for home snacking. Experience tells us that if a child's lunch contains these items, s/he tends not to eat much of the other foods you send.

The CCC follows NAEYC criteria (5.B.14) and Title XX11 Licensing requirements (101227) which states that the following items are not served to children **under 4 years old**: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hard pretzels; spoonfuls of peanut butter; raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. We recommend that foods be cut into pieces no larger than 1/4-inch square for infants and 1/2-inch square for toddlers/twos, according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability. No food should be served which is a size and/or consistency that could cause choking. If there is a concern about the appropriateness of an item, the Lead Teacher will communicate her/his concern directly to the parents. This is applicable to both food provided by the program, as well as food brought from home. We recommend that foods from home (such as chicken tenders, fish sticks, and other food) be cut to the age group requirements.

For parents of infants and toddlers according to state licensing requirements, (101427.j) all food items brought from home such as (bottles, food containers, Ziploc bags, pre-packaged foods) must have your child's name and the current date on it. The easiest way to do this is with masking tape (or with individual labels that you may already have for your child's belongings). The classrooms have masking tape and a marker. This is to ensure that the proper food gets served to your child and that it is always fresh.

**Allergies:** As standard practice, we inquire with all families and staff about allergies when they begin in our program. Staff are notified and notices are posted in the classrooms and kitchen to inform anyone in the center of the allergy in the room. If necessary and physically possible, the allergen is removed from the center or the area in which the child or staff member frequent. Alternate snacks can be provided in the event of food allergies.

The Center has a "no nuts" policy. This policy will include but is not limited to peanuts and peanut butter. For example, it includes walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, macadamias, pistachios, and any kind of food that may include any type of nut. While we know the policy may come as a surprise, let us assure you the decision was not arbitrary. The reason behind the

decision is literally a matter of life and death. A few children in the Center have a life-threatening allergy to nuts.

**Birthdays:** You are welcome to come celebrate your child's birthday with the group. We want children to connect feeling special with healthy foods, and the Center will provide your child's favorite snack on their birthday. We will put candles in their snack, sing Happy Birthday, read stories, and, in general, make your child feel special.

**Holidays:**

The CCC does not celebrate holidays and yet we do not ignore them either. We acknowledge and address whatever comments and interest children may have regarding special holidays celebrated by the family but we do not have a holiday dictated approach. Instead you will see natural materials such as pumpkins (Halloween) gourds (Thanksgiving) fruit (Sukkot) pinecones, leaves, and flowers as ways to learn about change and growth over time. You may also see children make handwritten notes (Valentine's Day) or journal about their experiences. Through our STEM based curriculum and activities, we find that children learn, discover and play rather than focus on themed gifts, cards or games.

## Personal Possessions

All items, clothing and other belongings, **MUST BE LABELED** with your child's name. Your child should have a complete change of clothing in his/her cubby at all times, including a water-proof bag for wet or soiled clothing. The Center has a limited amount of clothing to be **loaned** for emergencies (for example, to clean up after clothes are soiled by sudden illness or a toileting accident). Center clothes that are **loaned** to your child must be washed and returned to the Center by the following week. When the weather is warm, you may send a bathing suit and towel for water play.

For naptime, your child will need a crib-size blanket. In the preschool classrooms, your child will also need a crib-size sheet for their mat (sheets are provided in the Bunny and Dolphin rooms). The sheet and blanket **MUST BE LABELED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME** and taken home each Friday for laundering. (Crib/mat sheets are laundered daily in the Bunny class by housekeeping staff.) If you wish, a comforting stuffed animal or doll may be brought to the Center for naptime.

Children are often eager to bring toys from home to the Center; however, the risk of damage, lost parts or misplacing the toy is great. The Center strongly discourages bringing toys from home, and staff cannot be responsible for these items. For "sharing", we encourage bringing age-appropriate books, tapes and "discoveries" such as corncobs, seedpods, feathers, interesting leaves, sprouting onions, shells, pebbles, etc. These treasures are often displayed in the science area where they stimulate discussion and exploration. Be sure to label any of these types of items your child wants back; otherwise the Center and its staff cannot be responsible for them.

## Clothing

Children should be dressed comfortably for the day's probable weather and temperature. Layers are best! As much as possible, children should wear clothes that can be soiled without it being a

source of anxiety for them or frustration for you. Our paints are supposed to be washable, but occasionally they don't completely wash out.

**Shoes:** Sneakers are best! In hot summer weather, sturdy sandals are acceptable. Active children need to wear supportive, soft-soled, flexible non-skid shoes. No flip-flops please, and no boots or shiny-soled "party" shoes.

## Health and Safety

We will inform you of any contagious disease or condition occurring in your child's group, with a printed notice next to the sign-in sheet. As part of the enrollment process, parents are required to sign a **Medical Emergencies Consent Slip**, which provides the Center with information concerning the child's physician, drug and medication allergies as well as a medical release. Parents must notify the Center **immediately** of changes in emergency and identification information, including a change of physician.

**Sick Child Policy: When in doubt about your child's health, keep him/her home.** Please remember that the teachers and other children may catch the illness that an ill child may bring to school. Keep your child home if s/he:

- is in the first three days of a cold
- has a sore throat
- has had a temperature greater than 100°, with or without other symptoms, in the past 24 hours
- has lice
- has been vomiting in the past 24 hours
- has had diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- has impetigo (strep or staph infection on the skin)
- has an untreated conjunctivitis ("pink eye")
- has any unidentified rash
- or any other contagious disease or condition

Please notify your child's teacher if your child has not been feeling well, or is acting "out of sorts." Additionally, a green nasal discharge may indicate an infection requiring treatment by a physician. Please notify your child's teacher or the office if your child has contracted any of the above-mentioned conditions.

If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be contacted to discuss the symptoms and you may be asked to take the child home within one hour. Your child may return to class after s/he is free of the above symptoms for 24 hours and can fully participate in the classroom's daily activities. If your child has a fever, s/he may not return to the Center until s/he has been fever-free without the aid of fever reducing medicine for 24 hours.

**Medication:** We understand that children will occasionally need to take medicine at school. Your child's Teacher will administer the medicine; however, you are required to complete a Parent Consent for Administration of Medications and Medication Chart, and only medication in its original bottle will be dispensed. Blank forms can be found on the website as well as in each classroom. Center staff will administer medication only once per day. If a child needs to receive medication more than once in 6-8 hours, the child must be kept home.

No over the counter medication will be given to any child unless directed and approved by the physician. The physician should prescribe specific amounts and intervals for a specific condition before any medication is administered. If your child has a chronic medical condition, you will need to have a Parent Consent for Administration of Medications and Medication Chart on file. Please do not send medication of any kind in your child's lunch. Medication in its original bottle, labeled with your child's name and dosage, should be given to your child's Teacher, who will place it in a locked box, either on or inside the refrigerator.

**Sunscreen Policy:** Many families are concerned about the level of sun exposure their children have during the day. The CCC strives to create areas of shade for children to play and to monitor levels of sun and heat, especially during the summer months. We take care to avoid going outside during the hottest times of the day when the UVB/UVA rays are the strongest, and observe children carefully to prevent overheating, burning, and prolonged exposure to the sun. The CCC encourages families to bring hats, sunglasses, and consider protective clothing (long sleeves/pants) as an alternative or in addition to sunscreen application. We suggest that parents consider the benefits and risks for their individual child's needs when choosing protection from the sun.

If families wish for their children to wear sunscreen as an additional preventive measure, it must be applied by the parent before school. Sunscreen will only be applied to children by the CCC staff after water play, with signed consent from the parent/guardian, and using a sunscreen brought from home.

Parents requesting regular re-application of sunscreen in the afternoons will need to provide a signed note from their pediatrician with specific instructions for application.

## **IMS Plan (Incidental Medical Services)**

The Children's Center at Caltech (CCC) will be as inclusive as possible, including integrating children with various on-going medical conditions into our daily routine. The following plan outlines what our procedures are for the four conditions we currently accommodate.

1. We can accommodate children with anaphylaxis (severe, potentially life threatening allergies), asthma (chronic lung disease that impairs breathing), febrile seizures (seizure associated with a high body temperature) and eczema (inflammation of the skin).
2. Personal plan of care procedures will be kept for each child with one of the above conditions provided by doctor or parent using the LIC 9221 form and instructions for when and how to administer medication (simple forms to provide instructions for asthma and food allergies can be found on our website).
3. Epi-pens, inhalers, nebulizers, and doctor prescribed medications are kept in the emergency lock box on top of the refrigerator in each classroom with a copy of instructions for administration. **Expired medications will not be stored.**
4. All of our staff is certified in pediatric first aid and CPR. This training includes use of the Epi-pen and the nebulizer. A CPR/First Health Advocate Training Instructor trains all staff.
5. The low ratios as well as high rate of training ensure that adequate trained staff are available in the event that IMS care is needed.

6. We ensure that proper safety precautions are met including the wearing of gloves in the event of exposure to bodily fluids, proper hand cleaning following glove removal, safe disposal of all relevant materials.
7. In case of a disaster that requires us to vacate the facility, we bring the emergency back pack with us. For class trips, the teachers carry the backpack with any needed medical supplies.
8. Following an IMS occurrence, treatment is logged in the medical record book (LIC9221) and parents are notified by phone.
9. Serious incidents will warrant a call to 911, and any change in this plan will be reported to our licensing office and an Unusual Incident Report (LIC624B) will be filed.

**Immunizations:** The State of California has enacted a new law regarding immunizations, Senate Bill 277, requiring all children enrolled in California schools, public or private, to be immunized according to the California Department of Public Health.

Starting January 1st, 2016, all children attending the CCC must be vaccinated according to the schedule put forth by the California Department of Public Health, or on track to completing this schedule per their most recent immunizations. Personal Belief Exemptions previously received will no longer be valid moving forward from this date. If we do not have a current vaccination record for your child demonstrating the most current immunizations received, it will affect your enrollment at the CCC.

Medical exemptions will be accepted if they meet the following guidelines: a parent or guardian must submit a written statement from a licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.) which states that the physical condition or medical circumstances of the child are such that the required immunization(s) is not indicated, include which vaccines are being exempted, whether the medical exemption is permanent or temporary and the expiration date, if the exemption is temporary. Children with a medical exemption from the recommended immunization schedule may be excluded from care if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs to which children are susceptible.

CCC immunization records must to be kept up to date in each child's file every quarter. It is the parent's responsibility to provide CCC with a current record of their child's immunization. Updates should be provided to the office directly.

**Car Seat Law:** We also remind you to use child safety seats (car safety seats or booster seats) for all children up to 8 years of age or under 4' 10", and to use safety belts at all times. Children under two must be in a rear facing car seat.

## **Infant Toddler Program**

The following section of our handbook is specifically designated for our infant program. The center supports families in caring for their infants and toddlers by connecting home to school. An intake is conducted upon enrollment into the program to collect information specific to each family's preferences for feeding, sleeping, and diapering. Each classroom maintains a daily chart detailing information with regard to these specific aspects of the children's day to maintain open communication with families and continuity of care throughout the day, and from school to home.

### **Meals:**

**For children under 12 months of age:** The CCC supports families in making choices regarding their child's nutritional needs and collaborating together as their children develop and their needs change. Breastfeeding is highly supported and parents are welcome to visit during the day to feed their children. Breast milk and formula are both easily stored in the refrigerator, and should be labeled with your child's full name and date provided. Breast milk and formula are warmed with standard bottle warmers in water no warmer than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no more than 5 minutes. Breast milk or formula not consumed within one hour is discarded. The center does not serve bottles that contain solid foods to avoid choking hazards. The center will also not serve cow's milk or juice to children under 12 months. Infants are held to be fed by bottle. The CCC does not use walkers, jumpers, or any child restraining devices such as high chairs or "Bumbo's".

The center will only provide meals and snacks as requested and provided by parents through the infant needs and services plan. Staff will work in close collaboration with families to update this information as their child's needs change. Children under 12 months will not be served snack from the CCC unless specified by the parent in the infant needs and services plan.

**For children 12- 24 months:** the center will provide whole milk, water, or 100% juice to children during snack and lunch times. Meals and snacks are served according to children's developmental needs and family preferences. The CCC serves snack and lunch in a family style setting. Children are invited to sit at the table when they are physically able and are provided utensils and cups to feed themselves independently while teachers support them in learning the skills necessary to do so.

### **Sleeping**

An adult is always physically present in the napping area when children are sleeping. The CCC provides small cots low to the ground for all children in our infant and toddler programs: cots are designed specifically for infant sleeping purposes and meet the standards of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. The CCC provides fitted cot sheets for each child, and they are washed weekly or as needed.

**For children under 12 months:** Infants are always placed on their backs to sleep without the aid of sleep positioners unless ordered by a physician. Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed for use while sleeping. Blankets are not used to cover children during sleep. Clothing sacks or other clothing designed for sleep may be used as an alternative. Lightweight swaddling material may be used when wrapped securely and is placed no higher than the child's shoulders. If an infant arrives to the program asleep, or falls asleep at the program, in equipment not specifically designed for infant sleep (such as a car seat, stroller, or chair) the infant is removed and placed on their back on a cot to continue resting.

**For children 12-24 months:** Lightweight, small blankets may be used and a small comfort item is acceptable if needed.

### **Diapering**

The CCC follows RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) and PITC (Program for Infant Toddler Care) practices and continually communicates and involve children during the diaper changing process. When able, children are invited to climb the small staircase to the changing table and to assist in the changing process to provide a sense of independence and collaborative effort in



self-care activities. Diapers and wipes are provided by the CCC. Diaper cream should be provided from home and is only applied as needed.

## Discipline

The goal of positive guidance or discipline is to help children learn to consider and respect themselves, others and the environment around them, as well as to feel secure and in control of himself or herself. Young children need to learn what is acceptable and how to live cooperatively with others. Self-discipline is the ultimate goal we set for the children. We strive to make each child intrinsically motivated to value accepted behaviors.

At the Center, clear and consistent age appropriate limits on behavior are set. The environment is arranged in such a manner as to minimize the necessity of limits, and children are allowed to participate in the decision making process. As the Children's Center at Caltech has a strong commitment to developing a positive sense of self-esteem and independent, responsible and caring behavior on the part of the children, we approach discipline in a positive rather than punitive manner. Teachers model appropriate behavior and provide positive reinforcement, praising children for exhibiting those behaviors. Additionally, the teachers provide reminders and cues as to acceptable behavior, as well as facilitate problem solving amongst the children.

When unacceptable behavior occurs, the first course of action is positive redirection, with the understanding that the child may return to an area or activity when they are able to use proper behavior. **At no time will a child be struck, roughly handled, verbally abused, or demeaned. Bullying will not be tolerated. This behavior is categorically prohibited. This rule applies to all adults and children on the CCC premises.**

## Dismissal Policy

We want to partner with parents to solve any discipline problem. However, physical or emotional abuse of another child or teacher, which is determined to be excessive or repetitious by the Staff and Director, will be grounds for dismissal.

Following is an outline of steps that will be taken before dismissal will be considered:

- Initially, a parent conference will be scheduled to discuss the behavior(s) needing to be addressed, and to develop a plan to correct them.
- An outside assessment may be appropriate to help evaluate the problem and assist in developing a plan to correct it. This may result in additional cost to the parent.
- Next, a reasonable amount of time will be given for improvement in the child's behavior. Another parent conference will be scheduled to evaluate the child's progress.
- Finally, if the behavior persists, and cannot be resolved to the Center's and the parents' satisfaction, it may be determined by the Director and Staff that the program does not meet the child's needs. At that time it may be necessary to withdraw the child from the program.

Parents' non-support of or non-adherence to Children's Center policies will be cause for dismissal.

## Grievances

It is the Children's Center policy to establish and maintain the necessary atmosphere for healthy Staff and Parent relationships. As a vital part of this process, participants in the program must have the opportunity to submit complaints or grievances arising from work situations. The Center has provided a grievance procedure designed to give such matters careful consideration and bring them to a fair and speedy resolution. All grievance issues will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. **In addition, staff and parents have the right to contact California Department of Social Services, Licensing, with any grievances.**

Traditionally most adults contribute to the CCC environment in a happy, healthy and harmonious manner. However, we understand that from time to time situations may arise that need to be addressed. We believe that grievances and personal complaints are best handled informally and expeditiously. Parents are encouraged to speak to their Lead Teacher or to the Director with concerns, questions and suggestions. In the event that further steps need to be taken for resolution of the parents' concern, following are the steps for filing and resolution of grievances is in place:

**Step I** - A written notice should be submitted to the Center Director clearly outlining the issues to be addressed. The Director will make a reasonable effort to obtain the necessary facts and to resolve the issue immediately. When appropriate, parents may request that the Director set up a special meeting with one or more affected staff in order to provide a forum in which to discuss the grievance issues. The Center Director will do fact gathering and respond to the parent no later than 10 working days from the date the grievance was first received.

**Step II** - In the event a mutually satisfactory solution has not been reached as a result of having explored avenues available within the Center administration, the parent may proceed in the following manner: A) the parent should write a clear, concise statement of the grievance, B) outline his or her understanding of the decision given by the Center Director and C) include his or her desired remedy or correction. This information must be completed and provided to the Chairperson of the Personnel Committee of the Board of Trustees within 10 working days from the Center Director's final decision, or from the date it was due under Step I above. The Personnel Committee will then obtain a written statement from the Center Director outlining her/his views on the matter, the basis for the decision rendered, and all actions taken to resolve the matter within the Center. The Personnel Committee will take all the above information under advisement.

**Step III** - The Personnel Committee will review and discuss the parent's appeal and will provide a response within ten (10) working days. A meeting to discuss the response may be requested.

## Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All staff working with children are mandated by the State of California to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. Reports, by law, are made without prior notification to parents, to the Protective Services Division of the local Department of Social Services. Signs of abuse and neglect include, but are not limited to: bruises, burns, prolonged inability of the child to interact with or relate to staff and/or children, or inflammation or other abnormal appearance of genitals.

We ask that you tell us the cause of visible bruises, etc. that have been incurred at home, and we in turn will notify you of the circumstances surrounding any injuries sustained at school.

One other item considered to be child neglect is leaving an unattended child in a car. If a staff member observes an unattended child in a car, she or he will mention it to the child's parent.

We earnestly wish to work in partnership with parents. For further information regarding the Child Abuse Reporting law, you may consult the Attorney General's *Child Abuse Prevention Handbook* in the Children's Center Office.

## **Inspection Authority**

The Department of Social Services has inspection authority to enter and inspect a facility without advance notice. In addition, the department also has the authority to interview children or staff and to inspect and audit child or Child Care Center records without prior consent.

## **Disaster Preparedness**

***Fire, Earthquake, and Shelter in Place Drills:*** Fire and Earthquake drills are conducted monthly to familiarize staff and children with disaster procedures. Shelter-in-Place drills are conducted quarterly. The usual evacuation destinations for each group are posted in each classroom.

***Emergency Supplies:*** The Children's Center keeps emergency supplies on hand in the event of a major disaster when children might need to remain at the Center.

***Emergency Evacuations:*** After a major disaster, if the Center facilities are considered safe by the staff of the Caltech Housing Department and Physical Plant, the children will be kept at the Center. If necessary, an alternate facility will be determined by the Institute. If the children have been moved elsewhere, information will be posted at all the regular entrances to the Center.

The Children's Center is included in Caltech's Disaster Preparedness plan, which provides shelter, food, water and basic medical attention for a 72-hour period. Children will be released only to a parent or designate listed on your Emergency Information Form kept on file at the Center.

## **Air Quality**

The Children's Center is aware of and concerned about air quality. We consult with the AQMD and refer to the Lead Teacher's discretion to ensure the air quality is within a healthy range before going outside to play. The AQMD phone number, for your reference, is 1-800-242-4022. When outdoor play is not recommended, similar gross motor activities will be provided indoors (such as dancing, yoga, or other indoor movement activities).

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

Extra-curricular activities are for the purpose of providing fresh experiences and learning opportunities for the children. Center teacher's present related curriculum both before and following onsite presentations or field trips.

All children take walking trips on Campus, a nearby park, the fire station, the library and the surrounding neighborhood. We feel this gives the children a sense of belonging in the

community. Whenever possible, the center hires guest performers such as artists, musicians, and puppeteers. Additionally, various hands-on experiences are made available to the children through visitors to the CCC.

Children not regularly attending the Center on the day of a field trip are invited on these trips for the duration of the trip only. For instance, a Tuesday/Thursday child is welcomed on a Friday trip. If your child is in this category, be sure to sign up on the field trip sheet, and be sure to pick up your child at the end of the announced time of the trip. The cost of any extracurricular activity is included in the tuition for enrolled children. Parents may be asked to pay actual costs incurred for themselves and/or siblings.

**We encourage parents to accompany us on field trips.** The children benefit greatly from having an adult accessible to chat with, who can expand the experiences and sights of the trip. To receive work hour credit for attending a field trip, a parent must take the responsibility to be a “walking partner” for one or more children throughout the entire trip. If two parents come, work hour credit will be given to each parent if they each take the responsibility to be a “walking partner” for one or more child(ren) throughout the entire field trip.

## Transition to a New Classroom

***Our philosophy:*** We wish to offer the best possible experience for your family. The philosophy of the Children's Center at Caltech has its basis in a humanistic view of the child as an **independent and individual learner**. The aim of the program is to respond to the needs of each child as s/he develops awareness of the world and readiness for learning.

Each group provides developmentally appropriate materials and activities for children in the areas of social/emotional, intellectual and aesthetic growth and psychomotor development, while fostering a positive self-concept. Decisions on when and how to transition a child from one classroom to another are made in alignment with this philosophy.

***How decisions are made:*** There are many factors that we take into consideration when transitioning children. The list below represents just some of the factors we consider:

- Parent feedback
- Space availability in the next classroom
- Your child's physical and emotional readiness
- Developmental milestones
- Your child's social relationships in the classroom
- Travel schedules (family, teacher)
- Significant changes in your child's life (e.g. new sibling, new home, visiting relatives)
- Your child's individual temperament
- Transitioning a cohort together versus an individual child
- Group dynamics

***The transition process:*** We understand that transitioning your child from one classroom to another can be a challenge as well as an opportunity. As a Center, we work with you, the parent, to make the smoothest possible transition for your child. Once the lead teacher in the classroom has identified that your child is ready to transition, the teacher will work with the administrative office to coordinate a transition plan with you.

**Hop-Skip:** Sometimes, your child might be ready to move but there is simply no spot available. The waiting period is generally a short one so please be patient. Because we have six classrooms and we only serve children ranging from 6 months to 6 years old, it is impossible for each child to spend a year in every room. Some children do what we refer to as a “hop skip,” spending only the summer months in the room before moving to the next classroom.

## **Parent Work Hours**

We believe it is developmentally beneficial for children to know and feel the importance of their own daily care and education. We believe children are most influenced by their own parents and more readily adopt for themselves the values they observe in their parent(s). Modeling esteem for your child’s school and respect for teachers can make our job easier, too!

Two-parent families agree to contribute twenty (20) hours per year, and Single-parent families agree to contribute ten (10) hours per year. Work hours may be waived by paying \$25.00 per hour (\$500 per year for two-parent families, \$250 per year for single-parent families).

The work hours obligation must be fulfilled during the period from October 1 through September 30 of any school year. Unless other arrangements have been made, a minimum of ten (10) hours, or five (5) hours for single parents, should be completed by March 31. Remaining work hours must be completed by September 30. Families will be billed for hours not completed and the charge will be reflected on their October statement, or the remaining amount will be deducted from their deposit. Families enrolling after October 1 will have their work obligation prorated at the rate of ninety (90) minutes per full month for two parent families.

Parents may earn work hours in a variety of ways. Some examples are: preparing teaching materials, serving as a committee member for a fundraising event, participation in classroom activities (i.e., assisting a teacher with a special project), sewing, membership on the Board of Directors (a one year commitment fulfills obligation), Room Parent, classroom webmaster, classroom librarian, participation on a field trip as a “walking partner” for at least one child, attendance at a parent function such as Parent Teacher Partnership Workshops, or attending Board meetings.

Each family is required to fulfill no less than 4 hours (2 hours for a single parent) by participating in a Saturday work morning. Families are exempt from this requirement if their work job already fulfills their annual commitment, or if families choose the payment option. A detailed Job Listing is distributed each fall.

Parents will be responsible for reporting any work hours completed by indicating the time and dates worked in the Parent Hours notebook in your child’s classroom.

## **Parent Teacher Partnership**

The Parent Teacher Partnership (PTP) meets six times a year, typically at noon at the Center. Parents in attendance receive one-hour credit toward their parent participation hours. Topics of general interest are planned by the teaching staff and often include community experts and cover issues such as best practices. When parents and teachers work together, it maximizes the children’s experience at the Center.

## **Fundraising**

The Children's Center Board sponsors two fundraising events each year: the annual Pancake Breakfast in the fall, which is the kick-off to the Center's annual Giving Campaign, and the annual Evening Under the Stars silent and live auction held in May.

There are two easy and steady fundraising projects that are almost effortless! Our group earns cash rewards when you do what you do anyway – shop! It's free, it's easy, and it's rewarding! One way to do this is by shopping at Amazon.com through the Center's unique link, [www.supportccc.org](http://www.supportccc.org). By shopping through this link, approximately 6% of your purchase total can return to the Center. Similarly, families can contribute easily to Center fundraising by participating in the grocery E-SCRIP program, another way for a percentage of your purchase to benefit the Center. We encourage every family to sign-up for grocery e-scrip designating the Center as beneficiary: CCC Group ID #140972586.

As a member of our community, we hope you will be an active supporter of all our fundraising efforts and events. We hope to achieve 100 percent participation from the CCC community.

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