

St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center The Learning Garden



FAMILY HANDBOOK Policies, Procedures & Parent Information

2026-2027 School Year

Administrative Team:

Director
Tracie Fielding

Assistant Director
Shawn Williams

School Contact Information:

(Minimum Standards 746.501(1))

St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center
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Website: www.learninggardenykt.com

Hours: 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday – Friday

Texas Rising Star Certified Program
Texas School Ready Participant
Frog Street Curriculum
CACFP Food Program Participant

*Updated and revised September 2026
(Policies are reviewed annually and updated if necessary.)*

St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden reserves the right to change, revise, suspend, or discontinue any portion of this handbook at any time.

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“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” *Proverbs 22.6*

Mission Statement

At St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden, our experienced staff and safe facility ensure quality care for children. We focus on nurturing children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual development. Families are encouraged to participate in both their children's and church activities. Inspired by Proverbs, our philosophy is to help children grow and learn about Jesus Christ.

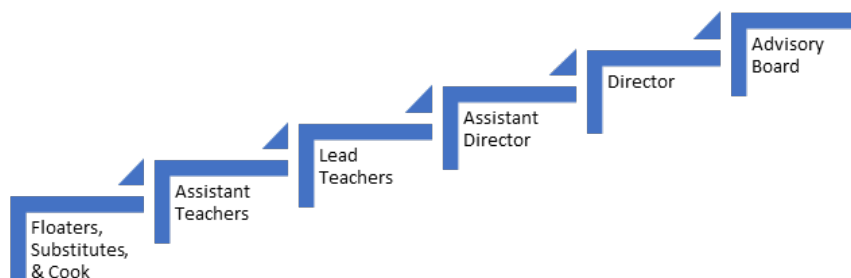
Philosophy

At The Learning Garden, we believe the early years are a special time that helps shape a child's future. We are committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and engaging environment where children can learn, grow, and feel loved. We value the important connection between home and school and believe children thrive when families and caregivers work together. We also recognize that each child's language, culture, and family experiences play an important role in development. Children learn best through hands-on experiences, meaningful relationships with caregivers and peers, and opportunities to explore the world around them. Through outdoor play, music, movement, clear boundaries, and thoughtful choices, we help children build confidence, develop social skills, and grow in a joyful and nurturing setting.

Welcome

Since October 2013, The Learning Garden has aimed to provide child care that exceeds standards and offers innovative, high-quality early childhood education. Our philosophy is to offer developmentally appropriate activities, prepare children for public school, and build social-emotional skills, all through learning and playing. The School Director manages daily operations. If the School Director is absent, the Assistant Director or another designated individual will be in charge. In this Family Handbook, the Assistant Director acts as School Director when needed.

Policy 1 Organizational Structure & Chain of Command



The term "Director" in this Policy Manual will refer to the Director on duty.

The Assistant Director will fill the role of School Director in the School Director's absence. The Assistant Director serves on the leadership team at St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden. She is authorized to assist families, answer questions, support staff, address concerns, and help ensure the center's daily operations run smoothly. Families are expected to communicate respectfully with all members of the administration and recognize that the Director and Assistant Director work collaboratively to support children, families, staff, and the overall success of the program. St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden fully supports the decisions and guidance provided by the Assistant Director in carrying out her administrative responsibilities.

The term "Advisory Board" in this Policy Manual refers to the members of St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden Board. It is a non-profit organization formed in 2013, and, along with the Pastor, the Christian Education Director, the Center Director, and the Center Assistant Director, establishes policies for our program. The current list of Advisory Board members is available to view on the bulletin board near the main office.

Policy 2 Licensing, Accreditation & Program Affiliations

State Licensing Authority

Minimum Standards 746.501(21)

Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing.

A full printed copy of the licensing regulations/standards is available at the front desk. Parents or guardians may also access the licensing regulations online at the following link:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/default.asp

Parents or guardians may also review a copy of the child-care center's most recent licensing inspection report, posted in the Binder located at the front entry of our center or on the licensing website listed above. Parents or guardians may contact child care licensing through the website above or by calling the local office at 361-574-7416.

These regulations/standards are included in this Family Handbook as if they were written herein, and it is the responsibility of every parent or guardian to read, understand, and follow them.

Employees are required to uphold the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Minimum Standards at all times and are required to immediately notify the School Director of any violations of licensing regulations by any person in the organization.

Frog Street

Frog Street is an early childhood education company that helps guide the next generation of children to success through research-based curriculum, digital resources, and professional development for public & private schools, Head Start programs, and childcare centers alike. They provide teachers with intentional, age-appropriate curriculum aligned with both federal and state standards. Our comprehensive, research-based programs integrate instruction across all key developmental domains.

Frog Street's continuum of curriculum includes all of the components teachers need to prepare students for kindergarten, such as:

- Social-emotional learning using Conscious Discipline
- Easy-to-use weekly teachers' guides
- Integrated STEAM projects
- Suite of Digital Products
- And so much more!

O Come Let Us Worship Him

Religious education for children is essential and very rewarding. O Let Us Worship Him is designed to help reveal God's love to the children we teach and care for at our center. Children think in concrete terms; as teachers, we help show them what love is and how it feels. Our goal for the children who attend our center is that they understand that God loves them. Each classroom incorporates the Bible Story of the week into its daily lessons. Please refer to your child's classroom's lesson plan for more details.

CIRCLE Infant and Toddler Curriculum

The CIRCLE Infant and Toddler Curriculum provide everything our program needs to create and implement weekly lesson plans that support meaningful interactions and playful learning experiences for our infants and toddlers. The components of the curriculum have been thoughtfully designed to serve as comprehensive, user-friendly resources. They offer various supports to help your child learn and give our teachers the support they need to plan and implement developmentally appropriate practices, regardless of their level of expertise, and gradually guide the child from foundational to advanced implementation. Curriculum components include a teacher's guide, weekly plans, activities A through Z, and family engagement activities.

CLI Engage

CLI Engage provides a comprehensive, integrated resource suite that connects professional development (online courses) to classroom implementation (activity collections) and to highly targeted data collection and planning (child progress monitoring, teacher observation, and goal setting). Through CLlengage, our teachers use practical tools for early learning, including screening, progress-monitoring, and observation tools; online learning and professional development tools; activities and materials; quality improvement and innovation tools; and family engagement tools. This platform houses free resources for educators and families of children from birth through Pre-K and elementary.

Texas Rising Star (TRS) (Currently a Three-Star Center)

The Texas Rising Star program is "a voluntary, quality-based child care rating system of child care providers participating in the Texas Workforce Commission's subsidized child care program." TRS Certification is available to Licensed Centers and Licensed and Registered Child Care Home providers who meet the certification criteria. The TRS Provider certification system offers three levels of certification (Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star) to encourage providers to meet progressively higher certification requirements, culminating in Four-Star.

A Texas Rising Star (TRS) provider is a child care provider that has an agreement to serve Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)-subsidized children and that voluntarily meets requirements that exceed the State's Minimum Child Care Licensing (CCL) Standards.

Across Texas, parents, guardians, and families enroll their children in child care programs, including center- and home-based programs. Numerous studies have shown that at-risk children who attend higher-quality child care programs are better prepared for school entry than those who do not.

Those providers that voluntarily achieve TRS provider certification offer quality care that exceeds the State's Minimum Child Care Licensing Standards for director and staff qualifications, caregiver-child interactions, age-appropriate curricula and activities, nutrition and indoor/outdoor activities, and family involvement and education, are in a better position to contribute to the early development of children. As providers progress through the levels of TRS provider certification, they contribute increasingly to the development of the children they serve daily.

A full printed copy of the Texas Rising Star standards is available at the information station. These standards are included as part of this Family Handbook as if they were written herein.

Employees are required to uphold the standards and guidelines published by Texas Rising Star at all times. Employees are also required to immediately notify the School Director of any violations of the Texas Rising Star standards by any person in the organization.

Texas School Ready (TSR)

Preschool teachers enrolled in TSR participate in a comprehensive teacher-training program designed to better prepare children for kindergarten and beyond.

The four main components of TSR are:

- Curriculum
- Professional Development
- Coaching
- Child Progress Monitoring

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Texas School Ready is a comprehensive preschool teacher training program that combines high-quality classroom materials and curricula with ongoing professional development and progress-monitoring tools. Teachers from child care centers, Head Start programs, and public-school pre-kindergarten programs participate in TSR. Throughout the school year, teachers enrolled in TSR are provided with tools to help them learn more about the specific instructional needs of the children in their classrooms and how to support children using engaging lessons and activities. The new skills and techniques that teachers learn through TSR positively affect children's classroom experience.

Employees are always required to uphold the standards and guidelines set by Texas School Ready coaches. Employees are also required to immediately notify the School Director of any violations of the Texas School Ready standards by any person in the organization.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The Learning Garden is committed to continuous quality improvement and maintaining high standards of early childhood education. The center regularly reviews program practices, classroom environments, child progress monitoring data, and family feedback, staff evaluations, training records, licensing requirements, and Texas Rising Star standards to identify opportunities for growth and improvement. Information gathered through these processes is used to develop goals, strengthen teaching practices, improve family engagement, and enhance outcomes for children.

Family surveys are conducted at least annually, and feedback is reviewed by the administration to identify program strengths, areas for improvement, and goals for continuous quality improvement.

St. Paul Lutheran Church

<https://www.stpaulykt.org/>

The center follows the policies of St. Paul Lutheran Church. For more information or membership inquiries, don't hesitate to contact the Church Office- 361-564-2135.

Policy 3 Enrollment & Admission Requirements

Enrollment at the center is open to children from six weeks to nine years old. 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. Our center is not a licensed special needs center.

Enrollment Fee

Parents or guardians can apply for enrollment of their child at the center by completing the Enrollment Form and paying the \$125.00 Enrollment Fee. The Enrollment Fee is non-refundable and recurs yearly.

Enrollment Forms

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the completed Enrollment Form, Physician's Statement, Tuition Express Application, Income Eligibility Form, Emergency Release Form, Food Program Enrollment Form, signed Tuition Agreement, registration fee, immunization records, and signed Family Handbook receipt.

Children are not allowed to attend the center until all required forms are completed and submitted. The Enrollment Form and Tuition Agreements are not meant to serve as contracts guaranteeing service for any duration.

Pre-Enrollment Requirements

Minimum Standards 746.501(11,13)

Each child is required to have a complete pre-enrollment packet. The packet is to be returned to the center's office 3 business days before the child's first day of attendance. All children are required to have a complete, up-to-date immunization record on file at the center per our licensing regulations. If you have chosen not to have your child immunized, please ask the school director for an immunization waiver form. Immunizations may be waived for certain reasons. Please discuss this with the school director to determine whether you have the right to enroll your child and not have them immunized. Parents/guardians are required to have a waiver on file in place of an immunization record to ensure the center remains in compliance with licensing regulations.

The center evaluates each child individually to determine whether the program can reasonably meet the child's needs while maintaining the safety, health, and well-being of all children enrolled. Families are encouraged to communicate openly with administration regarding medical diagnoses, developmental concerns, therapies, allergies, accommodations, or special care needs.

Right to Refuse Service

The center reserves the right to deny enrollment, discontinue services, or refuse re-enrollment when it determines that continued participation is not in the best interest of the child, other children, families, staff, or the operation of the program. Whenever possible, families will be notified of the discontinuation of services. The center reserves the right to deny future enrollment or re-enrollment to any family with an unpaid balance or history of repeated late payments.

Continued enrollment requires families to follow all handbook policies, including timely payment of tuition and fees.

Updating Enrollment Information

Parents or guardians are required to notify the center immediately if any information collected at the time of enrollment or thereafter changes. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being dis-enrolled from the program and forfeiture of any registration fee and/or tuition.

The center updates all enrollment information in September of every year. However, you can update contact information through ProCare Family Engagement anytime something changes.

Fall Re-Enrollment

Fall re-enrollment will take place each spring. At that time, a re-enrollment form and a \$75.00 fee must be submitted for each family to secure a spot in the program for the upcoming school year. The \$75.00 fee will then be credited to the family's account in September if the children are still attending. If the family does not enroll for the upcoming school year, the re-enrollment fee will not be refunded.

Waiting Lists

The center keeps waiting lists, divided by age and program. A waiting list form must be completed by the Director or Assistant Director to help secure the family's spot. Families may be added to the waiting list without paying the enrollment fee. However, placement on the waiting list does not guarantee enrollment. Payment of the enrollment fee is required to reserve an available opening.

Policy 4 Tuition, Fees & Payment Policies

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians are required to sign a Tuition Agreement before enrolling in the center. Parents or guardians are required to indicate to whom all billing information and correspondence are to be addressed.

Tuition is billed one week in advance. Charges are posted each Monday, and payment is due by the Friday before the week of care. (e.g., Tuition billed on Monday, September 7th covers care for September 14-18 and is due on Friday, September 11th.)

Children may not attend if tuition is not paid according to the terms of this handbook unless a written payment arrangement has been approved by the Director.

Tuition rates are reviewed annually, and families will receive a 30-day notice of any tuition increase. Part-time schedules are fixed schedules, and missed days may not be swapped unless approved by the administration. Accounts remaining unpaid after withdrawal or dismissal may be referred to collections.

Tuition Rates (Weekly)

Age	Full Time	Part Time
Infants (0-17 mths)	\$189.40	\$176.50
Toddlers (18-24 mths)	\$168.00	\$156.85
Twos (2 years)	\$168.00	\$156.85
Preschool (3 years)	\$145.50	\$127.25
Prekindergarten (4-5 years)	\$145.50	\$127.25
After School (6-8 years)	\$137.10	\$119.65
After School Summer (6-8 years)	\$137.10	\$116.65

Payments

Private paid families may choose to pay weekly, biweekly, or monthly. However, we will charge your account for tuition each week. Payment for your child is due on Fridays as specified in the current rate schedule. Tuition is payable according to the tuition schedule, whether or not the child attends.

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(e.g., On Monday, September 7th you were billed for the week of September 14th-18th. Tuition is due Friday, September 11th.)

A \$35.00 fee will be charged for all returned payments. If we receive two insufficient funds payments, your child's account will be terminated unless the issue is corrected.

Credit Card/ACH Processing Fees

When paying tuition with a credit card, you will be charged a 3% processing fee. When allowing our center to pull from your bank account, you will be charged a \$2.00 processing fee.

Late Fees

A \$35 late fee will be added for all non-payments. If tuition and/or late fees are not paid by the end of the day on Friday, the late fee will be applied on Monday. If tuition has not been paid or approved payment arrangements have not been made by the end of business on Monday, the child may not return to care until the account is brought current.

No credit is given for vacations of fewer than 5 consecutive days, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or closings due to emergency situations, inclement weather, or acts of God.

Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at the center. However, if you anticipate difficulty paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Center Director immediately. If alternative payment arrangements are approved, you will be notified by the Center Director.

Accounts more than 30 days past due may be referred to a collection agency, and the responsible party shall be responsible for any collection costs, attorney fees, or court costs in collecting the debt.

Collections and Outstanding Balances

Any account that remains unpaid after a child has been withdrawn, dismissed, or otherwise ceases attendance may be referred to a collection agency, small claims court, or other legal means of collection. The parent(s), guardian(s), and/or financially responsible party agree to be responsible for all unpaid tuition, fees, late charges, collection costs, court costs, and reasonable attorney fees incurred in collecting the outstanding balance.

Families with outstanding balances may be denied re-enrollment until all amounts owed have been paid in full. The center reserves the right to withhold records, where permitted by law, until financial obligations have been satisfied.

Subsidized Care (CCS)

The center does accept childcare subsidies.

Parents or guardians of a subsidized child must complete all required paperwork on time to continue enrollment at the center. Parents or guardians of subsidized children are also required to sign a Tuition Agreement, agreeing to be personally responsible for tuition payments in the event they become ineligible to receive childcare subsidies.

Subsidized Care families are billed monthly. Your account will be charged the week before the month starts. Your parent/guardian's share of cost is due by the 1st of the Month. (e.g., On the Monday before the new month, you will be billed for the next month.) If it is not paid by the 3rd of the month, your children will not be allowed to attend, and it will be reported to CCS that you have not paid your parents' or guardians' share of the cost.

Multiple Child Discounts

The center offers a multi-child discount for one or more siblings enrolled in the same school year. The youngest sibling pays the full tuition rate, and each additional child's tuition is discounted by 10%. 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.

Vacation Credit

After 1 year of attending the center, your family will receive a vacation credit for 5 consecutive days. You may request this vacation credit equal to one week of weekly tuition. **Families must request the vacation credit in writing by email 2 weeks before the absence.**

Family Referrals

We greatly appreciate your business and know that you will be so pleased with our service that you will tell all your friends and acquaintances about us! If one of those families decides to enroll their child(ren), we will credit your account with half a week's tuition after that family has been with us for 90 days. The referring family must mention the referral at the initial visit to our program.

Scholarships

Every private-pay student attending the center who qualifies for Child Care Subsidies is eligible to receive a scholarship sponsored by St. Paul Lutheran Church to offset the increase in tuition rates. Upon enrollment, you will either accept or decline the scholarship by completing the scholarship section in our tuition agreement.

Policy 5 Nutrition Services & Child and Adult Care Program (CACFP) Participation

We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and are in good standing. The CACFP reimburses child care centers, day care home providers, adult day care centers, and afterschool at-risk programs for part of the cost associated with serving more than 400,000 approved meals and snacks to children and adults in Texas every day. The goal of the CACFP is to improve and maintain the health and nutritional status of children and adults, promote the development of good eating habits, and integrate nutritious food service with organized child and adult day care services.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint> and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Foods Minimum Standards 746.501(10)

The Cook prepares monthly menus, which are submitted to the Assistant Director by the last week of the month. After approval, they are entered into ProCare and emailed to parents or guardians. Menus are posted on the bulletin board above family mailboxes and in classrooms. We receive updates and recipes from CACFP, the Institute of Child Nutrition, National CACFP Sponsors Association, and our Child Nutrition Specialist from Region 3.

We follow all health guidelines in preparing food, cleaning, and providing adequate nutrition. The local health department inspects the kitchen and our facility.

The center asks that families not bring in outside food that does not follow the CACFP healthy meal guidelines. It is our goal to provide nutritious meals and snacks for the children in our care, as nutrition is vital to a child's health.

Children need to eat well-balanced meals to meet their daily energy needs and help build a strong body and mind. We know that good food habits a child develops will help them prevent cavities, iron-deficiency anemia, and obesity, among other common nutritional problems in young children.

All age groups:

For the safety of your child, families 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.

Families are required to provide written notification of any food/dietary restrictions. (i.e., lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat-free/gluten-free diets)

Written Medical Statements should include the following:

- Child's name
- Date of birth
- Describe the participant's condition and dietary restrictions
- Specify exactly how food or drink modifications will be made
- Date to start with end date
- Physician's signature and date

The center never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in lunch or snack time for behavioral reasons.

Infants:

The center provides formula for the children enrolled in our programs. If a family wishes to provide an alternate formula, they may do so at their expense. There is no reduction in fees or tuition for families who provide their own formula or food.

Families are required to complete a monthly feeding schedule for their child, or as the child's feeding requirements change. Staff will complete a daily chart for each child detailing for the family what the child ate, when, and how much.

1-2-year-old classrooms:

The center offers children a morning breakfast at approximately 7:45 a.m., a half-hour lunch at approximately 10:45 a.m., and an afternoon snack at approximately 2:45 p.m.

All meals are served by the cook, with the children sitting at tables, promoting good manners, eating habits, and socialization skills. Staff will encourage children to eat their main entrée first, followed by healthy snacks.

The center does not allow candy bars, sodas, or candy treats such as Skittles, Starbursts, or gum as part of a child's lunch or snack. If you wish these foods to be a part of your child's diet, please give them to your child at home.

The center prohibits any food in glass containers (except Baby food in the infant classrooms) and aluminum cans. These can pose safety hazards to children and staff.

The center will provide a healthy morning and afternoon snack for all children, including water, fruit juice, and/or milk. A list of daily snacks available to the children will be posted in the classroom monthly.

3-year-old and older classrooms:

The center offers children a morning breakfast at approximately 8:15 a.m., a half-hour lunch at approximately 11:15 a.m., and an afternoon snack at approximately 3:15 p.m.

All meals are family-style, with the children sitting at tables to promote good manners, eating habits, and socialization skills. Staff will encourage children to eat their main entrée first, followed by healthy snacks.

The center does not allow candy bars, sodas, or candy treats such as Skittles, Starbursts, or gum as part of a child's lunch or snack. If you wish these foods to be a part of your child's diet, please give them to your child at home.

The center prohibits any food in glass containers (except Baby food in the infant classrooms) and aluminum cans. These can pose safety hazards to children and staff.

The center will provide a healthy morning and afternoon snack for all children, including water, fruit juice, and/or milk. A list of daily snacks available to the children will be posted in the classroom monthly.

Breastfeeding Minimum Standards 746.501(24)

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. An appropriate, private feeding location is available in the lounge located just off the Infant classroom. On both doors, there are hangers for

the door handles, indicating that the room is being used for breastfeeding. When you are done breastfeeding, we ask that you please flip the signs back. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the classroom teacher.

Breastfeeding resources can be found in our enrollment packet and on our information board in our hallway.

Nut Free Center

Due to the extreme nature of allergic reactions to nuts and products containing nuts in some children, the center prohibits nuts and/or foods containing nut products on the center property, and/or at the center-sponsored events. These nut allergies can be so severe that exposure to nuts can result in an anaphylactic reaction. An allergic child can have a reaction from simply smelling nuts on someone's breath or touching nut oil residue left on a countertop, not only from consuming nuts or nut products. This includes, but is not limited to, milk made with nuts such as almond milk.

Due to the possibility of cross-contamination (which occurs when one food is prepared with items previously used to prepare foods containing nuts or nut products), the center does not allow homemade snacks at the center. While the center understands that parents or guardians enjoy providing homemade snacks for birthdays and holidays, we must be mindful of the safety of all children enrolled at the center.

Since the center is a nut-free environment, parents or guardians can purchase items to make homemade snacks and plan with the classroom teacher to incorporate them into a classroom lesson. Only the center utensils, bowls, and bakeware may be used to prepare these foods.

Policy 6 Confidentiality & Privacy Protection

The center will share confidential and sensitive information only with employees who have a "need to know" to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, families, and/or children will not be shared with families, as the center strives to protect everyone's right to privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, or other health-related information of anyone associated with the center.

Outside of the center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the family of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law. Parents or guardians will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of the center, persons with whom the information will be shared, and the reasons for sharing the information.

Any family that violates the Confidentiality Policy may be restricted from school property and/or subject to termination of services. Refer to the policy regarding a Family's Right to Immediate Access for additional information on the disenrollment of a child when a parent or guardian is prohibited from accessing school property.

You may not observe children at our center who are disabled 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. The center strictly prohibits discussing anything about another child with you.

Families may not share screenshots, classroom messages, recordings, ProCare communications, or information regarding other children, families, or employees.

Policy 7 Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect *Minimum Standards 746.501(25)*

Texas law requires child care professionals to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Employees must notify authorities about any suspicion without discussing with parents or investigating further. Failure to report may result in criminal liability. The center is committed to fulfilling this duty. The Child Protective Services Act aims to protect children's welfare and interests.

As mandated reporters, the staff of the center 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."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, and season

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- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g., car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate meals, including a drink for your child
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Sending a sick child to school overmedicated hiding symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

If parents or guardians feel they need assistance with possible child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, we encourage them to get help. Please call the National Parent Hotline 1-855-427-2736 or visit www.helpandhope.org/find-help.html

The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you would like to report any suspected abuse or neglect.

Policy 8 Family Conduct & Professional Expectations

The center requires the parents or guardians of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of the center is to provide the most appropriate environment for a child to grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of the center, but also the responsibility of each and every parent/guardian/adult who enters the center. Families are required to behave in ways that foster this ideal environment.

Families who violate the Family Code of Conduct will be prohibited from being on school property thereafter. Please refer to the Policy on Parents' Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding the disenrollment of a child when a family is prohibited from accessing school property.

Staff Protection and Parent Conduct Policy:

Families are expected to communicate respectfully with all employees and administration. Yelling, intimidation, harassment, profanity, recording employees during disagreements, aggressive communication through ProCare or social media, gossip, or threatening behavior will not be tolerated. Administration reserves the right to end conversations that become inappropriate and require meetings to be scheduled through the office.

Swearing/Cursing

No parent/guardian or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on church property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent/guardian or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to express that frustration or anger verbally, using non-offensive language. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

Threats Toward Employees, Children, Parents/Guardians, or Other Adults Connected to TLG

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today's society, St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the school will not assume the risk of a second chance. **PARENTS/GUARDIANS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.**

Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Child or Other Children at TLG

While St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden does not necessarily support or condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the childcare facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for parents/guardians to verbally abuse their child.

Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents/guardians are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures. Parents/guardians are prohibited from addressing, correcting, or disciplining a child who is not their own. Of course, no parent/guardian/adult may physically punish any child. If a parent/guardian witnesses another family's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent/guardian to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Center Director.

Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent/guardian to seek out another parent/guardian to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or director will address the issue with the other parent/guardian. 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

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with you. All children enrolled in our school have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent/guardian or adult visiting the center.

False, Malicious, or Misleading Complaints

The Learning Garden supports every family's right to contact Child Care Licensing about the care and supervision of children. Families will never face retaliation for making a good-faith report.

However, knowingly making false, misleading, malicious, or defamatory statements about the center, its employees, children, families, the church, or operations is considered a serious violation of this handbook. Any family found to have intentionally provided false information, fabricated allegations, or engaged in a pattern of malicious reporting intended to harass, intimidate, damage reputations, or disrupt the operation of the program may be subject to immediate termination of services.

The center reserves the right to pursue any additional remedies available under law when false or defamatory statements cause harm to the center, its employees, or affiliated organizations.

Smoking

For the health of all center employees, children, and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on school property. Parents or guardians are prohibited from smoking in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of the center. Parents or guardians who smoke in their cars must dispose of cigarettes before entering the parking lot.

Parking Lot Conduct

Families may not leave children unattended in vehicles, block fire lanes, speed through the parking lot, vape, use profanity, or wait for another parent, guardian, or employee to harass on center property.

Entry Door Safety

For the safety of all children, we have secure doors. Only authorized people can enter the building while children are present. When families enroll, they will be informed of their code. You are not to share that code with anyone except those listed on your pick-up list. These procedures are designed to protect the welfare and best interests of the employees, children, and families of the center. Upon entry or exit, please make sure the door closes behind you for the safety of the children and staff.

Violations of the Safety Policy

Parents or guardians are required to follow all safety procedures at all times. These procedures are designed not as mere inconveniences, but to protect the welfare and best interests of the employees, children, and associates of the center. Please be particularly mindful of the entrance procedures for the center. We all like to be polite. However, we need to be careful not to allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you may, in fact, be polite; that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in our organizational chain. Be alert and mindful. Immediately report any breaches to the Center Director.

Confrontational Interactions with Employees, Other Parents/Guardians, or Associates of TLG

While it is understood that parents or guardians will not always agree with the employees of St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden or the parents or guardians of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled calmly and respectfully. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate way to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

Violations of the Confidentiality Policy

The center takes very seriously its responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of all people associated with the school. Parents or guardians must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents or guardians need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy applies not only to their child or family, but also to all children, families, and employees associated with the center. Any family that shares confidential information and pressures employees or other parents or guardians for information that is not necessary for them to know will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

Social Media

As part of our duty to safeguard children, it is essential to maintain the privacy and security of all our families and employees. No public discussions are to be held, or comments made on social media sites regarding the center, the children, staff, administration, advisory board, or

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Church that could be construed to have a negative impact on the center's reputation or that would offend any member of staff or families. Any family that posts remarks or comments that breach confidentiality, brings the center into disrepute, or are deemed detrimental to the Center, its employees, or other children could result in immediate dismissal from our center.

If a parent names St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden on any social media platform, they must do so in a way that is not detrimental or derogatory to the school.

Families may not post photographs, videos, recordings, screenshots, or comments that identify other children, families, or employees without written consent. Families may not use social media to threaten, harass, intimidate, or defame staff, children, or families associated with St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden. Violation of this policy may result in dismissal from the program.

Cell Phone Use

Proper family communication is imperative when working with young children. It is difficult to communicate when cell phones are in use. Effective December 1, 2010, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services passed new regulations prohibiting the personal use of cell phones in classrooms. Please end all calls before entering the building so our center staff can communicate with you properly.

To ensure proper supervision, communication, and confidentiality, the use of personal electronic devices is prohibited in classrooms and child care areas except for approved purposes. Electronic devices include, but are not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, tablets, laptops, earbuds, Bluetooth devices, handheld gaming devices, and personal recording devices. Families are asked to end calls and limit electronic device usage while entering classrooms so staff may properly communicate regarding the child's care.

Electronic Communication

Families are encouraged to communicate with staff and administration through ProCare, email, telephone, or scheduled conferences. Staff members are not expected to respond to messages outside of business hours. Urgent matters should be directed to the office by telephone.

Parent Communication Boundaries:

Families may not contact employees through personal social media accounts or personal phone numbers unless specifically authorized by administration. All classroom concerns should be communicated through ProCare, the center email, or administration.

Questions or Concerns

Minimum Standards 746.501(19)

If parents or guardians have questions or concerns about our program, we encourage you to communicate openly with your child's teacher and the School Director. Through open communication, we can ensure that all parties are well-informed and work as partners in the child's education. From time to time, the center director may complete a "Family Concern Form". Parents or guardians will receive a copy of this form with the appropriate outcome.

The parent/guardian must submit a written statement to the director within 1 business day of becoming aware of the event that caused the conflict. (Same day-next day)

Families are encouraged to address concerns promptly. Concerns should first be discussed with the classroom teacher. If additional assistance is needed, families may contact the Assistant Director and then the Director. Written concerns may be submitted at any time and will be reviewed promptly.

Policy 9 Parent Access & Visitation Rights

Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(1)

Parents/guardians of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever the child is in care at the center, 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), the center 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 interpretation of the order in writing. In cases where both parents are granted shared/joint custody by court order, both parents must sign the request for a more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with the center, **both** parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. The center cannot, without a court order, limit a parent's access at the 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, the center 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. The center staff will contact the local police should any conflict arise.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments with the School Director and are allowed into the childcare facility only at the School Director's discretion. An employee of the center will accompany visitors at all times, throughout the center.

The center will dismiss any child whose parent is prohibited from entering upon school property. Due to the parents' right to immediate access policy, as well as state and federal regulations, the center cannot have a child at school when the child's parent is prohibited from access. The center will not agree to any request to maintain a child's enrollment even if the parent agrees to stay out of the school. Such an agreement violates the law and will not be entertained.

Policy 10 Program Dismissal & Termination of Services

The center reserves the right to immediately terminate services without prior notice when a family, child, or visitor poses a threat to the safety, welfare, or operation of the program.

Parents will be refunded any unused tuition within two weeks of the dismissal. A school check will be mailed to the address indicated in the child's file. Any past due balances must be paid within 30 days of the dismissal. An invoice detailing the past due balance will be forwarded to the address indicated in the child's file within one week of the dismissal. Any balance remaining after the 30 days will be referred to the school's legal counsel for collection.

The School Director or designee will assist parents in gathering their child's belongings at the time of dismissal, and parents are required to leave school property immediately in a calm and respectful manner. The center will request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative while gathering their child's belongings upon dismissal.

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

Following a dismissal, any parent or child who harasses, threatens, or in any manner causes harm to anyone affiliated with the school by calling, writing, or any other means will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law by the center.

Dismissal Examples:

- Non-payment of tuition
- Repeated late pick-up
- Failure to comply with handbook policies
- Threatening or disruptive behavior
- Inability of the program to meet the child's needs safely
- Repeated failure to maintain required records
- Knowingly making false, malicious, defamatory, or misleading reports or allegations regarding the center, its employees, children, families, or operations.
- Excessive absenteeism for children receiving Child Care Services (CCS) from Workforce

Policy 11 Withdrawal & Disenrollment Procedures

A two-week written notice is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper notice is given, any unused tuition will be refunded within thirty days of the withdrawal. If the required notice is not given, parents will not be refunded any tuition that was paid in advance.

The parents and child, following their last day of enrollment, are not permitted to re-enter the center without the School Director's prior permission. A withdrawn child and their parents must call to request an appointment with the School Director if they wish to return to the center after the last day of enrollment at the center. Appointments are made at the discretion of the School Director and are not the right of the withdrawn child or parent.

Policy 12 Part-Time Enrollment Requirements

Parents who enroll their children part-time follow the following schedule.

- 3 full days (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday)

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- 3 half days (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) or
- 5 half days (Monday-Friday)

In the event that you need to arrange care on days other than the usual Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, we ask that you give us advance notice. Parents who wish to change the days or times of enrollment at the center must submit a request 5-7 days in advance of the proposed change.

Policy 13 Custody Agreements & Court Orders

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), the center 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 interpretation of the order in writing. In cases where both parents are granted shared/joint custody by court order, both parents must sign the request for a more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with the administration of St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child, as stipulated by law. The center 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, the center suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, the center is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of the center cannot, at the request of anyone except the issuing judge, allow Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. The center will report any violations of these orders to the court. **The center reserves the right to contact law enforcement if unsafe custody disputes occur on center property.**

Policy 14 Arrival, Attendance & Sign-In Procedures

Upon arrival at the center, the parents or the adult dropping the child off must sign the child into care on the sign-in sheet located in the child's classroom as well as signing the child in at the front desk with your fingerprint. Children are required to be escorted by their parents or the adult dropping them off, to their designated classroom. Children are required by law to be supervised at all times while in the childcare facility. Parents are required to help children put away their outerwear and get settled for the day.

To support classroom routines, instructional activities, and meal service, children should arrive by 9:00 a.m. Late arrivals may be approved by administration for medical appointments or other approved circumstances.

Children approved for late arrival may not arrive during scheduled rest time unless approved by administration. Children arriving after 11:00 a.m. must eat lunch prior to arriving at the center. Late arrival is a disruption to the classroom and other children and may break the established routine of the classroom.

The center discourages parents from sneaking out of the center. Some children exhibit separation anxiety when it is time for their parents to leave. The center believes it is best for parents to tell the anxious child upon arrival that after all of the child's things are put away, the parent will kiss, hug and say goodbye to the child. This will prepare the child for their departure. The employee present in the classroom will comfort and assist the child through the anxious time. Parents are asked to leave after saying goodbye. The longer the parent of an anxious child drags out the departure, the more anxiety the child is likely to feel. The professional employees of the center are available to discuss other options if the child does not settle into the arrival routine after a reasonable period of time.

Health Checks

Minimum Standards 746.501(26)

Parents are required to notify the child's teacher or School Director of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. The parents must present the special instructions in the form of a letter and verbally discuss them with either the classroom teacher or School Director. These special instructions include but are not limited to: Early Pick Up, Alternative Pick-Up Person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern of which the child care providers should be aware to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

Parents must drop off their child by 9:00am in order for the child to be served breakfast. Breakfast will not be available or saved for any child arriving after 9:00am.

Notification of Absence

Parents are required to inform the center by 9:00am 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 plan for the day.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the school director not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our faculty 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 school 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 disease information will be shared. The center 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.

Parents who know in advance that a child will be late are required to notify the center by 9:00am so as to maintain the appropriate number of employees to ensure ratios are met when the child arrives at school.

If your child is absent due to illness or is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please notify the Director or Assistant Director immediately. See Policy 25: Health, Safety & Illness Prevention for additional communicable disease reporting requirements.

Attendance Expectations

Families are expected to maintain regular attendance and communicate absences promptly. Excessive unexplained absences repeated no-call/no-show attendance patterns, or failure to comply with subsidy attendance requirements may impact continued enrollment.

School's Right to Refuse Admission

St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause.

Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. The need to maintain compliance with Licensing Regulations.
2. We find that we cannot meet the needs of your child due to health or physical problems.
3. Staff deem the child too ill to attend.
4. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children enrolled at the center if the child were to be present at the center.
5. Parent's failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
6. Parents' failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

Policy 15 Authorized Release & Pick-Up Procedures *Minimum Standards 746.501(2)*

Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on the sign-out sheet located in the classroom and at the front desk with their fingerprint. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on school premises. The parent may not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms and/or playground. Parents are required to handle all business issues prior to signing out their child and are required to directly exit the building once they have signed their child out of care.

Parents must take home all papers in the child's cubby, filing system, or school bag each day.

Parents or persons designated to act "in lieu of parent" are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or another authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent(s) is unable to meet at the center during the course of the day.

Late Pick-up

Our schools are licensed to care for children from 7:00am to 6:00 pm. Parents must pick up their children no later than 6:00pm. A parent is late picking up their child at 6:00pm. All measurements of time are to be according to the center clock located at the front desk.

A flat late fee of \$15 will be charged per child beginning at 6:01 PM. In addition, a late fee of \$2.00 per minute per child will be charged after 6:05 PM. Late fees will be added to tuition and will be due by that week on Friday. If not paid by that Friday the child(ren) will not be allowed to return to care until all late pick-up fees are paid in full.

A child's services will be terminated should the child be picked up late on three occasions in one school year regardless of the reasons for the late pick-up. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or Emergency/Alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time.

Person's Appearing to Be Impaired by Drugs/Alcohol at Pick-up

If a parent appears impaired by drugs or alcohol, staff will notify local police and/or the other custodial parent. While the school cannot deny immediate access to a custodial parent, staff will delay release as long as possible while contacting authorities and Child Protective Services.

Any authorized person who seems impaired will not be allowed to pick up the child. Staff will inform the parents, local police, and Child Protective Services.

Emergency/Alternate Pick-up

When enrolling, parents or guardians must provide emergency and alternate pick-up information on the Enrollment Form. Families should list all individuals who may be authorized to pick up their child from the center.

If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, staff will contact the emergency contacts listed on the child's enrollment records until an authorized individual responds.

If a parent or guardian is unable to pick up their child, it is their responsibility to arrange for an authorized emergency contact to do so. Failure to maintain available emergency contacts may affect continued enrollment.

Parents and legal guardians do not need to be listed as emergency contacts because they automatically have the right to pick up their child unless otherwise restricted by a valid court order.

Parents or guardians must identify which authorized contacts may act **"In Lieu of Parent."** Individuals designated as "In Lieu of Parent" may receive information regarding the child's day, including incident reports, injury reports, illness information, and other routine communications.

Individuals who are authorized to pick up a child but are **not** designated as "In Lieu of Parent" may pick up the child; however, staff may not share confidential information regarding the child's day, behavior, progress, or care.

Only individuals listed on the child's authorized pick-up list, or those specifically authorized by a parent or legal guardian, may pick up a child from the center.

Anyone picking up a child must present a valid government-issued photo ID upon request. Changes or additions to the authorized pick-up list must be submitted by a custodial parent or legal guardian through ProCare, email, written notice, or another method approved by the center.

Families must maintain at least two emergency contacts who can be reached during operating hours and ensure all contact information remains current.

Emergency contacts must be at least 18 years of age.

Center employees may not be listed as emergency or alternate pick-up contacts unless related to the child.

The center may accept verbal authorization, a ProCare message, email, or telephone authorization for a one-time alternate pick-up. The authorized individual must still provide valid photo identification before the child is released.

The center reserves the right to deny the release of a child to any individual who appears impaired, presents a safety concern, or violates center policies. Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring that all authorized contacts understand and follow the center's policies and procedures.

Policy 16
Transportation & School-Age Transportation Services
Minimum Standards 746.501(14)

The center does not provide transportation services. School-age children are transported to and from school by Yorktown ISD. In emergency situations, transportation may be provided as permitted by licensing regulations and emergency procedures.

Policy 17
Program Calendar & Operating Schedule
Minimum Standards 746.501(1)

The center is open from 7:00am-6:00pm, Monday-Friday, year-round. In August of every year a new School Calendar will be sent out to parents.

We close in observance of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Friday During Spring Break, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Full tuition is due for holiday weeks.

We close on the following days for staff development days: New Year's Eve or the Friday before or Monday after if it falls on the weekend, Friday before Memorial Day, and Friday before Labor Day. Full tuition remains due during weeks that include scheduled staff development days.

NOTE: In some cases, if the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the center may close the day before or the day after the holiday. Parents will be updated on each year's holiday schedule as soon as we know the day we will be closed.

Yearly Activities

Every year our planning committee plans out the activities for the year. These activities are subject to change and/or activities may be added to the activity calendar. Plans include bulletin board themes, holiday plans, community outreach, fundraisers, etc. At the beginning of the school year a new activity plan will be sent out to parents.

Policy 18
Emergency Closures, Weather & Disaster Response

In most cases, the center is open during inclement weather. In the event that significant events accompany severe weather, such as a loss of power or water, the school will close. In the event of a utility interruption, the center may utilize its backup generator to continue operations when safe and permitted by licensing regulations. The center reserves the right to close if conditions are determined to be unsafe for children or staff.

Families will be notified of closures through ProCare, Facebook, email, and other approved communication methods as needed.

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

Should the center need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures of less than five school days. If the closure extends beyond five school days, parents will have their tuition refunded within 30 days of the closure.

Policy 19
Curriculum, Assessment & Child Development

The center uses Frog Street Early Learners for our infants, toddlers and two's, and Frog Street Preschool for our three-year-olds, and Frog Street Prekindergarten for our four-year-olds. We receive extensions to our lesson plans from Spark Activate Faith, Teaching Strategies Gold, and CLEngage. These curriculums believe that children learn best through actively engaging with people and things in their environment. Children are involved in hands-on experiences, real-life adventures, and assisted discovery as they explore concepts through play. The center is a place where essential readiness skills are nurtured through play, investigation, and of course, fun! These programs provide developmentally and age-appropriate activities and materials for exciting and wonder filled environments. To learn more about these programs and the wonderful things they offer, visit <http://www.frogstreet.com/>

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At 9am Monday-Friday during the school year we attend Chapel where we pray, perform the pledges, and teach the Bible. On Wednesday's our Chapel is guided by our Pastor or Christian Education Director teaches our Bible curriculum. We use O Come Let Us Worship Him to teach the Bible stories. The time that we attend chapel may change at times or cancel due to events or unforeseen circumstances.

Daily Schedule of Activities

The center classrooms follow a daily schedule designed specifically to meet the children's developmental, social, and emotional, and personal needs. All schedules are contingent on the needs of the children and may vary from day to day. Each classroom has their own daily schedule that they follow. Schedules are subject to change.

Class Assignments

Classroom assignments are based on each individual child's chronological age, developmental age, emotional age, and physical age. The center typically will transition children to new classrooms one to two times a year, however from time to time we may request a transition sooner based on the individual child's needs. Final classroom placement decisions remain at the discretion of administration.

When it becomes time to start transitioning your child into a new classroom we will send out a letter giving you notice that your child is developmentally ready to transition to the next classroom. We will schedule a conference between the family, new teacher, current teacher, and administrative staff to discuss the transition and allow you time to ask questions. After the conference we will start transitioning your child into their new classroom. This will start 2 weeks to a month before the child moves into the new class.

Classroom transitions are based on developmental readiness, classroom availability, emotional maturity, and individual child needs. Transitions may occur gradually to support successful adjustment.

The center reserves the right to combine classrooms, adjust schedules, or temporarily close classrooms due to staffing shortages, emergencies, or operational needs. Families will be notified as soon as possible through approved communication methods.

Staff to Child Ratios

The center follows the staff to child ratios established by Texas Rising Star, which is lower than the state licensing ratios. From time to time, due to staffing shortages or other operational challenges, the school may default to state designated ratios. The center will never run higher ratios than established by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing unless a significant event or emergency arises.

The Learning Garden is committed to maintaining Texas Rising Star staff-to-child ratios whenever possible. In the event of unexpected staffing shortages, emergencies, or other circumstances beyond the center's control, the program will remain in compliance with Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and will make every reasonable effort to return to Texas Rising Star ratios as quickly as possible.

Nap and Rest Times

Supervised rest periods are provided for all children under five years of age who remain at the center for six or more hours a day, and for all other children who show a need for a rest time. Your child will be provided with a mat to rest on for naptime. Please provide a clean blanket and mat cover for naptime and take them home on Fridays for washing. You may also bring in a small blanket, pillow, or stuffed animal if desired, but they must be able to fit in your child's cubby. Nap and rest times are required by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing. Due to these regulations, parents/guardians cannot request that their child be exempt from nap or rest time.

Nap mat covers are required for all children. The standard mat size is 24" x 54" x 2"; please make the covers slightly larger to ensure they are easy to slip on and off. If you do not provide a nap mat cover, you are responsible for replacing the mat if it becomes damaged.

Personal Care Supplies Needed

Preschool children must have a complete change of clothing, **clearly marked with the child's name**, left at the center. Preschool children need to be dressed for the weather. Caps, mittens, and warm clothing must be worn during the cooler seasons for the daily outdoor playtime. Accidents can happen, even for older preschoolers, or if they get wet on the playground. For safety reasons, boots, sandals, crocs, and flip flops are prohibited. Only tennis shoes are permitted.

Parents/guardians must supply all bottles, toddler training cups, diapers and wipes. We will label everything with your child's first and last name. However, diapers will be labeled with initials.

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We use washable crayons, markers and paint during art time, but children's clothing may get stained from just being kids! Please dress your children in play clothes since PLAY is what we do!! Please leave all valuable items at home since the center cannot be responsible for broken or lost items.

Birthday and Holiday Celebrations

Most children enjoy celebrating special events with their preschool friends (birthdays, new babies, and holidays). Parents/guardians may send a "store bought" treat to share with the class. Please decide with the teacher three days in advance when planning a special occasion.

The center believes in inclusion and celebrating each child's beliefs and important days.

In the event that a parent/guardian does not want their child to participate in a holiday celebration, they may choose to keep their child home for that day. No reduction on fees or tuition will be given.

Parent or Guardian/Teacher Conferences/Communication

Minimum Standards 746.501(6)

Open Communication with parents/guardians is very important to children's success. The Center has multiple ways of communicating with parents/guardians. In some situations, parents/guardians may be asked to sign documents acknowledging that communication has taken place. Signing such documents is not an admission or agreement in any way, yet acknowledgement that communication took place. Failure to acknowledge or return required documentation may affect continued enrollment and may result in administrative action.

Listed below are ways that the center may communicate with parents/guardians:

- Through email notifications
- Written memos placed in your child's weekly folders
- Social media sites such as Facebook
- Smart phone notifications through ProCare
- Verbal communication with the child's teachers and director

Parents/guardians will be offered a Parent or Guardian/Teacher conference 2 to 3 times each year. This is a formal conference with your child's teacher to discuss academic and developmental progress in the classroom. Parents/guardians will be asked to sign up for a date and time for their conference. Parents/guardians will be required to sign acknowledging that they are unable to attend or do not wish to attend a Parent or Guardian/Teacher conference.

ProCare and Communication Expectations:

Families are responsible for reviewing ProCare messages, alerts, incident reports, invoices, and center communications daily. Electronic communication through ProCare, email, or text may serve as official notification regarding billing, incidents, emergencies, closures, or policy updates.

Child Informal Assessments

The center understands how important your child's education is to you. We conduct child assessments 3 times a year. Those assessments happen:

- BOY-Beginning of the Year (September/October)
- MOY-Middle of the Year (January/February)
- EOY-End of the Year (May/June)

Our Infant, Toddler, and Two-Year-Old classes use a Developmental Screening Checklist while our Preschool and Prekindergarten classes use an informal assessment through the Texas School Ready Program.

The results of these checklists and assessments are used to drive lesson planning, individuation, and will be reviewed during your parent or guardian/teacher conference.

Policy 20 Positive Guidance, Behavior Support & Discipline

Minimum Standards 746.501(7)

The center staff members are trained to use a positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. Just a few examples used in this situation are praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior: reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements and redirecting behaviors. The center does not use "time out" as a form of managing behavior. The center staff will never use Corporal Punishment or negative discipline that may hurt or humiliate a child.

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Research has shown that positive guidance teaches children skills which help them get along in their physical and social environment. This aim is to develop personal standards in self-discipline, not to enforce a set of inflexible rules. Giving children understandable guidelines and redirecting their behavior helps them to develop internal control of their actions and encourages acceptable behavior. Positive cooperation is required from the family when dealing with disruptive behavior. We feel that consistency from all parties involved is the best way to handle these issues. The center reserves the right to terminate care for the child for discipline problems at any time.

When it comes to challenging behaviors, it is important that:

- We encourage collaboration on strategies to address challenging behaviors by conferencing with the family, teachers, and any therapists that are seeing the child.
- Our discussions are framed around the objectives and goals of the child.
- The teacher and/or director have ongoing conversations with the family to express concerns.
- Families are informed of their child's progress through additional conference and/or classroom reports.

The center employees are trained in Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline techniques and beliefs are used at all times in the classroom. These techniques and beliefs include:

- Our role is to teach behavior, not stop behavior.
- Adults see themselves as role models in the classroom. Adults are to behave in the same manner expected of children.
- Using active calming techniques for both children and adults
- Understanding that all behavior is a form of communication. When children act out, it is an opportunity to teach, not punish.
- Meeting the needs of the children so that they can meet the needs of their peers.
- Allowing children to express their emotions while supporting and comforting children in distress.
- Understanding that all children can only see the world through their version of reality and helping children see the world as a positive place to live.
- Being optimistic and positive about all children enrolled in our program.
- Greeting each child every morning in a positive and impactful way.

Suspension and Expulsion of Children

Minimum Standards 746.501(8)

The center is proud of our history of working with the individual needs of our children and will work with the parents/guardians whose children may need additional support. We refer students to external support services, such as early intervention, speech, occupational, and physical therapy. We also participate in IEP meetings to help address student needs.

The center will make reasonable accommodations to their policies, practices, and procedures as appropriate in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. The center is not required by law to fundamentally alter or change the services provided for a child displaying dangerous/inappropriate behavior, developmental delays and/or disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The center will allow outside resources/therapists into the program to work with any child as needed, provided those services are communicated in advance, the provider of the services has the appropriate clearances to be in the building, the behavioral/therapeutic plan is shared with the administration and the resource/therapist works cooperatively with the center staff to meet the needs of the child. The presence of the resource/therapist must mitigate any and all safety risks the child presents to themselves and to others and must be collaborative and complimentary to the program. Should the resource/therapist be disruptive to the program or not have authority or ability to mitigate, through appropriate therapeutic methods, the child's dangerous behaviors, the child may be excluded from the program.

Any child who is a safety threat to themselves or to others will be subject to suspension/exclusion and/or disenrollment from the program if the dangerous behavior cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodations provided for under applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Temporary suspension from the school may be necessary for the safety of the child and others while any appropriate evaluations are completed and/or while securing the appropriate support services from the appropriate agency.

The center will at all times provide written documentation to the parents/guardians of any child that is subject to referral for outside support services for any behavior, developmental delay or disability. Further, through formal and informal conferences with the teachers and administrators, written incident and accident reports and letters, the center will communicate with parents/guardians of children exhibiting behaviors that are dangerous to themselves or to others, the steps taken to accommodate the child and notifications that the child will not be able to return to the program until support services are in place.

Discipline and Guidance (Personnel)

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The teacher, assistant teachers, support staff, and administrative staff at the center will be consistent in making sure children follow rules and procedures. This makes children feel secure. A well-managed class and center will keep discipline problems to a minimum.

Staff should understand that laying the foundation for internal order will help children for the rest of their lives. It is important that all teachers and assistants work together. Maintain a good relationship with the parents/guardians and keep them informed. When necessary, send home notes or make phone calls. Communication is essential.

St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden's Personnel Handbook States:

Discipline of Children (Policy 6.9)

Employees are prohibited from using physical forms of punishment, corporal punishment, severe verbal reprimands, embarrassing or humiliating forms of punishment including name calling, and/or withholding food from any child at any time.

Employees who engage in any type of prohibited form of discipline will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. In most cases an employee will be immediately terminated for any such offense.

Employees are required to use positive forms of behavior modification and discipline to stop unwanted behaviors and encourage desired behaviors. Employees are to be direct with children, providing clear descriptions of unwanted behaviors and then explain and model appropriate and desired behaviors.

Children who are exhibiting behavior that is dangerous to themselves and/or to others and are not responding to corrective measures should be referred to the Director or Assistant Director.

The center's staff members are to be trained to use a positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. Just a few examples used in this situation are praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior; reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements and redirecting behaviors. Staff will never use "time out" in disruptive situations. Staff will never use corporal punishment or negative discipline that may hurt or humiliate a child. The use of "time out" or corporal punishment is grounds for immediate termination.

Research has shown that positive guidance teaches children skills which help them get along in their physical and social environment. This aim is to develop personal standards in self-discipline, not to enforce a set of inflexible rules. Giving children understandable guidelines and redirecting their behavior helps them to develop internal control of their actions and encourages acceptable behavior.

The center employees are trained in Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline techniques are to be used at all times. These techniques include:

- Our role is to teach behavior, not stop behavior.
- Adults see themselves as role models in the classroom. Adults are to behave in the same manner expected of children.
- Using active calming techniques for both children and adults
- Understanding that all behavior is a form of communication. When children act out, it is an opportunity to teach, not punish.
- Meeting the needs of the children so that they can meet the needs of their peers.
- Allowing children to express their emotions while supporting and comforting children in distress.
- Understanding that all children can only see the world through their version of reality and helping children see the world as a positive place to live.
- Being optimistic and positive about all children enrolled in our program.
- Greeting each child every morning in a positive and impactful way.

Steps for Dismissal of a Child

1. Conference with the Director about the issue. Sit down and build a plan of action.
2. Conference with the Parents/Guardians about the issue. Go over the plan of action.
3. Contact Child Find with parents' permission.
4. Continue to work with parents/guardians, therapists, and children.
5. We do not dismiss a child unless we are unable to give the child the services that they need.

Additionally, the center's policies about Discipline and Guidance, which can be found in our Personnel Policies the following guidelines have been added.

Gross Misconduct:

Some offenses are so serious that they can result in termination without previous warnings. The following examples are listed for guidance of all. This list is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all prohibited activity. The following actions may result in immediate termination:

1. Neglect or physical abuse of a child.

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2. Withholding food, naps or other comfort from a child.
3. Yelling or the use of harsh tones of voice.
4. Failure to report to work with no notice.
5. Convicted of a felony of any offense.
6. Falsification of center records (employment application, time clock, time card, and your records).
7. Leaving children unattended (inside or outside)
8. Allowing a child to leave the center with an unauthorized person.
9. Sleeping while supervising children.
10. Insubordination shows gross disrespect such as threatening, cussing, or yelling at administrators.
11. Discussing personal information about your rate of pay or payroll in any manner.
12. Unable to work with, and/or get along with other employees. (take care of you and no one else)
13. Discussing anything that has to do with the Center Business, children in our center, employees at the center outside of the center is prohibited. Any information about children or their families must be shared on a "need to know" basis only. Thus, be very sensitive about discussing children's developmental needs and family information in a public place. Protect the interests of each child and family by keeping confidentiality. (If you have something that needs to be addressed you have to talk to your supervisor.) Also strive to be supportive of the centers efforts by avoiding negative or malicious discussions about the center issues.
14. Employees that are not up to date and/or maintain the training hours (24 Hours) that are required by Minimum Standards Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Behavior and Guidance:

The goal of discipline is to help children learn self-control. Providers help teach children about appropriate behavior and how to get along with others.

1. Be consistent. Children are confused when providers respond in different ways to similar behavior.
2. Appropriate guidance needs to follow a child's misbehavior immediately so that the child understands why he or she is being corrected. Never threaten to do something that the provider would not or could not do.
3. Be a good role model. Act with kindness and patience toward each child. Respect and talk to children about their feelings.
4. Talk with children about their behavior and what is expected. Tell children what they can do rather than what they can't. "Please walk" is more effective than "don't run".
5. Follow a consistent daily schedule so that children know what to expect and are prepared for changes in activity throughout the day.
6. Give children choices whenever possible.
7. Praise good behavior often. Children (and adults) need to hear that the good things they do are appreciated!
8. Talk to parents/guardians about both the good things their child(ren) has done while in child care and those things that require additional attention. Include parents/guardians in making decisions about effective ways to provide guidance for their child(ren). Consistency between the child's home and the child care home is most effective. Never spank or use another method of punishment that is prohibited by law or regulation, even if parents/guardians give permission.

Suggested Guidance for Infants and Toddlers:

1. Remove tempting items that are off limits to infants/toddlers. By nature, they are curious about people and things. They are just learning.
2. Distract (this is also called redirection) the infant/toddler away from the activity that is not desired by attracting the child with a better choice.
3. Ignore the behavior, if the child is not in danger or causing someone else to be in danger.
4. Use the word "NO" sparingly. "NO" should only be used when the infant/toddler is approaching danger. Over using the word "NO" may result in the child learning to ignore you.
5. Provide duplicates of popular toys. Infants and toddlers do not understand the concept of "sharing".
6. Place a toy or item in "time-out"-not the child. Infants/toddlers have short attention spans and are naturally active. Time out for infants/toddlers is not appropriate.

Suggested Guidance for Preschool Age Children:

Any of the above methods of guidance PLUS:

1. Allow preschool age children to make acceptable choices and let the natural consequence of the decision be the teacher (as long as the consequence is not dangerous). Be sure to offer choices you can live with!
2. Help children learn to solve problems. Offer suggestions when necessary and allow the child to decide.
3. Talk about the "rules" of the child care center. Remind the children of the rules. Children learn by repetition. Allow the preschool age children to help set the "rules".

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4. Time-out should be used sparingly. Over use of “time out” or any other method of guidance causes the method to become “old hat” which causes it to lose its effectiveness. Time out provides the child with the opportunity to think -cool off - calm down. Time out is not about your ability to control the child. Provide a “time out space” for the child that is nearby and which allows you to clearly supervise the child. Invite the child to rejoin the group when he/she is ready. Talk about the behavior, feelings and reassure the child when he/she rejoins the group. Never place a child in time out for long periods of time.

Suggested Guidance for School Age Children:

Any of the above methods of guidance PLUS:

1. Involve school age children in planning activities.
2. Involve school age children in setting their own guidelines.
3. Allow school age children to suggest consequences when rules are “broken”.

All caregivers are to follow Texas Health and Human Services Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers Subchapter L, Discipline and Guidance.

746.2803 What methods of discipline and guidance may a caregiver use?

Discipline must be:

- 1) Individualized and consistent for each child;
- 2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding;
- 3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control; and
- 4) A positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, including the following:
 - a) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
 - b) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
 - c) Redirecting behavior using positive statements;
 - d) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

746.2805 What types of discipline and guidance or punishment are prohibited?

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- 1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- 2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- 3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- 4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- 5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- 6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- 7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- 8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet;
- 9) Withholding active play or keeping a child inside as a consequence for behavior, unless the child is exhibiting behavior during active play that requires a brief supervised separation or time out that is consistent with 746.2803(4)(D) of this subchapter (relating to What methods of discipline and guidance may a caregiver use?); and
- 10) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age, including requiring a child to remain in a restrictive device.

746.2807 May my employees discipline their own children who are in care at my center?

Yes, during operating hours an employee may discipline the employee's own child as long as the employee does not violate the requirements specified in this subchapter.

Behavior Intervention Process:

Repeated unsafe, aggressive, or disruptive behaviors may require additional interventions including behavior documentation, parent conferences, classroom observations, behavior support plans, referrals to outside resources, temporary suspension, or dismissal. The Learning Garden reserves the right to determine whether the program can safely and appropriately meet the needs of a child while maintaining the safety and well-being of others.

**Policy 21
Personal Belongings & Toys from Home**

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents/guardians are responsible for enforcing this

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policy with their child. Parents/guardians are encouraged to consult the classroom teacher should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy.

If the parents/guardians fail repeatedly to enforce this policy with their children, the staff will call the parents/guardians and require that they come to the school and remove the toy.

Children in classrooms with nap/rest time are permitted to include with their bedding supplies, one plush/non-musical toy with which to nap/rest. This toy is to be placed with the bedding supplies and use of it will only be allowed at nap/rest time.

All toys brought in for use as part of the curriculum, and/or for nap/rest time will be inspected by the center staff for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of the center.

**Policy 22
Dress Code & Appropriate Attire**

Children

Clothing:

Children are engaged in various activities during the course of the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable, clothing.

Parents/guardians are prohibited from dressing children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures. These types of clothing present particular challenges for children in relation to toileting.

If your child is not potty trained, please send them in clothing that are not difficult to take off when changing their pull-ups that don't have fastening sides. If you continue to send them in difficult clothing to take off we will ask you to send pull-ups that fasten on the side.

Coats must be provided in the winter months.

Children are not permitted to wear closed-toed or open-toed, and/or open-backed shoes like sandals and flip flops. For the safety of your children, we do not allow crocs (even if worn with the strap on) and boots. The required type of shoes for participation in school activities is rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes.

Children who wear dresses are required to wear shorts underneath their dress.

Children ages 3 through 5 are required to have one seasonably and size appropriate complete change of clothing at the center at all times. Children under 3 years of age are required to have two seasonably and size appropriate, complete changes of clothing at the center at all times. A complete change of clothing includes shirts, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes. Teachers will post reminders for parents/guardians to update changes of clothing as the weather begins to change.

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. The center is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

Jewelry/Accessories:

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program. In addition, the center will not be responsible for lost or stolen valuables. It is the parents/guardians responsibility to enforce this policy with their children. Should a child come to school wearing any jewelry, parents/guardians will be required to take it with them, or to return to the school to remove the jewelry if it is discovered after the parent/guardian leaves. Repeated (more than 3 violations per school year) violations of this policy are considered to be violations of SAFETY POLICIES and will result in dismissal from the program.

Hair beads, barrettes, bobby pins, etc. are not to be worn by children. These accessories are considered to be safety hazards. When choosing accessories for your children be mindful of the potential safety issues they present not only for your child, but also for the older and younger children attending the center.

The center is not responsible for damage to or loss of articles of clothing.

Families

Clothing:

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Parents/guardians are required to be dressed in appropriate clothing while at the center or involved in any center sponsored event. Inappropriate clothing would include revealing, extremely short, ripped/torn (in inappropriate places), and/or see-through articles of clothing. Anything with suggestive or vulgar language is prohibited.

Parents/guardians wearing high heels, work boots, or shoes with wet/dirty soles, will be required to remove their shoes prior to entering any classroom with children under 1 year of age. This will reduce the risk of injury to a child on the floor and will help to maintain a clean floor. Parents/guardians can simply leave their shoes outside the classroom door prior to entering the classroom. Parents/guardians with bare feet must wear booties when entering the classroom.

Policy 23 Field Trips & Off-Campus Activities *Minimum Standards 746.501(16)*

The center sometimes supplements the in-class curriculum with field trips. Parents/guardians are required to give written permission for their child to attend these field trips.

The center considers the following field trips:

- Nature walks
- Visiting the prayer garden
- Visiting the Church
- and tending to our garden.

The center provides all required supervision for all field trips. The permission slips, a first aid kit, and the children emergency contact information accompanies the teachers for the field trips.

Policy 24 Family Engagement & Volunteer Opportunities *Minimum Standards 746.501(20)*

The Learning Garden recognizes families as children's first and most important teachers. We believe that strong partnerships between families and educators support children's learning, development, and overall success. We encourage ongoing communication, family participation opportunities, conferences, surveys, classroom events, and collaborative goal setting to strengthen the connection between home and school. We value and respect each family's culture, language, traditions, and unique contributions to our program.

Families are encouraged to participate in conferences, family engagement activities, surveys, classroom events, and collaborative goal-setting opportunities that support their child's learning and development.

Family feedback is an important part of our continuous quality improvement process. Feedback may be gathered through surveys, conferences, informal conversations, suggestion forms, and other communication methods. Information shared by families helps guide program planning, improve services, strengthen family engagement, and enhance outcomes for children.

Parents/guardians are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child's school activities. There are many different ways in which parents/guardians can participate and volunteer at the childcare center. Parents/guardians may volunteer to attend trips, read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events. Teachers will have posted in their classrooms any volunteer opportunities available. Parents/guardians not interested in volunteering directly in the classroom may donate items, do maintenance work, or assist in the front office. These volunteer opportunities are posted in the main office area on the family bulletin board.

Any parent/guardian 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/guardians, 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/guardians 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/guardian is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that parent/guardian will only be able to volunteer on those days. Parents/guardians with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted to volunteer with the express written permission of the custodial parent/guardian.

The center reserves the right to make Volunteer assignments. The center does not guarantee the volunteering parents/guardians will be assigned to locations where their child(ren) is present.

An Activity Plan will be sent home yearly to let you know what plans we have for the year and how you can participate.

Family Partnership

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The Learning Garden believes families are a child's first and most important teachers. We are committed to building strong partnerships through open communication, family engagement opportunities, conferences, surveys, volunteer opportunities, and shared support of children's learning and development.

Family Feedback and Family Engagement

The Learning Garden values family input and encourages ongoing communication between families and staff. Families may provide feedback through surveys, conferences, suggestion forms, emails, and direct communication with administration. Family feedback is reviewed regularly and may be used to improve program quality, family engagement, communication practices, and services provided to children and families.

Parent Surveys

Families will be provided with opportunities to participate in annual surveys and feedback activities. Information gathered through these surveys will be used as part of the center's Continuous Quality Improvement process and Texas Rising Star requirements.

Policy 25 Health, Safety, & Illness Prevention Policies

Potty Training

Is Your Child Ready to Use the Toilet?

Children enrolled in potty training classrooms must arrive with multiple changes of weather-appropriate clothing, underwear or pull-ups, and required supplies. Families and staff are expected to work together consistently during the potty-training process. Children will never be shamed or punished for accidents.

The center believes there are two stages or steps to potty training or toilet learning. These stages are:

1. Toilet trained – The child is capable of using the toilet BUT it is the adult who gets the child to the bathroom on time by putting the child on the toilet at certain times or on a schedule. At this stage, the child often needs assistance with the whole toileting process – this includes pulling pants up and down. Accidents occur frequently at this stage. This is the first stage towards becoming toilet learned or potty trained.
2. Toilet learned (learning) or potty training – The child is not only capable of using the toilet BUT has the developmental ability to express the need to go (both urine and bowel movement). In this stage, the child will demonstrate all or most of the readiness signs listed below. Accidents occur, but very infrequently at this stage.

Verbal Stages of Potty-Training Readiness

1. Basic verbal skills – the child is able to speak in three-to-four-word sentences.
2. The child tells you when he or she has wet his/her diaper (recognizes he or she is wet).
3. The child tells you when he or she is wetting his/her diaper (recognizes the sensation of wetting a diaper).
4. The child tells you that he or she needs to go to the bathroom (can control self and go to use the toilet).

Physical and Psychological Signs of Potty-Training Readiness

1. Child stays dry for a long time – able to hold their urine or bowel movements.
2. Has bowel movements at regular times. The child chooses when to have a bowel movement.
3. Adults can recognize when the child is having a bowel movement.
4. The child can undress and pull up their own clothing/pants.
5. Child initiates using the toilet and asks to wear underwear. This is also a sign of wanting to be independent, which is very important.
6. Emotionally ready and open to learning.
7. Can follow three to four step instructions. This is critical to learning to pee, wipe, flush, and wash hands.

Potty training should be a positive experience for everyone involved. It should only take a short period of time when your child is truly ready. Problems arise when adults (parents/guardians and caregivers) do not pay attention when your child is truly ready. It should only be determined on an individual basis, much like learning to walk. No two children will potty train in exactly the same time frame or even in the same manner.

It is the belief of the center that potty training or toilet learning should begin at home with the child's parents/guardians and at a time when there are not a lot of changes in the child's life. Life must be fairly stress free during this time for the child. We will assist your child in becoming potty trained once the signs of readiness have been established or have been observed by the parents/guardians, as well as the classroom teacher. Many children may show these signs of readiness at home, but not at school and sometimes vice versa. It is encouraged that the first steps towards potty training begin at home and on a weekend when you the parents are able to devote your weekend to helping your child. When your child is successful for a **full week**, your child can attend school in underwear. Please notify your child's teacher in the morning that your child has underwear on and not a diaper or pull-up, as to minimize any surprises. At that time, the teacher will gently remind your child from time to time (not on any set schedule) to remember to go potty. It's unrealistic to expect a busy teacher to remind one or more children every thirty to sixty

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minutes to use the toilet, especially while managing the needs of the entire class. For that reason, your child needs to be able to communicate the need to go potty his or herself without reminders from an adult. There are times in the day that teachers remind the children to go in and go, but it is not at a set time or schedule. – the reminders come naturally throughout the day such as before rest time.

We request that the following guidelines are followed when children are potty training or wearing underwear at school:

1. Your child **MUST** wear loose-fitting clothing that is easy for the child to pull up or down.
2. **NO** overalls, pants that require the use of a belt, t-shirts with snaps between the legs, or pants with snaps and zippers that the child cannot get in and out of.
3. A few changes in clothing, underwear, and socks that are kept in your child's cubby in case of accidents. Please be sure to change clothes when the weather changes.
4. Bring an extra pair of shoes if available. These can get wet too.
5. Have your child wear training pants (the thick layer underwear) if available.
6. IF your child is male, inform the caregiver if your son will be sitting or standing. This really should be determined right from the beginning of the potty-training process. It is recommended that boys first learn to sit and pee in the potty and once they are consistent then can be taught to stand and go. This will also lessen problems with learning to put BM's in the toilet and will also avoid constipation issues.
7. Keep a small supply of pull-ups available at school until the child has shown naptime dryness for a week. Your child will be in a pull-up during naptime until he or she shows that they can stay dry for that time.
8. We do not rinse out or wash soiled clothing, so any clothing that becomes soiled during the day will need to go home that afternoon. Your child's teacher will place them in a plastic bag and will put them in your child's cubby.

Please keep in mind that often children will show readiness and have success in potty training at home before the signs are seen at school. There may be a period of time when your child is potty trained at home and not at school. That is perfectly normal and has been seen quite often. If your child comes to school with underwear on and has 2 accidents in a short period of time, a diaper or pull-up will be put on your child and we can try again another day when he or she shows signs of being ready at school. Patience is very important during this time.

Children with Severe Allergies

For the safety of your child, parents/guardians are required to provide a signed copy of the "Food Allergy Emergency Plan" form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child's physician and parent/guardian(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every six months, or more frequently, as needed. This form can be obtained by request from the School Director.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

Communicable Diseases/Illnesses/Head Lice

Minimum Standards 746.501(3)

The center follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics Model Health Policies and Procedures Manual. A copy of this manual is on file with the School Director and is available upon request for review. Additionally, copies can be purchased, for a nominal fee, from the National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC).

Parents/guardians are required to pick up an ill child within 1 hour of notification by phone. If a parent/guardian is reached but cannot pick their child up within 1 hour, it becomes the parent/guardians 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/guardian is reached. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, the staff will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

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 by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must present a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. The center reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the center director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

Children are to be excluded from the center due to:

A fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours. If your child is sent home due to a fever, he/she is not permitted to return to the program the following day at a minimum. A fever is defined as a temperature reading on a thermometer of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more as taken under the arm, on forehead, or in the ear.

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For loose bowels or diarrhea which occur 2 or more times in a 24-hour period of time. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume. On return to the center, if child continues to have loose bowels or diarrhea they will be sent home and not be able to return for 24 hours.

For an illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (determined by caregiver.)

For an illness that requires attention greater than the caregivers can provide without jeopardizing the health and safety of the other children in the classroom.

Signs/symptoms of illness such as lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, inexplicable irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing (and/or wheezing)

- Blood in stool (not associated with diet changes, medication or hard stool)
- Vomiting until vomiting stops or vomiting is deemed not contagious by a licensed health care professional and the child is not at risk of dehydration.
- Abdominal pain for more than 2 hours or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs/symptoms of illness.
- Rash with fever or behavior change until deemed not contagious or symptom of a communicable disease by a licensed health care professional.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) until treatment has been initiated.
- Head lice until first treatment is complete and all nits are removed. At drop off your child will be checked. If lice or nits are still found your child will be sent home again.
- Scabies (highly contagious skin infection caused by mites that burrow into the skin) until treatment has been completed.
- Tuberculosis (infectious disease that is caused by bacteria that affects the lungs) until a licensed health care professional states the child is receiving appropriate therapy and may attend child care.
- Impetigo (contagious skin infection caused by staph or strep) 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
- Strep throat until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has been initiated and fever ceases.
- Chicken pox until all sores have dried and crusted (anywhere from 5-21 days)
- Pertussis (whooping cough) until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed.
- Mumps (viral infection causing face/neck to swell) until 9 days after onset of symptoms.
- Hepatitis A (viral infection of liver) until 7 days after onset of illness
- Measles (highly contagious respiratory disease) until 4 days after onset of rash
- Rubella (highly contagious viral infection with a distinct red rash) until 6 days after onset of rash
- Herpes Simplex (cold sores/fever blisters) with uncontrollable drooling
- Coxsackie Virus (highly contagious viral infection causing soreness in the mouth, on the hands and feet and sometimes the buttocks) until 3-6 days after onset.
- Unspecified respiratory illness combined with another illness which requires exclusion.
- Salmonella (Salmonellosis) until diarrhea has resolved and a healthcare provider determines the child is no longer contagious.

If your child is absent due to illness, we request that you notify the school director. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with faculty on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the school director, so that the parents/guardians of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. The center will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. 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.

Illness Return Expectations:

Children must be symptom-improved and able to fully participate in daily activities before returning to care. Medication may not be used to mask symptoms in order to attend care. Children experiencing symptoms of contagious illness may be excluded until cleared to return according to center policies or physician recommendations.

Communicable Disease Reporting

Parents or guardians are required to notify the Director or Assistant Director immediately upon being informed by a healthcare provider or other medical professional that their child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease. This notification must be made as soon as possible, regardless of whether the child is attending the center.

Prompt reporting allows the center to:

- Comply with Texas Child Care Licensing and public health requirements;
- Implement appropriate cleaning, sanitation, and infection control measures;

- Notify families of potential exposure when required while maintaining confidentiality; and
- Help protect the health and safety of all children, families, and employees.

Parents are expected to cooperate with all exclusion and return-to-care requirements established by the center, their healthcare provider, and applicable public health authorities.

Teething

Teething is a natural process that can cause discomfort for infants and toddlers. Our daycare center strives to provide the best possible care for all children, including those who are teething. To ensure that every child receives adequate support during this time, we have established the following teething policy:

We encourage open communication regarding their child's teething symptoms between parents and ourselves. Parents should inform us when their child begins showing signs of teething so we can be prepared to provide additional care if needed.

We will use various comfort measures to help alleviate teething-related discomfort in children. These may include providing cool or frozen items such as washcloths or teethingers for children to chew on, giving infants gentle gum massages, or offering extra cuddles and attention when needed.

At times children may run a fever from teething. However, it is a low-grade fever. If your child is running a fever of 100.4 or more under the arm they will be sent home.

Teething Medication

Over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) can effectively reduce pain associated with teething. However, these medications will only be administered with written permission from the child's parent or guardian. We will follow dosage instructions carefully and monitor children closely for any adverse reactions.

During the teething process, children may drool more than usual, which increases the risk of spreading germs. We ensure that all surfaces and toys are regularly sanitized and that children's hands and faces are wiped clean frequently throughout the day.

Individualized Care Plans: Every child has unique needs when managing their teething symptoms. Our daycare center provides individualized care plans based on each child's specific needs and preferences.

To ensure everyone's safety at our center, we do not use products containing benzocaine like Orajel on any child under two years old due to FDA recommendations. We also prohibit the use of teething jewelry. Teething jewelry poses an unnecessary choking hazard.

By implementing these guidelines into our daily routine at our center, we hope to make your child's transition through this stage less painful while providing you with peace of mind knowing they're receiving fantastic care!

Biting

The center recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the infant through 2-year-old classrooms. Parents/guardians with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may bite or will bite another child. The staff understands that parents/guardians 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/guardians are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior. Uncooperative parents/guardians will have their child's services terminated.

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/guardians are expected to cooperate with staff to help their child control this behavior. Uncooperative parents/guardians will have their child's service terminated. Furthermore, children in the older age groups, who bite 3 times in a school year will have their services terminated since, the safety of all the children in the program is of the utmost concern of the center.

Parents/guardians will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the course of the day. The staff may not discuss with either parent/guardian the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is considered to be confidential and cannot be disclosed. The staff of the center cannot discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other party. It is recommended that any child involved in a biting incident be seen by their family physician if the parents/guardians are concerned about communicable diseases possibly resulting from the biting incident.

Dispensing Medication

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Minimum Standards 746.501(4)

The center will 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. The center will only 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 antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given. **The center will only dispense prescription medication that is prescribed three or more times a day. Medication prescribed once or twice a day must be given by the parents/guardians at home.**

Parents/guardians are required to complete a Medication Form for the medication to be dispensed. Medication Forms can be found in your child's classroom. Medication Forms, doctor's notes and medication are to be turned into the Classroom Teacher or School Director.

The center will dispense over the counter, fever reducing/pain medication (ex. Children's Tylenol, Children's Motrin) on an as needed basis, with a doctor's note detailing the recommended reasons for administration and appropriate dosage. Parents/guardians are required to supply an unopened bottle of the fever reducing/pain medication clearly

labeled with their child's name. (One note and bottle of fever reducing/pain medication is required per child.) Prior to administering fever reducing/pain medication, staff will contact a parent/guardian or person listed on emergency contact form, if a parent/guardian cannot be reached, to inform them of our need to administer the medication. Staff will also inform the parent/guardian or emergency contact person if it is necessary for the child to be picked up due to illness. Refer to the policy listed above regarding picking up ill children.

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that all prescription medication is properly labeled by a pharmacist and replaced prior to the expiration date.

Fire/Emergency Drills

Minimum Standards 746.501(5)(23)

The center conducts monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Parents/guardians, 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/guardians may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents/guardians must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents/guardians 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 designate will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time, any parents/guardians waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents/guardians or emergency contact people will be notified by telephone of the situation. As with the sick child pick up policy, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

Parents/guardians wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the school is in the midst of a fire/emergency drill, parents/guardians will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the staff and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the school is having a real fire/emergency situation, parents/guardians will be asked to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all staff and children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents/guardians and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

The center maintains emergency preparedness plans for severe weather, lockdowns, intruders, evacuations, utility failures, and pandemic situations. Families will be notified through ProCare, email, phone calls, and Facebook when emergencies occur.

Parents/guardians may review the complete St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden Emergency Preparedness Plan posted in every classroom and on the Family Communication Board.

Alternate Safe Location

Minimum Standards 746.501(23)

Should the administration of the center or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the child care agency to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to an alternate location detailed in the center's Emergency Preparedness Plan. Once the children are assembled here, the staff will begin contacting parents/guardians or emergency contact people for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

Incident/Illness Reports

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Should your child be involved in an incident/illness during the course of the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Illness Report. The Incident/Accident Report will be provided to the parents/guardians by the classroom teacher.

Parents/guardians or persons designated to act "in lieu of parents/guardians are required to sign any incident/illness reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher 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, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent/guardian is unable to meet at the center during the course of the day.

Should a person other than the parent/guardian or one designated to act "in lieu of parents/guardians pick-up the child, a parent/guardian or person designated to act "in lieu of parents/guardians must sign the Incident/Illness Report. However, the parent/guardian is required to sign the form the next time they are at the center to drop off or pick up.

Emergency Medical Authorization:

The Learning Garden reserves the right to seek emergency medical care for a child when deemed necessary. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) may be contacted at the discretion of administration. Families are responsible for all emergency medical expenses incurred.

Firearms and Weapons

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of Firearm, Ammunitions and/or Weapon on agency property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Infant Sleep Safety

Minimum Standards 746.501(9)

The center follows the Infant Sleep Safety Guidelines as listed in the Child Care Minimum Standards and as outlined by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. All infants will be placed on their backs to sleep. To avoid suffocation, nothing is allowed in the crib but the infants, including blankets and stuffed animals. Sleep positioning devices are prohibited unless instructed by the child's health care professional. An "Infant Sleep Exception" form must be completed by the health care professional. All cribs at the center meet the CPSC safety guidelines. Crib compliance documents are on file in the front office. Pacifiers are allowed, however straps that are attached to the child's clothing and pacifiers with stuffed animals attached are prohibited.

Water Activities

Minimum Standards 746.501(15)

Parents/guardians will be notified in advance of other water play activities. Splash/Sprinkler Play is offered during the summer months. Parents/guardians are asked to send a swim suit, swim diaper (if applicable), water shoes and a towel on their child's assigned splash day. Children wearing regular diapers will not be allowed to participate in Splash Day.

Animals

Minimum Standards 746.501(17)

The center does not allow any animals inside the center that are able to be handled or touched. We only allow fish. Fish tanks are cleaned regularly and maintained.

Insect Repellant and Sunscreen

Minimum Standards 746.501(18)

The center will apply sunscreen and/or bug repellant as needed. Sunscreen and bug repellant must be provided by the parent/guardian, must be in the original container, and must not have expired. Permission on the admission form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian before these items can be applied.

Health Statements

Minimum Standards 746.611

A health statement is required for your child to attend our center. The health statement is:

- A written statement from a health-care professional who has examined your child within the past year, indicating the child is able to take part in the child-care program is required. This statement is due within one week after the date of admission.
- A signed affidavit from the parent/guardian stating that medical diagnosis and treatment conflict with the tenets and practices of a recognized religious organization of which the parent/guardian is an adherent or a member.
- A signed statement from the parent/guardian giving the name and address of a health-care professional who has examined the child within the past year stating that the child is able to participate in our program. This must be followed by a signed statement from a health-care professional within 12 months of the date of admission.

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Health Checks

Minimum Standards 746.501(26)

The center staff will do a visual check of the children upon arrival each morning. If a staff member notices anything unusual, they are required to point this out to the parents/guardians at that time. If your child has an accident overnight, please notify staff members.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases/Shot Records

Minimum Standards 746.501(27)

The center employees are encouraged to receive an annual flu shot and are required to be current on their Pertussis vaccine to help protect children from illnesses. Before enrollment at the center, you are to provide an updated shot record for your child. During enrollment as your child receives shots it is your responsibility to make sure we have an updated shot record on file.

Gang-Free Zone

Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(2)

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a licensed child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is a regular part of the daily routine. Children should be prepared to play outside some part of every day. Please do not request that your child stay indoors. Per the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, children too sick to go outside should not be at school. Children may only wear tennis shoes.

Birth-12 months: outdoor play for an amount of time as tolerated by the Infant. 13 months and up: a minimum of 60 minutes a day. Outside Times vary among the classrooms. Each classroom has an outside schedule to follow.

We follow the Child Care Weather Watch Chart to determine whether we will go outside or not. If we do not go outside we will provide gross motor activities in the classroom like exercises, music and movement, etc.

Heat Index

Less than 90	30 minutes
90-95	15 minutes in the sun, then up to 15 minutes of shade play
95-100	5 minutes in sun, then up to 25 minutes of shade play
Over 100	shade play only, limited to 10 minutes

Wind Chill

Over 55	30 minutes
50-55	15 minutes
45-50	5 minutes
Under 45	no outside time

Outdoor Play and Safety Expectations:

Outdoor play is an important part of our daily program and will occur weather permitting. Children must wear closed-toe shoes and weather-appropriate clothing. Children who are too ill to participate in outdoor play may not be well enough to attend care.

Screen Time

Minimum Standards 746.2205 (b); 745.2207

Children under two are not allowed TV, video, or computer access. Older children may only use screens if it's part of the daily activity plan and limited to 15–30 minutes, age-appropriate, and related to planned activities (e.g., Frog Street videos, Dr. Jean, Jack Hartmann, Bible Stories). Holiday movies like "The Star" or "Polar Express" are spread over the week to minimize screen time.

Family Resources about screen time are available in the hallway or by the entrance. Screen time is developmentally appropriate, used for education, movement, curriculum support, virtual learning, and special events, and always supervised by staff.

Policy 26 Non-Solicitation of Employees & Staff Employment Policy

Center staff may be employed by any client, whether current or former. Parents and guardians engaging in the services of center employees are reminded that all matters related to the center are confidential.

Employees who engage in social networking connections with clients are expected to uphold a high standard of professionalism at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, accepting or sending friend requests on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram.

Policy 27 Photography, Video Recording & Media Release Policy

Closed Circuit Camera Policy

The center utilizes closed circuit cameras in all classrooms to ensure the safety and well-being of children and staff. In accordance with privacy laws, all recorded camera footage is strictly for the use of St. Paul Lutheran YKT Child Care Center/The Learning Garden administrative review. Access to this footage by parents or guardians is limited to specific circumstances. Parents or guardians may request to view previously recorded footage only from the School Director and solely in situations involving an alleged incident of abuse or neglect concerning their child, provided the footage is still available. Viewing is restricted to footage directly related to their own child, and parents or guardians may not retain any portion of video that depicts children other than their own. Additionally, the parents or guardians of any other children shown in the requested footage must be notified by the center prior to viewing.

The center is committed to cooperating fully with local law enforcement. Any available camera footage will be released to local authorities upon receipt of a court order. Protecting the privacy of all children is a top priority; therefore, classroom cameras are not accessible via the internet.

Photographs

The center believes in the benefit of using real-life pictures in our educational program. Photos taken of the children will be taken with a school-owned camera and will only be used in our program. If parents/guardians choose to take pictures of events held at our program, they may only photograph their child, unless written permission is given by the other parent/guardian. Please note during certain family events, such as Pre-K graduation, Christmas programs, and Carnivals, photographs may be taken. If you wish for your child not to be photographed, you may want to remove them from these events.

Videos

The center participates in many different programs that benefit our center. At times, these programs ask us to video tape our teachers during instruction in the classrooms. These videos are for assessment purposes only and are not used in any other manner.

Zooms

The center periodically utilizes Zoom to conduct conferences with parents/guardians, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Texas Rising Star, and Texas School Ready. You may grant or withhold permission for your child's participation in Zoom sessions by indicating your preference on the photography consent form included in the enrollment packet.

Policy 28 Family Accommodations & Inclusion Practices

The center feels that it is very important to support families and children, including differing home language, abilities, and/or cultural backgrounds. We will work together with you, Early Childhood Intervention specialists, the DeWitt-Lavaca Special Education Coop, and any other services that will help your child with their development.

- Lesson planning will be strategized with the specialists to make sure that we are working with your child on reaching their goals.
- We provide a designated space for therapy and meetings with your therapists.
- Our family information bulletin board located in our hallway and the information table by the entrance to our center provides information on different services offered. The literature and family resources are in English and Spanish.
- We will accommodate to the best of our abilities for differing abilities that are needed.

Supporting Inclusive Services to Children with Special Care Needs

The Learning Garden welcomes children of all abilities and strives to provide reasonable accommodation whenever feasible to support their successful participation in the program, while prioritizing the health and safety of every child.

The center is committed to addressing individual needs and will collaborate with parents or guardians whose children may require additional support or specialized care. When appropriate, referrals may be made to external support services—including, but not limited to, early intervention, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy—and staff will participate in IEP (Individual Education Plan) or ISFP (Individualized Family Service Plan) meetings as necessary to best serve the child.

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Accommodation for children with special care needs will be made as recommended by healthcare providers or qualified professionals affiliated with the school district or early childhood intervention programs. These accommodations may involve adapting equipment, procedures, and instructional methods within the classroom setting. The center welcomes external resources and therapists to work with children as needed, provided that services are communicated in advance, providers have the required clearances, and behavioral or therapeutic plans are shared with administration. Such professionals must collaborate effectively with center staff to meet the child's needs.

The presence of any resource or therapist must mitigate potential safety risks and complement the overall program. If a resource or therapist is disruptive or unable to appropriately address dangerous behaviors through therapeutic interventions, the child may be excluded from participation. The center will utilize recommended adaptive equipment supplied by guardians or external specialists.

Separate classrooms for children with special care needs are not provided; research supports that inclusive environments benefit children with disabilities by fostering empathy, compassion, and increased social-emotional development for all participants.

The center reserves the right to request further documentation, evaluations, care plans, or meetings to determine whether reasonable accommodation can be safely implemented.

**Policy 29
Parent Rights, Responsibilities & Grievance Procedures**

A parent or guardian of a child enrolled in a childcare center has the right to:

- Enter and examine the childcare center during its hours of operation and without advance notice.
- File a complaint against the childcare center
- Review the childcare center's publicly accessible records.
- Review the childcare center's written records concerning their child.
- Receive inspection reports and information about how to access the childcare center's online compliance history.
- Have the center comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the child.
- Be given the contact information for the childcare center's local Child Care Regulation office.
- Inspect any video recordings of an alleged child incident of abuse or neglect involving their child provided that:
 - video recordings of the alleged incident are available;
 - the parent or guardian does not retain any part of the video depicting a child that is not their own;
 - and the parent or guardian of any other child in the video receive prior notice from the center.
- Obtain a copy of the childcare center's policies and procedures handbook.
- Review the childcare center's staff training records and any in-house training curriculum.
- Exercise these rights without receiving retaliatory action by the childcare center.