



Parent Handbook

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Section 1 - Welcome

We are pleased that you have chosen Grace Discovery Center to educate and care for your child. We understand what a significant role we play in you and your child's life and we take this very seriously. We will strive daily to make your child feel safe and secure. We have an open-door policy and wish to extend an open invitation for you to drop in any time for informal visits. We'd love to meet and become acquainted with you and your entire family.

This handbook was designed to communicate with you, the parent/guardian of the child(ren) cared for, the policies, procedures and rules governing this educational facility. Revisions to this document are made from time to time as needed and you will be notified in writing. We pride ourselves in offering you a carefully structured program so these guidelines are used to help you function within our facility. You will help us help you by following these procedures.

Grace Discovery Center provides loving care and learning from birth to age twelve without regard to race, religion, gender or national origin. We will continually observe and abide by our set policies as well as maintain to the highest level, the State Minimum Standards and the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) recommended learning standards and accreditation criterion.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to teach, care for, love and nurture your developing child. We look forward to a long relationship between you, your child and our family here at Grace Discovery Center. Please feel free to see any of our Administrative Staff should you need any assistance.

1.1 Our Mission Statement and Philosophy

The mission of Grace Discovery Center is to provide a secure, nurturing, educational environment that meets the needs of each child and family while providing educational challenges to enhance their learning experience.

The philosophy at Grace Discovery Center is that we want all children to have the opportunity to grow physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually by playing, exploring and learning with others in a fun, safe and healthy environment.

We not only welcome but encourage family and community involvement. We believe that through this positive partnership between the staff, the family and the community we will provide our students the best opportunity for success. To better understand the cultural backgrounds of the children, families, staff and the community we serve; Grace Discovery Center participate in community cultural

events, concerts, storytelling activities and performances that are designed for children, to educate and celebrate cultures.

Grace Discovery Center believes in a “hands on” active learning approach to learning. It is our belief play is in fact where children learn best. Through the use of Frog Street Curriculum our staff can observe, document and assess our specific children and design objective based, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. These learning experiences aid children in their skill development with the social/emotional, physical, language, literacy, cognitive, math, science/technology, social studies and artistic domains of learning.

1.2 History

Grace Discovery Center is a family owned business that was established in 2015. Grace Discovery Center works as a partnership between children, parents, staff, regulatory agencies and community members to ensure that the best care is provided for our students.

Our goal is to recruit and retain employees who are driven to provide excellent care for children while meeting their social, emotional, physical and cognitive needs. We expect staff members to model lifelong learning by attaining their CDA or AA in Early Childhood Education and by attending training opportunities throughout the year. **ALL** Grace Discovery Center staff adhere to the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Code of Ethical Conduct (NAEYC).(see attachment).

Grace Discovery Center is dedicated to providing quality care that ensures parents’ confidence in the safety, well-being and development of their child. Grace Discovery Center will exceed the Texas State Minimum Standards and will follow the recommendations of the NAEYC and Texas Rising Star. Grace Discovery Center maintains safety and security for students but utilizes an open-door policy for parents to observe and communicate with the staff. We encourage families to visit and participate in classroom activities at any time they are able. For the child’s security we ask that all visitors be individuals that the parent or guardian has indicated on intake forms as emergency contacts. The only time we discourage visitation is if it causes distress for the child when the adult leaves.

Grace Discovery Center is actively involved with the Central Texas Workforce Boards Accreditation Project. We are a Child Care Services Provider. Staff members participate in the planning of training events and conferences that will meet the needs of staff and student populations. This partnership also provides our center with mentors who assist us within the classroom and they provide classes for our staff to attain their CDA.

1.3 Statement of Non-Discrimination

Grace Discovery Center does not discriminate when admitting or providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, national or ethnic origins, cultural heritage, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status or disability.

Section 2: Parent Communication and Involvement

2.1 Involvement

We strongly encourage parent involvement. We appreciate parents:

- sharing cultural customs, hobbies, special interest or expertise with the children
- helping plan both class and family events
- volunteering during classroom activities
- serving on the parent advisory board
- reading to children in the classroom
- participating in outdoor classroom activities
- volunteering to help us maintain our gardens and landscaped play spaces
- telling us how you would like to help
- participating in our annual program evaluation (program staff, families and advisory board members are given a report of the findings)

2.2 Open Door Policy

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit Grace Discovery Center anytime during the day. Phone calls are welcome as well. The best time to call is naptime when teachers have time to focus on your call. If the teacher is busy with children, your call will be returned during naptime. Working collaboratively with families to incorporate family practices and ideas enhances the learning environment for Grace Discovery Center.

2.3 Parent Input

Members of management are available to answer questions about Grace Discovery Center and welcome parent comments, concerns or suggestions. If you would like to visit with a certain member of management, please call the front desk to schedule a time.

Grace Discovery Center appreciates any input from our parents, our Suggestion and Communication Box is located at the front desk. Please help us improve things by giving us suggestions or comments. We need to know what you think and take your comments very seriously. This is how we make things better for children and families.

2.4 Chain of Command Procedure for Parents

Parents are asked to abide by the following procedures for reporting complaints:

- Request a parent/teacher conference
- Meet with the teacher to resolve the issue.
- After a reasonable period of time, if the situation is not resolved, request a conference with the director.

If the complaint involves issues not pertaining to your child's teacher or classroom, the parent needs to request a conference with the administrator through the office.

2.5 Volunteers and Visitors

Parents, family and community members are always welcome to volunteer. To ensure the safety of children and staff in our program, all visitors and volunteers follow strict guidelines and are expected to sign the visitor log and show an I.D. Regular classroom volunteers must complete Background Record Checks and FBI fingerprinting annually and complete and orientation run by one of the directors. Family members sharing special abilities, skills and interests with the children expands their knowledge of others beliefs and cultural backgrounds. Special projects and parent meetings are held to allow parents to get to know one another and to encourage and support.

2.6 Posted Information

There are many postings with information on the front door or within the entrance area. Please take time to read these as they may contain essential information for you and your child!

Parents are always free to review and discuss any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures of Grace Discovery Center with the director or a member of the administrative staff.

2.7 Means of Communication

Teachers make themselves available to speak with families at any time as long as it does not interfere with the supervision and education of the children. Parents may call and speak to staff or email Grace Discovery Center if they prefer. Conferences are set up quarterly to discuss their child's progress and goals. Grace Discovery Center has a monthly newsletter, a parent information area and a Facebook account to keep parents informed of all activities, upcoming events and parenting resources. When families provide an email address communication is shared via our Grace Discovery Center email.

Procedures are in place to allow parents to update contact information at all times, without staff assistance

2.8 Absences

In the event your child will be absent, please contact our front office. If you participate in the CCS program attendance will be reported after 3 missed days. If we do not hear from you by the 4th missed day, your child's spot will not be held.

Section 3: General Information

3.1 Days and Hours of Operation

Grace Discovery Center is a year-round program open Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

3.2 Closings

Days Center Is Closed

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day
- Good Friday
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and Day After
- Christmas Eve and Day

Other Closed Days

- In the event that Christmas Eve or day falls on a weekend, Grace Discovery Center will announce the closing days to equal two days closed during this holiday time.
- Two days prior to the start of the new school year for teacher in-service training and facility maintenance. Days closed will be posted one month in advance.
- In the event Grace Discovery closes due to COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, out of Grace Discovery control. Closures will be communicated accordingly to all parents.
- Fees or tuition reimbursement will be at the discretion of the Owner.

Grace Discovery Center reserves the right to close for additional holidays, government closings or trainings if deemed necessary with a one-month notice.

Grace Discovery Center incurs all staff salaries and other fixed costs even during days closed for inclement weather, emergency closing days and planned closing days and cannot refund fees or discount tuition for the rare days we are closed.

3.3 Emergency Closing/Inclement Weather Policy:

In case of bad weather (snow, ice), stay tuned to a local radio or television channel to be advised as to school closings (www.kctx.com; www.kxxv.com). We follow the Temple Independent School District's (TISD) ruling on bad weather. This means that if TISD closes, then so do we. If they are on a delay, we will open at 8:00am. This decision can be found at www.tisd.org.

If your child is at school and bad weather causes an early closing, WE WILL NOT PICK UP YOUR CHILD! IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU LISTEN AND PICK UP YOUR CHILD WHEN A DECISION IS MADE THROUGH TISD.

If your child is here at Grace Discovery Center, and inclement weather makes it necessary for us to close, we will contact our parents via, email and phone calls. Please keep all information current so we can contact you for closings. **Please come as soon as you are made aware- as it is important that we get all of the children and staff home safely in situations such as these!!!**

If weather is bad during a public-school holiday, then Grace Discovery Center will follow TISD's decision regarding closing or delay.

3.4 Arrival and Dismissal

Structure and routine are essential to a quality-learning environment. To ensure an optimal level of learning, we encourage that all children be in their classrooms by 9:00 a.m. Arriving by this time allows the child to participate in educational activities and eases the drop off process. If your child must be late, please call ahead and let Grace Discovery Center know (s)he will be in attendance. Out of courtesy for the other students please do not drop off your child during naptime; we reserve the right to deny entrance during naptime.

Please make sure you accompany your child to his or her classroom each day. It is essential that you make verbal and visual contact with the morning teacher and sign the sign in/out sheet before leaving your child. This ensures the safety of your child. **We are not legally responsible for your child until he/she is signed in.**

Your child is permitted to leave the facility **only** with you or an adult authorized on your child's enrollment form. You must sign out your child with the teacher and notify them that you are taking your child. We understand there may be times when parents may wish to send a sibling into Grace Discovery Center to pick up their child. For safety purposes anyone on the authorization list must be at least 16 years of age to sign a child in and out of our facility. **If the staff person in the classroom does not know you when you arrive to pick up your child (such as a substitute), you must provide a photo ID or a member of**

administration will identify you and let the teacher know it is okay for you to pick up the child.

If, in an emergency situation, you wish a person to pick up your child that is not on the authorized pick-up list, you must provide in person a signed and dated note to the front desk. If you must make this change through a phone call, there are security measures in place with these phone calls. You will be asked to verify certain information before we can accept a call by phone. This emergency pick-up person will not be added to the authorized pick up list in the child's file; you must come in person and update your forms to add anyone as an authorized person.

Identification is **required** if your child leaves with anyone we are not familiar with. Once we know a person, it will not be mandatory each time. Please let any individuals who have come to pick up your child know to have ID readily available. They must stop by the front desk for verification **before** going to the classroom. If your child is in the infant/toddler buildings the individual must come to the main office to confirm their identity and a staff member will walk them up to their child's classroom.

3.5 Clothing Requirements

Please send your child in appropriate clothing each day. Layers work best with cool/warm days. Articles of clothing that are easy to run and play in, easily washable, and free of complicated fastenings, are most acceptable. Please consider rubber-soled shoes instead of boots, sandals, or any type of shoe that is difficult to provide stability during walk and play. Toddlers to 2-year olds should have a full-coverage type shoe on- NO FLIP-FLOPS SANDALS or CROCKS that can easily cause imbalance are allowed. Finally, any skirts or dresses should have shorts on underneath, for the purpose of physical movement activities.

Please make sure your child's name is CLEARLY marked with permanent marker on all belongings. This includes items such as: coats, hats, gloves, backpacks, lunchboxes, blankets, ETC.! Lost items are easily identified and returned if they are properly marked. Any unidentified belongings will be placed in Lost & Found. If they have not been claimed in a reasonable amount of time, they will be donated to a charity.

Because of spills, accidents and other mishaps, an extra set of clothing is required to be kept AT GRACE DISCOVERY CENTER AT ALL TIMES!

If clothing is sent home soiled, you must send a clean set in the following day. If your child is sent home in Grace Discovery Center clothing, please return them after laundering.

3.6 Support Services

A list of resources for child and family support services is available upon request at the front desk. Some examples of services include: health, mental health, oral health, nutrition, child welfare, parenting programs, early intervention-special education screening and assessment services and other basic needs such as housing and child care subsidies. Administration can assist in locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children's and families' well-being and development.

3.7 Vacation Time

You will receive one week of vacation after each one year of enrollment. Vacation time can be saved and used at your discretion; however, your child may not be in attendance when using vacation time. ***You must give a TWO- WEEK NOTICE to receive proper credit for this time.*** Vacation request forms are available at the front desk.

3.8 Notice of Withdrawal

A minimum two- week written notice is required to withdraw your child. ***If proper notice is not received, your account will be billed for the two-weeks.*** We do not allow the use of a vacation as part of the two- week written withdrawal notice.

3.9 Photos and Videos

Snapshots and videoing of the children are taken from time-to-time for displays and advertising. You are given an opportunity upon enrollment to approve or disapprove for us to photograph your child. All safety precautions are put into place when we use these photos.

3.10 Parties:

The following parties are allowed at the teacher's discretion:

- *Fall Festival
- *Birthdays
- *Easter
- *Christmas
- *Thanksgiving
- *Valentine's Day
- *End of Year

Most of these parties are held centerwide, parents who do not wish their child to participate may need to keep their children home that day. Parents always invited to participate for these events.

Birthday Parties

Birthday parties for your child are welcomed. Please give your teacher proper notification so the class will be adequately prepared. If a parent wishes to pass out invitations to a party away from the school, each child in the class should receive one. If every child is not going to be invited, distribution of invitations in class will NOT be permitted. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we avoid hurting the feelings of children.

3.11 Personal Belongings

Please do not allow your child to bring any items (toys, etc.) from home unless they are needed for napping, a special project, or if permission was given by your child's teacher.

GRACE DISCOVERY CENTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY LOST, BROKEN, OR STOLEN ITEMS THAT ARE BROUGHT FROM HOME.

3.12 Field Trips, Transportation & Special Activities

From time-to-time, your child is given the opportunity to participate in exciting recreational and educational field trips. Some examples of field trips are: library visits, fire station, police station, local grocery stores, etc. We will give you notification and obtain a permission slip, so your child can attend. If a parent forgets to sign for a field trip, we will make every effort to contact the parents to get permission. If you do not wish for your child to participate, you will be responsible for care until the class returns. On all field trips teachers take an emergency backpack that contains emergency items such as a first aid kit, cell phone and children's medical information. Parents are welcome to attend special events at any time by letting the teacher know. As always, we encourage parent involvement.

During certain thematic units, we may have visits from animal keepers. The children will not be allowed to handle the animals but will be taught many interesting facts about them. Up-to-date immunizations will be required for any animal on the premises.

Water activities such as sprinkler play and water/sand tables are made available. We will not participate in full-pool swimming for children up to age 5, unless offered as a class by a certified instructor, and you specifically sign your child up for the program.

3.13 School pictures

Professional photos are offered twice a year for purchase. Any guarantees of product or payment provisions are with the photography company and not with Grace Discovery Center.

3.14 Child Abuse/ Neglect

(as per the Texas Family Code 261.002)

- A. A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report to the appropriate agency.

- B. If a professional has cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected, the professional shall make a report not later than the 48th hour after the hour the professional first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected. A professional may not delegate or rely on another person to make the report.

- C. When making a report the staff member must follow the procedure mandated by the Texas Family Code, which is outlined in the Texas Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers, Appendix III.

Staff who report suspicions of child abuse/neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless it is proven that the report was intended to do harm.

In the event a staff member is accused of child abuse or neglect the following steps shall be taken:

- If the director is not on site she will be notified.
- A call to CPS (1-800-252-5400) will be made, a police report will be generated.
- The director will notify parents of the report.
- Once alleged violation is reported employee will be suspended
- In the event there is not an identified offender, no single childcare provider will be left alone with the children.
- Alleged offender will be suspended until the matter is legally resolved.
- The director shall provide access to administrative files, attendance sheets, work schedules; client lists (i.e. parents, children, addresses and phone numbers) to investigators and other relevant personnel who have an official need to know.
- The director shall provide access to staff for investigative interviews.
- The director shall be available to talk with parents, to keep a chronological log of events and keep the staff informed (to the extent that is appropriate/legal) of the case development through staff meetings.
- After 60 days of suspension position could be filled.
- After 120 days employee will be terminated.
- If allegation is sustained employee will be terminated
- There will be no appeal process of the termination
- No staff member will discuss the incident unless it is on a need to know basis.

Grace Discovery Center has a zero-tolerance policy in regard to physical, sexual and physical abuse of a child. The procedures outlined above are in place to protect both the rights of the accused staff person and the children in the program.

If you feel the need to contact the Licensing office regarding a concern you may have, call 254-526-9011 or the DFPS child abuse hotline at 800-252-5400. You may also seek additional information at www.dfps.state.tx.us

Section 4: Enrollment Policies

4.1 Forms

There are several forms that must be completely filled out before your child is able to begin our program. Much of the information is required by law, while some is used so we may better serve your child. We ask that all areas are completely filled out **before** your child begins. If your phone number or any other contact information changes, please immediately fill-out an information change form at the front desk so that your child's records may be updated. It is so important that we have current information on your child. You will be required to update sponsor contact and student enrollment forms each January to keep information current.

One of the requirements for any child, who does **NOT** attend a public school, is a copy of a current record of immunizations. Any time more immunizations are given, you are required to bring us a copy from your pediatrician. Your child may be denied care if these immunization requirements are not kept up to date. If your child does not have required immunizations due to a medical condition or conscious objection, an official notarized affidavit form developed and issued by the Department of State Health Services must be on file with Grace Discovery Center upon enrollment. Please be advised however, that if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the center, any under immunized child will be promptly excluded from care.

Administrative staff will orientate you and your child on our center prior to the first day of your child's attendance. Key components of the handbook are discussed as well as tuition and fee responsibilities. You will be provided an orientation form that will be signed and dated. Your child will be introduced to the teacher that will be caring for him/her to make transition smoother on the first day. It is your responsibility as the parent/guardian to read the entire handbook. If any questions arise, please see the front desk.

4.2 Confidentiality and Security of Records

Grace Discovery Center will maintain the confidentiality of all children's records including assessments and screenings. Administrators, teachers, therapists and other professionals that are directly involved with the child may have access to the records on an as needed basis. Written consent must be received prior to releasing any information or photographs to outside entities, except for authorized state and federal agencies. Medical information and insurance will be released to medical personnel (i.e. EMT, emergency doctors, dentists) in the event of an emergency in which center staff seek medical treatment for a child. Parents/legal guardians

have access to their child's file upon request. All files are stored in a locked file cabinet.

4.3 Tuition and Fees

There is an ***INITIAL non-refundable*** enrollment fee required to be paid before your child begins. This fee guarantees your space within the child's classroom and covers other administrative costs associated with your enrollment. After your first month of enrollment a monthly material fee will be assessed the first full week of each month.

Our weekly rates are structured so that we may operate an exceptional learning facility for your child. This helps us provide members of our qualified staff competitive salaries and benefits. Rates vary by age groups and are subject to change as needed to maintain a high level of quality.

Tuition fees are due by Monday evening for that week of care. If payment is not received on or before Friday, you will obtain a late fee of \$5 per day until the amount is paid or until Wednesday of the following week. Potentially, one could have up to \$20 in late fees per billing cycle. **Care may be interrupted if your account balance is not paid in full each week.**

Payments are accepted in the form of check, cash, credit card or money order. Payments will need to be given to one of our administrative staff at the desk. A receipt will always be provided for cash and credit card payments. If you wish to have a receipt for check or money order you must request it. Grace Discovery Center will give you a statement of payments at the end of each year to be used for tax purposes. This will keep you from having to save receipts all year.

Returned checks are handled through InstaCheck. There is an automatic charge on all returned checks. Grace Discovery Center does not handle these checks and cannot prevent the charge. All questions regarding the charges and payments of returned checks must be directed to InstaCheck. Accounts may be placed on a cash-only status in the event of recurring returned checks.

If InstaCheck cannot collect payment you will be sent to collections. If you are military personnel, we are at liberty to contact your chain of command for assistance in this matter.

4.4 Subsidies

Our Center also accepts Child Care Services (CCS) subsidies offered through Texas Workforce Commission. If you have knowledge of other subsidies that are available for tuition, please inform our administration. The front desk staff is available to help with any subsidy applications.

4.5 Transportation: Arrivals/Departures- Schools, Field Trips, Extra-Curricular Activities

Staff ensures children who are transported during the program day are accounted for- before, during and after transport. They do so by:

- Keeping a current roster of children in attendance as they leave the facility
- COUNTING upon exiting classroom; before boarding vehicle; upon exiting vehicle (Driver will check vehicle from back to front and top to bottom to ensure no child is on vehicle); multiple times during trip; before departure from location; upon arrival to center and as re-entering classroom.
- Names of school-aged children at their various schools are kept on transportation rosters. Notations are made upon drop off and pick up from the school. If a child is NOT at the intended school for pick up, a call is made to a parent to verify the child's location.
- We will attempt to make any necessary accommodations for children with disabilities when transporting.

Before taking any walks, entering a vehicle or going on any trip, children are reminded of safety rules to protect them while away from the facility.

4.6 Late Pick-Up Policy

In instances where a child is not picked up by 6:00 p.m. and attempts to reach the parents and emergency contacts have failed, the Temple Police Department and the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services will be contacted. Persistent or chronic tardiness will result in a meeting with one of the Directors and may lead to her recommendation to withdraw the child from enrollment. The school policy for late pick up is a fee of \$1.00 per minute for the first five minutes and then \$5.00 per minute thereafter. If an emergency arises and a parent is late to pick up his child, it is important that Grace Discovery Center is notified promptly of the situation.

Section 5: Health & Medical

Childcare centers are notorious for the spread of illness and disease. The only way to control this is to enforce the state regulations on exclusion of sick children. This is done not only to protect your child but also to protect others including our parents and staff. Keep in mind that it is very difficult in a group setting for a sick child to receive the individual attention and nurturing he or she needs. **As part of your enrollment process, it is necessary for you to have a back-up plan in place in the event that your child needs to be picked up. Please make these arrangements BEFORE you need it!**

5.1 When to Keep Your Child At Home

We are required by licensing regulations to send your child home if he/she is experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of or over 100.4
- Vomiting twice within 24 hours
- Two bouts of uncontrolled diarrhea in a 24-hour period
- Abdominal pain that continues for more than 2 hours
- Undiagnosed rash
- Inability to participate in group activities
- Acute change in behavior (including: lethargy/lack of response, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, uncontrolled coughing)
- Infectious/communicable disease (for example: whooping cough, chicken pox, or strep throat)
- Oozing sores
- Head lice
- Pink-eye
- Impetigo
- Thrush
- Ringworm

If your child experiences any of the above symptoms while at Grace Discovery Center, you will be contacted to pick up your child within the hour. In the event you cannot be reached, we will contact those you have authorized to pick up your child. A supervised area away from other children will be provided until the child is picked up.

5.2 Illness Re-Admittance

Your child may be readmitted with a doctor's note 24 hours after:

- Taking antibiotic medication for bacterial infection (including strep throat).
- Temperature has returned to normal.
- Your child has stopped vomiting.
- Your child no longer has diarrhea.
- Treatment for head lice is completed.
- Treatment for Pink-eye is started (we will need to see the prescription and medication).
- Treatment for impetigo has been given for 2 days.
- Lesions from chicken pox have crusted over.
- Thrush must be treated before returning to school.
- Ringworm must be kept covered while at school.
- All signs or symptoms of illness have ceased.

Your child may return sooner than 24 hours with a doctor's note stating your child is not contagious. (Ex: your child has a low fever but is taking an antibiotic for a condition that is not contagious, such as an ear infection). If your child is not contagious and is not in pain, your child can return to Grace Discovery Center with

a note from the doctor stating the reason for the antibiotic and that the child is not contagious. Statements can also be faxed to 254-690-8461.

5.3 Immunizations and Physicals

Your child's health is of major importance to all of us. Upon enrollment, we require the **parent/guardian** to complete a health form acknowledging that the child is able to participate in a child care environment. We also require a statement signed by a **physician** stating that the child is healthy and able to attend. If the physician's statement is not available upon enrollment, you are allowed one year from the time your child begins to obtain this document and submit it to our office for filing. You must however inform us of where and by whom your child was last seen at a medical facility. If this is not received in a timely manner, we do reserve the right to withdraw your child from this facility or suspend care until information has been provided to us.

Your child's shot records are **required** at the time of enrollment. Please keep all immunizations up-to-date and bring copies of updated shots as they are received.

5.4 Exclusions from Immunizations

If your child is excluded from the immunization requirements for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, an official notarized affidavit form developed and issued by the Department of State Health Services must be on file with Grace Discovery Center upon enrollment. Forms can be downloaded from www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/public.shtm. If a vaccine-preventable disease occurs, parents will be notified immediately so that the child may be excluded from care until the risk of exposure is eliminated.

5.5 Hearing and Vision Screenings

In the State of Texas, all four- year olds are required to have an annual hearing and vision screening. **Any enrolling four- year old must have a screening within 120 days.** Results of the screenings are given to the parents. If additional screenings or more in-depth exams are warranted, a follow-up appointment must be made and administrations must be notified of the appointment time and results within 30 days of first screening.

5.6 Medicines

We will not administer oral and/or topical medications prescribed by your child's physician.

Items such as sunscreen, diaper rash ointments, and skin creams must be labeled with the child's full name and may be sent to the child's classroom. Please inform the teacher if you bring this in so it isn't left in the child's bag unused.

5.7 Emergency Medical Care

In case of injury requiring medical attention, we make an immediate attempt to contact a parent/guardian. If we cannot reach you, we will attempt to contact an emergency contact. As a last resort, or if the situation is severe enough, we will call 911. If this becomes necessary, a staff member will accompany your child to the hospital and stay with your child until you arrive. We will make any decisions concerning your child's medical situation until someone has been reached.

Parents/Guardians will be responsible for any resulting expenses that may be incurred. **It is for your child's benefit, that we require you to keep up-to-date information on file for emergencies. Information such as phone number changes, emergency numbers, parent's work information, etc. is required to be kept current at all times!**

5.8 Health Insurance

Current information regarding the child's health insurance coverage must be on file, updated annually and should include the insurance carrier, policy number, name of insured, and a list of individuals who are authorized access to the child's health information. Medical information and insurance will be released to medical personnel (i.e. EMT, emergency doctors, dentists) in the event of an emergency in which center staff seek medical treatment for a child.

5.9 Communicable Diseases

We are required to report certain cases of contagious diseases to the Texas Department of Health Services and to all parents at Grace Discovery Center. To keep you informed of any current communicable diseases, a sign located outside of each classroom and at the front desk listing the date of onset, type, and name of classroom where child was diagnosed with the illness will be available.

Parents should notify the school immediately if their child is exposed to or contracts a contagious illness such as strep throat, conjunctivitis, head lice, etc. In most cases, a physician's note is required before the child is allowed to return to school.

5.10 First Aid Kits

Fully equipped first-aid kits are readily available and maintained for each group of children in each classroom and during outdoor play as well as field trips and outings away from Grace Discovery Center.

5.11 Accidents and Injuries

Incidents and injuries are documented on forms that describe the incident and steps taken by staff to assist your child. You will be provided the accident/incident report when you pick up your child and will be asked to sign the form to show you read it.

If your child comes to Grace Discovery Center and has been injured at home or elsewhere, please inform your child's teacher and indicate any special care the injury may require. You may be asked to sign a form notating the injury before leaving. We appreciate your full cooperation in this type of situation.

5.12 Water Table Play

Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water play does not spread infectious disease. Children must wash their hands before playing in any communal water source. No child shall drink the water. Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate to in communal water play. Water is drained after each group has participated or at the end of the day and fresh potable water is used for each group.

5.13 Physical Activity

- a. The benefits of physical activity and outdoor play include: **strengthens children's bones, muscles, hearts and lungs. improves children's coordination, balance, posture, and flexibility.**
- b. Children will participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play for toddlers and a minimum of 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous active play for pre-kindergarten age children.
- c. Activities may include: Walking, Dancing, Jogging, Running, Jumping, Aerobic exercise, Bicycle riding, and Gardening activities.
- d. Physical activities may take place in the classroom or outside.
- e. Children should wear loose clothing and closed toed shoes to maximize their physical education opportunities.
- f. On extreme weather days, physical activities such as aerobics and dancing, may take place inside.

Section 6: Nutrition

6.1 Family Style Dining

Grace Discovery Center participates in the USDA Food Program and shall provide meals and snacks for the students. Meal menus are posted by the front door and copies may be obtained by request. Participating in the USDA Food Program ensures that we provide at least 50% of the children's daily nutritional value. Outside food is not accepted unless a medical issue prevents the child from eating meals prepared by the GDC staff.

In addition to meeting nutritional needs, meals and snacks are opportunities for teachers to sit and eat with the children and engage in conversation. Conversations are surrounded around the events of the children's lives and help to

form personal relationships. Parents are always welcome to join their children for mealtimes.

Meals and snack times are staggered so that food is being served to the children at least every three hours. The time span is measured from the ending of the previous meal or snack and the beginning time of the next meal or snack. A prayer of thanks is given before each meal or snack. Breakfast is served from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. Lunch is served at 11:00 a.m. and snack is served at 2:30 p.m. The infant classrooms serve meals throughout the day based on the child's individual schedule.

Grace Discovery Center will not serve hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, peanut butter, chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole, to any age group, whether it be cooked at Grace Discovery Center or brought from home. Staff cut foods into pieces no larger than ½ inch square according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability.

Toddlers/twos are not allowed bottles, they may not carry sippy cups, or regular cups with them while crawling or walking. Fluids are offered from a cup as soon as the families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use one.

Children may not crawl or walk with a sippy cup, regular cup, pacifier or bottle at any time.

6.2 Breakfast

Breakfast is served promptly at 8:30 and ends at 9:00 daily. Please be sure your child arrives during this time if you wish for him/ her to have time to eat. Our teachers are kept to a tight schedule and we want any child who needs to eat to have a calm, pleasant amount of time to do so. Please do not send your child into the facility with breakfast from home.

6.3 Lunch

Lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. If your child will be late arriving, but will have lunch with us, please call the office and let us know so that food may be prepared for your child. Children will be offered all items prepared however they will not be forced to consume all the food. Meals are served family style and children may choose to have additional servings. Home lunches are not allowed as we participate in the Food Program Assistance. If your child has an allergen issue with the meal provided, you are able to substitute accordingly to meet your child's dietary needs.

***Additional Safety Precautions:**

- a) liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach.
- b) All staff are educated on food allergies, and they take precautions to ensure children are protected.
- c) on days that providers serve meals, prepared food that is brought into the program to be shared among children is commercially prepared OR prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials.
- d) healthy snacks (as listed by the Texas Department of Agriculture) are available for school aged children as children arrive.
- e) on days that providers serve meals, milk, fresh fruit and vegetables are available for children who bring lunches from home.

6.4 Afternoon Snacks

Afternoon snacks are served at 2:30 p.m.

6.5 Milk, Water and Juice

Whole milk is served for children 12-24 months and 1% milk is served for ages 25 months and older at breakfast and lunch. Water is always available to each child and is served at every snack, mealtime, and after active play in a safe and sanitary manner. 100% juice may be served at snack time to children two years and older.

Section 7: General Safety and Sanitation

7.1 Smoke-Free Environment

Our center and grounds are smoke-free. No smoking is permitted in the presence of children or on the premises. Please discard all cigarette butts in your own possession. Discarding them properly and not throwing them on the ground prevents butts from blowing into play areas or from being put into children's mouths. Anyone violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination or expulsion.

7.2 Cell Phone Use

Please refrain from using your cell phone while you are in the building. We need to have your full attention to discuss your child's needs with you as needed. Teachers may not have cell phones at any time while supervising children.

7.3 Gang Free

Grace Discovery Center is a Gang Free Zone.

7.4 Drug-Free / Alcohol-Free

Parents and employees are prohibited from unlawfully consuming, distributing, possessing, selling, or using controlled substances while on duty. In addition, employees may not be under the influence of any controlled substance, such as

drugs or alcohol, while at work, on company premises or engaged in company business. Prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications, taken as prescribed, are an exception to this policy. Anyone violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination or expulsion. Grace Discovery Center reserves the right to require a drug and/or alcohol test at any time. Staff will be terminated if a test result is positive.

7.5 Weapons Policy

A parent, child or staff member, shall not knowingly, intentionally, or recklessly possess or bring on to the school premises, nor attend any school activity with any item that may be considered to be dangerous to that person or other persons. This includes, but is not limited to, any item that is designed to look like, or is purported to be or represented to be, a weapon. Law enforcement required to carry firearms is excluded.

A parent, child or staff member who threatens to use a weapon on any other parent, child or staff member, (even if a weapon is not present), will be dealt severe consequences.

All violations of the weapon policy may result in expulsion of child or parent and/or termination of staff member.

7.6 Non-Harassment Policy / Non-Discrimination Policy

Grace Discovery Center prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status or any other status protected by applicable law. Everyone has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and is free from discriminatory practices, including without limitation harassment. Consistent with its workplace policy of equal employment opportunity, Grace Discovery Center prohibits and will not tolerate harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status or any other status protected by applicable law. Violations of this policy will not be tolerated. Discrimination includes, but is not limited to: making any employment or enrollment decision or employment related action on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, disability, national origin, marital or veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable law.

Harassment is generally defined as unwelcome verbal or non-verbal conduct, based upon a person's protected characteristic, that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward the person because of the characteristic, and which affects the person's employment opportunities or benefits, has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the person's work performance, or has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Harassing conduct includes but is not limited to: epithets; slurs or negative

stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes and display or circulation in the workplace of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group based on their protected characteristic.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include: unwelcome or unsolicited sexual advances; displaying sexually suggestive material; unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances or propositions; suggestive comments; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; sexually oriented jokes; crude or vulgar language or gestures; graphic or verbal commentaries about an individual's body; display or distribution of obscene materials; physical contact such as patting, pinching or brushing against someone's body; or physical assault of a sexual nature.

Reporting:

Any Grace Discovery Center employee or parent who feels that he or she has been harassed or discriminated against or has witnessed or become aware of discrimination or harassment in violation of these policies, should bring the matter to the immediate attention of his or her supervisor or to the Director. Grace Discovery Center will promptly investigate all allegations of discrimination and harassment and take action as appropriate based on the outcome of the investigation. An investigation and its results will be treated as confidential to the extent feasible, and Grace Discovery Center will take appropriate action based on the outcome of the investigation.

No employee or parent will be retaliated against for making a complaint in good faith regarding a violation of these policies, or for participating in good faith in an investigation pursuant to these policies. If an employee feels he/she has been retaliated against, the employee should file a complaint using the procedures set forth above.

7.7 Safety Outlets

Outlets are covered with covers and/or plugs to prevent electrical shock.

7.8 Rules

Children are reminded daily of classroom, hallway and playground rules to ensure safety in these areas.

7.9 Pest Control Services

Grace Discovery Center and grounds are treated monthly and on an as needed basis by a contracted professional pest control service to prevent pests and unwanted vegetation. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children. An Integrated Pest Management is implemented when possible to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals.

7.10 Tripping Hazards

Floor coverings and objects are secured to keep children from tripping, slipping or falling.

If you wish to view the most recent copies of our fire, health, pest control or licensing inspections, or a copy of Minimum Standards, please feel free to ask someone in Administration.

7.11 Appropriate Hand Washing

Parents and teachers help prevent the spread of disease by modeling frequent hand washing and by requiring children to wash hands when arriving in the classroom, before eating, after going to the bathroom, after playing in water that is shared by two or more people, after handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals. Additionally, hands are washed after blowing noses or sneezing, and when older children visit and interact with groups of infants and/or toddlers (or vice versa). If parents are staying in the classroom for reasons other than dropping off or picking up, hands must be washed upon arriving to the room.

Proper hand-washing procedures include:

- Using liquid soap and running water;
- Rubbing hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around jewelry, and under fingernails;
- Rinsing well;
- Drying hands with a paper towel, a single-use towel or a dryer;
- Avoid touching the
- faucet with just-washed hands by using a paper towel to turn off water.

Please practice these procedures at home and we will do the same at Grace Discovery Center.

7.12 Tooth brushing

All classrooms brush teeth daily. Parents are asked to provide a child size, thin handled, soft-bristled toothbrush every six months. Please do not send battery operated toothbrushes or thick-handled toothbrushes; these will not fit into the toothbrush holder. For infants, teachers will use a soft infant toothbrush or clean washcloth with water to brush teeth or wipe the infant's gums.

Toothpaste is not used during tooth brushing. We practice this method using only water. Please do not send toothpaste with your child. Our goal is to brush or wipe off food residue to prevent tooth decay.

7.13 Sanitation Procedures

The procedure for sanitizing is removing dirt and bacteria so that the number of germs is reduced to such a level that the spread of the disease is unlikely.

Daily

Changing tables and potty chairs are cleaned and sanitized after each use. Mouthed toys are put into a container to be sanitized at the end of the day. Tables are cleaned and sanitized at the beginning and end of each day, prior to and after each meal and when soiled. A daily cleaning service is responsible for cleaning and sanitizing of floors, bathrooms including sinks, soap dispensers, faucets, toilet seats, toilet handles, cubicle handles and other touchable surfaces, doors and handles and cabinet handles along with vacuuming all rugs and carpets. Throughout the day, staff immediately, clean any areas that are visibly soiled or contaminated by body fluids.

Weekly

Cribs, mattresses and sheets are sanitized at the end of each week or as soiled. Additionally, parents have the responsibility of taking blankets, pillows and another belongings home at the end of each week to be washed. Dress-up clothes are laundered, and toys are sanitized weekly or as soiled.

Monthly

All rugs and carpets are steamed cleaned monthly by our cleaning team.

7.14 Idling Vehicles

As we do our part to contribute to a more *Eco-Friendly Environment*, Grace Discovery Center discourages idling vehicles in our parking areas, except vehicles that need to idle in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures.

7.15 Ratios

Grace Discovery Center strives to maintain a high standard of staff to child ratios during all hours of operation in classrooms, other indoor settings and outdoor learning environments.

Examples of written procedures that address how to maintain staff-to-child ratios and class size: Child supervision records, transition logs, head counts, attendance records, sign in and out sheets.

Developmentally Appropriate: Based on what we know about developments and learning of children within a given age range, while also considering each child's individual abilities and needs, and his or her cultural background.

Staff to child ratio: The number of children compared to the number of teaching staff.

Section 8: Evacuation and Emergency Drills

8.1 Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted monthly and emergency drills are conducted routinely as is required by the State. Our fire alarm system is monitored by a third party company to ensure that the Temple Fire Department is notified in a timely manner in the event of an emergency.

8.2 Tornado

If weather conditions indicate that tornadoes or severe thunderstorms may occur, the National Weather Service issues an advisory bulletin that is broadcast on television or radio. Police in the endangered area may use sirens to warn people to take cover. A tornado WATCH means that conditions are right for a tornado to form. A tornado WARNING means that a tornado has been sighted and precautions should be taken.

The school takes every precaution to protect the student in severe weather conditions. A tornado plan is to be clearly posted in every classroom, indicating designated safe areas. Students and employees are to proceed to their designated areas and remain there until further instructions are given.

Teachers will instruct students, when possible, to sit with their backs against the wall, bend knees to chest, and put hands over their heads.

Teachers are to have a plan available at a moment's notice to occupy students in the event of a lengthy drill. Reading a book or two is great.

Periodically drills will be conducted to ensure a quick and orderly move to assigned safety areas. Teachers on breaks are to go immediately to their classes to see that students are safely situated.

8.3 Evacuation Site

The field located to the left of the building has been designated as our “**safe place**” in the event of an evacuation. If this becomes necessary, we will relocate all staff and children to the following address: 209 E Avenue A, Temple, TX 76501
Phone: (254) 298-5500

Please note: (School age children) In the event of an Emergency Evacuation from your child’s school, they will be sent to a designated location assigned by TISD. WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE for picking up your child if this should occur. We will however, allow you to drop off your child at the normal after school time set for that day. Unfortunately, we do not have the staffing to take care of these children upon short notice.

Section 9: Developmental Needs

9.1 Staffing

Our classrooms are made up of exceptional, trained teachers who are dedicated to teaching developmentally appropriate skills in a safe, secure and loving environment. All staff members are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children. Additionally, staff must be at least 18 years of age with a high school diploma or equivalent, have a clear background and FBI check before being allowed to work with children. Personal references, a clear health assessment and a statement attesting to the ability to perform the tasks required to carry out the responsibilities of the position are also required.

Efforts are made to hire and maintain staff with the cultural and racial characteristics of the families served. Policies are in place for obtaining staff or volunteers who speak the language of the children served, and these individuals regularly interact with the children and families.

Grace Discovery Center strives to keep infants, toddlers and twos together with the same teaching staff for at least nine months.

9.2 Transitions

Continuity of care is a critical component of creating a quality-learning environment. Classrooms will be designed to allow children to remain with their primary care provider for nine months or longer whenever possible. Every

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attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children.

Staff works together with families to make children's transitions between classrooms and programs smooth and predictable. With parent permission, staff members collaborate and share relevant information between classrooms regarding the students enrolled. Staff is sure to help children transition by assisting them in a manner consistent with their ability to understand. A letter will be sent home to inform parents of the transition prior to the movement.

It is also important to us when our children are transitioning to another school. We provide all documents, assessments and important information to the new school and parent. If a family needs assistance finding a school to fit their child's needs, we will assist as much as possible.

9.3 Diapers, Pull-Ups and Wipes

For children who use diapers/pull-ups and wipes, these items are provided by the parents/guardians and must have a reasonable supply kept at Grace Discovery Center. Teachers will notify you when your child is in need of more.

Cloth diapers are permitted as long as the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and outer covering are changed as a unit. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home for laundering.

Diapers are changed when wet or soiled within 5 minutes of discovery. Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces:

- at least every two hours when children are awake
- when children awaken.
- before lying down for nap

9.4 Toilet Training

Toilet training is always done in accordance with the parent's wishes. Teachers take into consideration the child's physical and emotional readiness and we never attempt to train a child without parental consent. Toilet training does not "officially" begin until the child's teacher and the parents confer and both parties agree that the child is ready. Staff members and parents must work as a team on this effort, providing consistency with methods used at home and at school.

The family must provide several changes of clothing for children who are toilet training. Staff must promptly change soiled or wet diapers, pull-ups or clothing.

Soiled clothing must be put in a sealed container for parents to take home and wash.

9.5 Infants

9.5A Sleeping

Unless otherwise ordered by a physician, infants younger than 12 months are placed in a crib on their backs to sleep on a firm surface manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position.

Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in cribs or rest equipment for infants younger than eight months. Wedges may be used only with a doctor's authorization.

Lightweight infant sleep sacks are used as an alternative to blankets. If you prefer your child to use a blanket, it must be lightweight. Blankets are tucked around the crib mattress at the foot of the crib reaching only as far as the infant's chest. The infant's head remains uncovered during sleep.

9.5B Formula Bottle Feeding

Grace Discovery Center provides formula if desired. You may choose to provide your own. If you provide your own, it must be factory sealed and labeled with your child's name. Grace Discovery Center cannot accept opened cans of formula. Formula will only be given as per the instructions on the container, unless a doctor's note is provided. Formula bottles are prepared using tap water. If you prefer to have bottles prepared using bottled water, please provide the factory sealed bottled water and again, please label with your child's name.

All children six months and younger will be held while bottle feeding. Older infants, who are unable to hold their own bottle are held for bottle-feeding. Bottles are never propped or given while in a crib. All children will be fed on demand which is the best way to meet an infant's nutritional and emotional needs. However, we understand that feeding on demand does not mean offering food every time a child shows signs of discomfort. Needing a nap or a diaper change could also be the cause of crying.

To warm a bottle, a crock-pot is used not to exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no longer than 5 minutes. A microwave is never used for warming. Unconsumed formula is discarded after one hour and never refrigerated. An infant may

continue to drink the formula between burping or breaks within the hour time-frame.

Bottle feedings do not contain solid foods unless the child's health care provider supplies written instructions and a medical reason for this practice. Solid foods include cereals, fruits and vegetables: adding solids to bottles increases risks of choking, food allergies, and obesity.

Upon enrollment, parents must provide a container of ready-to-feed formula if needed for emergency evacuations.

9.5C Solid Foods

Staff does not offer solid foods to infants younger than six months, unless that practice is recommended by the child's health care provider and approved by families. Solid foods include cereals, fruits or vegetables. At seven months, parents are asked to provide nutritionally sound meals and snacks that are based on the infant's nutritional needs and developmental stages. Staff serves only foods and formulas that come to the facility in factory-sealed containers (e.g., ready-to-feed powder concentrate formulas and baby food jars) and are prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions. Staff cut foods into pieces no larger than 1/4 inch-square for chewing and swallowing purposes. Daily documentation of the type and quantity of food your child consumes is provided on the daily communication sheet to parents. **An infant needs to consume a food for 7 days at home before starting that food at Grace Discovery Center to ensure they will not have an allergic reaction.**

9.5D Juices

Sweetened juices are avoided and only 100% juice is served beginning at 6 months and is limited to four ounces per child daily.

9.5E Milk

Whole cow's milk is served from ages 12-24 months. Research shows the fat in whole milk attributes to growth and development, including the brain. For children between 12 months to 2 years of age for whom overweight or obesity is a concern or who have a family history of obesity, dyslipidemia, or CVD, the use of reduced-fat milk is appropriate. A physician's statement is needed for this substitution.

9.5F Breastfeeding

Breast feeding mothers are welcome and encouraged to nurse their infant as needed throughout the day. Grace Discovery Center will provide a private, comfortable place for moms to nurse their infant. Nursing moms are also welcome in the infant rooms. Grace Discovery Center provides (upon request) a compilation of breastfeeding education and support resources in Bell County.

Breast Milk

Breast milk may be brought in fresh every day and stored in the refrigerator or brought in weekly and stored in Grace Discovery Center's main kitchen freezer.

Breast milk must be labeled with the child's name, date and time expressed, and how many ounces are in the container. Breast milk is gently mixed, not shaken, by staff to preserve infection-fighting and nutritional components in human milk.

Breast milk may not be kept at room temperature for more than one hour if it has been previously frozen or refrigerated. A bottle of breast milk may only be warmed once and may not be put back in the refrigerator after it has been warmed; once a bottle has been warmed, the leftovers will be discarded. To warm a bottle, a crockpot is used (not to exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit) for no longer than 5 minutes. A microwave is never used for warming. Freshly expressed breast milk may be kept in the refrigerator for up to 48 hours. If breast milk was frozen and then thawed in the refrigerator it may be kept for 24 hours. Breast milk may be stored in the freezer for up to 3 months.

9.5G Shoe Policy

Our Infant room is a completely shoe free environment for caregivers and adults. Infants' hands and bodies frequently touch the floor. We want our floors free from gravel, dirt and germs that can be tracked in on shoes. Everyone entering the room will need to remove their shoes at the door. Shoe covers are also available for those that do not want to remove their shoes. Additionally, parents are welcome to drop their infant off at the door without entering the room. Walking infants are required to wear hard-soled shoes for the purpose of support and outside time.

9.6 Toddlers/Twos

9.6A Feeding

Grace Discovery Center will provide a nutritionally sound meal for their child that excludes: hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, peanut butter, and chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Staff will cut food into pieces no larger than 1/2 inch according to each child's chewing and swallowing ability.

Toddlers/twos do not carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while crawling or walking. Fluids are offered from a cup as soon as the families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use one.

Family style dining is used within the classroom; children are encouraged and guided in setting the table, serving themselves and clearing the table as developmentally appropriate.

9.6B Naptime

Children ages five and younger are given a two-hour block of time each day for rest and napping. Children are required to quietly lie down at the designated time. Grace Discovery Center provides cots for each child. Parents may send in a small blanket or beach towel (clearly marked with his/ her name) to be used during nap. Space is limited for storing pillows so small sizes are requested if you feel your child needs one. All nap items will be sent home for laundering on Fridays and should be returned on Mondays. We will sanitize your child's cot at least weekly or more often if soiled.

9.6C Potty Accidents

Accidents do happen; all parents must provide at least one change of clothing for children. Staff must promptly change soiled or wet diapers, pull-ups or clothing. **Soiled clothing must be put in a sealed container for parents to take home and wash.**

9.7 Preschoolers

9.7A Feeding

Grace Discovery Center will provide a nutritionally sound meal for their child that excludes: hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, peanut butter, and chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

Family style dining is used within the classroom; children are encouraged and guided in setting the table, serving themselves and clearing the table as developmentally appropriate.

9.7B Naptime:

Children ages five and younger are given a two-hour block of time each day for rest and napping. Children are required to quietly lie down at the designated time. Grace Discovery Center provides cots for each child. Parents may send in a small blanket or beach towel (clearly marked with his/ her name) to be used during nap. Space is limited for storing pillows so small sizes are requested if you feel your child needs one. All nap items will be sent home for laundering on Fridays and should be returned on Mondays. We will sanitize your child's cot at least weekly or more often if soiled.

9.7C Potty Accidents

Accidents can happen; all parents must provide at least one change of clothing for children. Staff must promptly change soiled or wet diapers, pull-ups or clothing.

Soiled clothing must be put in a sealed container for parents to take home and wash.

Section 10: Curriculum, Assessments and Special Programs

10.1 Curriculum

Grace Discovery Center uses a variety of curriculum choices to promote learning opportunities that meet the following goals:

- Children will achieve a positive sense of self and become confident, curious, independent learners.
- Children will engage in productive play and learning experiences that promote individual development in the following domains: social/emotional, cognitive, physical, and language.
- Children will treat others with respect and will develop caring human connections within their community.
- Children will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the natural environment.
- Children will develop social competence.

Lead teachers are responsible for preparing weekly lesson plans based on developmentally appropriate learning activities. These plans are posted on the Parent Information Board in each classroom for parent to view. Activities are planned for both the indoor and outdoor classroom; discoveries children make when exploring and experiencing nature and natural surroundings provides rich and fundamental learning opportunities. Activities are planned in the developmental areas of language, cognitive, fine motor, large motor physical skills, self-help and social-emotional skills. Family values, beliefs, languages and experiences are incorporated into the curriculum. The curriculum used in our program addresses adaptations and/or modifications for differences in age and ability; developmental stages, family needs, and other factors. Adaptations will be made for all children of all abilities. Adaptations for individual needs of children in the program are not limited to children with identified special needs. Please ask your child's teacher if you have any questions about lesson plans or would like to incorporate some ideas of your own.

10.2 Videos/Screentime

Children will from time to time watch educational videos with adult supervision. Grace Discovery Center purchases televisions; only videos that support the curriculum may be shown. The rating may not be higher than G and there will be absolutely no curse words what so ever. Videos will not be used in place of teaching but rather as an enrichment activity.

10.3 Curriculum

Grace Discovery Center believes in a “hands on” active learning approach to learning. It is our belief play is in fact where children learn best. Our Frog Street Curriculum allows our staff to observe, document and assess our specific children and design objective based, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. These learning experiences aid children in their skill development with the social/emotional, physical, language, literacy, cognitive, math, science/technology, social studies and artistic domains of learning.

10.4 Enhancement to Curriculum

Staff informs families about community events such as museum and art exhibits, concerts, storytelling, and theater intended for children. Members of the community are invited frequently to share their interests and talents with the children and to share cultural experiences to enrich and broaden their repertoire.

10.5 Outdoor Play/Physical Activity

As part of a well- rounded program, children will spend time outside each day in order to develop coordination and gross motor skills. They enjoy a change in environment and freedom of movement that is only provided outdoors. Outdoor activities develop social/emotional, physical, and language skills, increase the health and well-being of children and connect children to nature and the natural environment. When outdoor opportunities for large-motor activities are not possible, furniture is rearranged in the classroom to offer large open spaces.

Children have the opportunity to play in the shade. When in the sun, sun-protective clothing and/or sunscreen/sun block of SPF 15 or higher is applied to exposed skin. (Written parental permission is required before applying).

Children WILL GO OUTSIDE in colder weather. It is imperative that you send a coat, hats, gloves, etc. for your child to wear. You will be called if you have not provided adequate outerwear for your child. Of course, in extreme conditions, there will be indoor activities provided. We understand the importance for our children to receive fresh air and have opportunity for large muscle movement. The Director will make the call if it is not suitable for children to go outside in extreme weather situations. Unless a child is ill and going home, children will go outside with their class. ***Accommodations cannot be made to keep a child inside for any reason. If your child is not able to go outside due to illness, he or she should be kept home for the day.***

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to a high risk of insect borne disease, repellents only containing DEET are used with parental permission. Application is made once a day and is not applied to children 2 months or younger.

10.6 Assessments

Administrators and lead teachers that have been trained to implement and interpret scores, perform assessments within four weeks of the child's first day to allow the teacher knowledge of skills that are already accomplished. All assessments use words, pictures and concepts that are aligned with the curriculum goals and objectives that are sensitive to family culture, experiences, children's abilities and disabilities, children's interests and needs, and home languages. Assessments obtain information on all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional, approaches to learning, health and physical development (including self-help skills). Formal assessments are norm-referenced and standardized and are conducted twice a year in the fall and spring. Informal assessments are completed on an on-going basis to check for understanding and growth. Observation cards are filled-out on a continuous basis to aid in establishing patterns and evaluating child's progress. The results of all assessments, observations and work samplings are used by teachers in cooperation with parents, to set individualized goals for each child. Family members are provided information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's development and learning on a quarterly basis and written reports bi-annually and as needed to support the child's development. Assessment tools are available at all times for parents to view. All records of assessments are kept confidential and in a locked file cabinet.

10.7 Plans for Using Written Assessments

Assessments determine the developmental level of the child. If a child is developmentally ready both academically and socially for a transition to a different group, we make every effort to place them in an appropriate environment of peers with curriculum that best fits their needs.

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Grace Discovery Center believes early intervention is the key to future success. If assessments show that a child's developmental growth is not progressing, parents are notified for a conference to discuss the possibilities of arranging for a developmental screening and more in-depth assessment by a developmental pediatrician, diagnostician, psychologist, psychiatrist, therapists or other trained professional trained in assessments. Conferences can be held in the parent's native language if needed. Grace Discovery Center will work together with the professional and families to discuss results, to discuss adaptations to the curriculum, teaching practices and the environment to meet the individual needs of the child. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is put into place for teachers to follow in the classroom. Bi-annual formal assessments, informal assessments, observations and work samples are used to modify the plans.

10.8 Parent Conferences

Throughout the year staff will be required to schedule conferences to meet with parents/guardians. These conferences shall be designed so there is open conversation and two-sided discussion about the child's development in all areas. The initial conference shall provide an opportunity for the family member to share concerns and goals they have for their child. Future conferences shall review and update these goals.

All teachers are to schedule a parent – teacher conference with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd report card dates. The front office will give you these dates.

In the event a primary guardian cannot attend the conference, staff members shall ensure that the family members attending have written parental permission to receive information regarding any informal or formal assessment results. If the family member requests a translator or interpreter Grace Discovery Center shall seek staff, program and community support to provide requested service.

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Staff shall provide family members information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's development and learning on a quarterly basis and written reports bi-annually and as needed to support the child's development. Assessment tools are available at all times for parents to view. All records of assessments are kept confidential and in a locked file cabinet.

All families shall be made aware of programs and organizations that provide services that address the mental health, assessment and educational services for children outside of the program. Families shall be encouraged to utilize these services if there is a need.

Section 11: Discipline and Behavior Policy

It is the policy of Grace Discovery Center to use positive guidance techniques with children for correction and encouragement. Punishment does not accomplish anything positive and does not teach children how to handle problems. Therefore, **physical punishment, psychological abuse or coercion when disciplining a child is never used.** The goal of discipline and guidance is to foster self-discipline and teach children social competence. Interactions between teachers and children will always foster the development of positive self-concepts and will be conducive to the development of self-discipline and independence.

The goal of our discipline and guidance policy is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. Only under specific circumstances outlined in the Challenging Behavior Policy will exclusion from care be considered.

The following types of discipline and guidance, considered to be harsh, cruel, and/or unusual treatment, are prohibited by this program, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and the Standards set forth by NAEYC:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
3. Physical punishment including shaking, hitting, spanking, paddling, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time
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 with the door closed
9. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriate periods of time for the child's age.
10. Psychological abuse: to include shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, ostracism, withholding affection or frightening a child.
11. Coercion that includes rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up)

Under NO circumstances is it ever permissible for staff to use any form of physical punishment, psychological abuse, verbal abuse, or coercion

of any kind when disciplining children. All of these are strictly prohibited!

When inappropriate behavior occurs, it is dealt with immediately. Teachers individualize responses to the children's behavior, in relation to the particular child and the situation. They try to identify the cause of the inappropriate behavior and recognize that repeated problem behavior may be the child's way of communicating that he/she needs help in dealing with a certain task or situation.

Intervention Methods:

1. Anticipate—"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Teachers attempt to anticipate potential problems and take preventive action before problems start.
2. Gentle Reminders-Ongoing reminders of classroom rules, limits, and acceptable behavior. Reminders are stated positively (i.e. "Please walk" rather than "Stop running").
3. Redirection- redirection of children's attention from an inappropriate choice of behavior to an appropriate choice.
4. Substitution-Substitution of appropriate choices and/or materials when a child has made an inappropriate choice and/or inappropriate use of materials.
5. Choices-Children are given the opportunity to make decisions about their behavior. Teacher's help children learn to make choices, through training and practice. This helps children understand that they have the ability to make good judgments and decisions on their own. The essential element in giving children choices is that all the choices offered are acceptable to the child and the adult.
6. Problem Solving-By asking open-ended questions, teachers encourage children to problem solve/talk about their behavior and /or use materials properly. This method is only used when the child is not hurting or endangering him/her or others.
7. Praise-Statements used to positively reinforce appropriate behavior. Praise increases the probability that the behavior will occur again. Praise is meaningful and specific and describes exactly what the child did.
8. Logical or natural consequences-Consequences for behavior that are directly related the children's actions.
9. Ignore-Ignoring inappropriate behavior does not produce any interesting consequences, which may lead to the disappearance of the behavior. This method is only to be used when the child is not hurting or endangering him/her or others.
10. Removal-Removing a child from a situation that is not safe for the child and/or other children in the room.

11. Renewal Time-Helping children regain control of their behavior through time away from the disruptive situation. Renewal time is done in the *spirit of support*, not in the spirit of punishment. An adult will sit with the child in a quiet area and help the child regain control of his behavior and emotions. The adult can also use this opportunity to talk with the child about his or her behavior and the situation. Grace Discovery Center does not use “time out” due to the fact that it does not teach the child an appropriate way to handle situations.

When the teacher sees a conflict situation rising, he/she tries to identify causes and responds by stating what the child should do instead. For example, “You can put the block here on the shelf” instead of “Don’t throw the block on the floor.” If the inappropriate behavior continues, the teacher will tell the child the rule and consequences of the behavior. For example, “Throwing blocks may hurt someone, we use blocks to build things. If you throw blocks, you will need to make another choice of where to play.” The teacher is careful to emphasize that it is the behavior that is unacceptable, not the child. We ask that to keep consistency with discipline.

To keep parents informed of all situations involving serious behaviors, the teacher completes a Behavior Incident Form that will be available for the parent to read and sign at pick up time.

4.3 – Challenging Behavior Policy

If a child displays repeated **challenging behavior**, teachers, families, and other professionals work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child’s inclusion and success. The teachers and administrative staff will have ongoing conversations with parents to express concerns and discuss strategies in addressing challenging behaviors. These conversations will be framed around the objectives of the program. Parents will be kept informed as to their child’s progress.

“Challenging behavior is any behavior that (1) interferes with children’s learning, development and success at play, (2) is harmful to the child, other children, or adults, or (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure.”

Some examples of “challenging behavior” includes physical aggression (hitting, biting, shoving, whacking with toys), relational aggression (“You can’t play with us”, verbal bullying), tantrums, whining, testing limits, refusal to follow directions or observe classroom rules.

If serious adjustment or behavior challenges occur after a child is enrolled and intervention methods have not deemed successful, a conference will be scheduled

with the family, teacher and administration to develop an Individualized Behavior Improvement Plan (Appendix II).

Steps to follow in addressing a child's challenging behavior are as follows:

- 1) Assess the function of the behavior.
- 2) Work with families and professionals to develop an individualized plan to address the behavior.
- 3) Implement appropriate identified positive behavior support strategies (as outlined in the Behavior Improvement Plan).

Termination of Services: We reserve the right to exclude a child from care or terminate enrollment **ONLY** if all steps listed below have been taken:

- a child's needs cannot be met, or
- a parent or guardian refuses the action plan or recommended services, or
- if services are provided or behavior plans implemented, and the child's condition does not improve satisfactorily, or
- if continued enrollment of the child does not represent the best interest of the child, the Center, the staff, or the other children in the classroom.
- NOTE: This policy is communicated to all families and staff!

Grace Discovery Center reserves the right to give parents or guardians a termination of all services at the end of a stated amount of time or date. However, if Grace Discovery Center cannot meet the child's needs while at the same time successfully providing care and education for all the other children in the room, Grace Discovery Center will recommend alternative placement to the parent.

Supplemental services are offered within the facility with a psychologist, diagnostician, counselor, speech, occupational and physical therapists as well as Board Certified Behavior Analysts for any family including those who must find alternative child care. Additionally, our management will offer assistance in finding alternative care arrangements, as we are able. We realize that early intervention is the key to a child's future success and are committed to making that happen. We also believe that when children can have the influence of their peers in a safe and secure environment, their educational experience is enhanced. At all times, the goal is what is best for **all** children. Grace Discovery Center's policy acknowledges and complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

Classroom Equipment

Children are expected to care for all books and equipment within their classroom. If a child intentionally damages books and/or equipment belonging to Grace Discovery Center, parents may be required to pay for their replacement.

In conclusion:

We hope your experience with us is a pleasant one! We will continue to observe and abide by our set policies as well as all of the State Minimum Standards. We encourage you to drop by and see us any time to observe your child or to help out with special activities. Our Directors are always available by phone or in person if you wish to discuss any matters of interest. We will be happy to assist you should *any* problems arise. Please give us any suggestions on ways for us to better serve you or your child. Your input is greatly valued and appreciated.

And as always, thank you for giving us the greatest opportunity- to serve and care for your child.

Questions & Concerns

If you have a question or concern that cannot be addressed by your child's teacher, please contact the director to arrange a meeting or call to discuss your concern.

Handbook Reviews and Updates

Grace Discovery Policies are reviewed annually and are updated as needed. They will be provided to you upon updating and will be asked to Review and sign an acknowledgement.

Reviewing Standards & Reports

A copy of minimum standards are available for review in our front office. Our most recent licensing inspector report is always posted on the bulletin board in the foyer. You may also review the standards and our compliance history at www.txchildcaresearch.org

Contacting Child Care Licensing

We are required by the department of Family and Protective Services. You can find out more about the regulation of child care facilities by visiting their website at www.txchildcaresearch.org

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have received and agreed to all the 2019 operational policies of the Grace Discovery Center.

Parent/Guardian Signature

_____ Date

Grace Staff Signature of Receipt

_____ Date