

Children's Center of Damascus Family Handbook



WELCOME

We welcome you to the Children's Center of Damascus. We believe you have made the best possible decision for your child's pre-school/childcare needs. We want your time with us to be interactive and communicative so that together we can all enjoy the excitement and wonder of children.

This handbook has been prepared to introduce you to our programs, policies and procedures.

Philosophy

Our goal at the Children's Center is to provide a secure, loving, educational environment for all children. Every child is welcomed into our center family as a unique individual while having universal needs for cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth and development.

Therefore, this is an opportunity for our dedicated teachers to create and implement educational programs that are age appropriate in the areas of language arts, math, science, social studies, art, music, health and safety.

We believe children learn most effectively through playing and interacting with their peers in a social setting enriched by developmentally appropriate materials and activities. This stimulating environment provides an avenue by which young children begin to learn about themselves and how they relate to the world around them. Within this framework The Children's Center program provides a setting where each child can develop and strengthen a positive self-image with the guidance of our well qualified, nurturing teachers.

The program objectives for children are to:

1. Interact effectively with both peers and adults by:
 - a. working and playing with others, using appropriate social skills;
 - b. developing independence and responsibility;
 - c. strengthening gross and fine motor skills;
 - d. practicing good safety habits.

2. Gain knowledge and understanding of the work in which each child lives by:
 - a. building upon innate creativity and curiosity;
 - b. understanding and developing both receptive and expressive language skills;
 - c. developing basic readiness skills and acquiring information in a variety of content areas such as language arts, math, science, social studies, music, art, health and safety;
 - d. reinforcing learning through integration of home, school and community.

These are the basic objectives for the children of the Children's Center; however, we know that you, as the parent, are your child's first teacher and so, ultimately, we want to partner with you to create learning experiences that guarantees success for your child in our social environment.

Snapshot of Important Policies and Procedures

Hours of Operation

- Early Learning Developmental Program – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

- Lunch Bunch 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Pre K Program – 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- Early Learning Developmental Program PLUS Full Day Childcare – 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
- School Age Program – 7 a.m. until bus departure and bus arrival until 5:30 p.m.
- Summer School Age Program – 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Program Operation

- Early Learning Developmental Program – Concurrent with MCPS School Year and Separate Summer Enrichment Program (mid-June through August)
- Early Learning Developmental Program PLUS Full Day Child Care program for children ages Infant through 5 years old – School Year and Separate Summer Enrichment Program (mid-June through August)
- School Age Program – School Year (concurrent with MCPS)
- Summer Camp – Full summer except closed one day at the beginning of summer camp and one day at the end of summer camp

Elementary Schools Served – Clearspring, Damascus, and Woodfield. Transportation to and from Clearspring is provided by school system bus. Transportation to Damascus and Woodfield is provided by our private bus or van.

Holidays

The center is closed on the following holidays:

- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous People Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday immediately following Thanksgiving Day
- Winter Break (Christmas Eve 12/24 through New Year's Day 1/1)

**If the holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed in observance of the holiday the Friday before. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed in observance of the holiday the Monday after.*

Teacher In-Service

The center may close two school days in each calendar year for Teacher In-Service Days. These days are typically taken at the beginning and end of the summer session. You will be notified at least one month in advance of the dates of these closings.

Inclement Weather Delays and Closures

Closure and delay decisions involve careful evaluation of a variety of factors in a short time period. We strive to give our families as much warning as possible for closures or delays so families can plan. Based on the forecast and existing road conditions, a decision is made by 6:30a.m. whenever possible. Once a decision is made, our management team quickly communicates the closure or delay via an alert/message through Brightwheel and an update on our Facebook page.

In the event of inclement weather, please be sure to check your messages via Brightwheel for any updates before heading into the center.

If MCPS has a delayed opening, we will open on the same delayed schedule as MCPS for children who attend all day and for school age children. There will be no morning preschool for children who leave before 1:00 p.m.

If weather conditions are severe and Montgomery County Public Schools are closed, we will also close. If Federal Government closes, we may close as well.

When Montgomery County Public Schools are closed or have a delayed opening, our Early Learning Developmental Program is also closed.

Inclusion

Children's Center of Damascus' vision is to be recognized as an outstanding child care center and the preferred choice of child care needs in the community that we serve. Our goal at the Children's Center is to provide a secure, loving, educational environment for all children. Every child is welcomed into our center family as a unique individual while having universal needs for cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth and development. We are committed to guiding every child in our care in developing their full potential. We strive to provide a positive environment and a strong support system. All children, families, and staff are welcome in our program without consideration to cultural background, religion, gender, or economic status.

Children's Center of Damascus is committed to making reasonable accommodations for those with special needs when necessary. This includes but is not limited to children with physical, developmental, emotional and educational needs. In order to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all children in our program we actively collaborate with children, parents and outside community resources as needed. If applicable, at

the time of enrollment, we ask that families' provide us with a copy of the child's IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individualized Education Plan) and maintain a current copy on file. Upon receiving the IFSP or IEP the leadership team of Children's Center of Damascus and the teachers will meet to discuss and create a plan to support the IFSP or IEP. Throughout our curriculum and daily lessons, we will incorporate flexible grouping to assist each child in reaching their full potential by adapting each lesson to meet the individual developmental needs. We encourage a cohesive relationship between the Center, family and outside agencies to ensure we are meeting the plan outlined in the IFSP or IEP both at home and at the Center level. A quarterly meeting will be requested between the family, teacher and any outside agency that may be working with the child to discuss the progress or challenges the child may be facing.

At Children's Center of Damascus we encourage a diverse and inclusive environment. We believe that all children, with or without special needs, will benefit from developing relationships with their peers while gaining an appreciation and acceptance of individual differences. Providing a diverse environment will allow children to gain an understanding and provide early exposure to social expectations in an inclusive society. Diversity will be reflected in our program through our curriculum, lessons, materials, books and the environment. Children's Center of Damascus will provide learning experiences that are meaningful and beneficial to each child's unique learning style and individual ability.

Curriculum Overview

The Children's Center of Damascus, as part of our program, uses Teaching Strategies: The Creative Curriculum for our preschool children. This curriculum is approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), which is the agency responsible for licensing all childcare and preschool centers throughout the state. This curriculum helps us to prepare children for entry into the Maryland Public Schools. You can learn more about The Creative Curriculum at

<https://teachingstrategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-Creative-Curriculumfor-Preschool-Touring-Guide.pdf>

Programs Offered

The Children's Center of Damascus is a multi-service child care facility licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care. We provide full time or part-time child care programs for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years old.

We also offer an Early Learning Developmental Program from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Children ages 2 through 5 that are present with us during this time of day will participate in this program. Also, this program is available to families who need pre-school exclusively. Those clients must register for a minimum of two days per week of pre-school.

If you need child care surrounding the Early Learning Program, we provide planned activities that are developmentally appropriate from 7:00am until 9:00 a.m. and noon to 5:30 p.m. These activities include art, music, outdoor play, imaginary playtime and table games. Lunch and story time occur between noon and 1:00 p.m. followed by naptime until 3:00 p.m.

Child care is provided also for school age children, kindergarten through fifth grade who need care before and after school, on early release days, as well as school holidays. Transportation to and from Clearspring is provided by Montgomery County Public Schools. Transportation to Woodfield, Damascus and Lois P. Rockwell is provided by our own bus. There is an additional fee for use of our bus.

Our before and after school programs offers homework time, a snack, outdoor time, weather permitting and a variety of arts and crafts.

The summer program is run separately from the school year program; therefore, a separate registration is required. The Center offers a pre-school curriculum based on a weekly thematic approach incorporating many out of door activities. For the elementary school children, we offer a summer day camp program which includes a wide variety of engaging experiences with field trips as well as on site activities and visitors to make the summer filled with fun.

Summer camp for school age children (K-5th grade) is offered by week and parents can choose the weeks they need and pay for that week each Monday. However, once you have signed your summer enrollment agreement, you may not change your weeks and there is no refund for weeks not used.

Our Staff

All of our teachers are qualified based on requirements outlined by Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care to teach the program and age group to which they are assigned. In order to remain qualified, teachers must have continuing education as required by the State. Most of our staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. Criminal background checks are required for everyone who works in childcare. Our staff also participates in the Maryland Child Care Credential program.

Communication

Parent, administration and staff communication is critical for the relationship we want to build with our families and for the development of your child or children. Feel free to share both the positive and negative feedback with us. You may call the center at **301-253-6864**. We have voicemail and we check it frequently. You may also email the Director at director@childrenscenterdamascus.com or the Assistant Director at asstdirector@childrenscenterdamascus.com. If you have concerns about your child's

development, speak with the teacher. If your concerns are of a more serious nature, please call the office. If you have questions about changes to your schedule, questions about your bill or to report your child's absence, contact the office.

Our management team and teaching staff will use multiple methods to keep parents engaged and informed. Our main form of communication will be through Brightwheel. Upon enrollment, you will be invited by the Director to join Brightwheel. This tool will be used to communicate pertinent information about your child's day as well as information pertaining to your account. Other physical methods such as white boards, newsletters, notices and fliers, as well as electronic methods such as email and our website may be used to communicate. In addition, teachers in each classroom communicate using monthly newsletters, notes in your child's cubby as well as white boards or other notices on their doors.

Behavior Management and Discipline Policy

The CCD behavior management policy reflects a philosophy of providing a supportive and healthy emotional climate for all children. Our goal is to help children develop positive self esteem, social skills and internal behavior controls that enable them to comfortably engage in all types of activities in the early childhood classroom setting. Age appropriate expectations, careful planning and the availability of a rich variety of appropriate play materials and activities help to create an environment where behavior problems may be prevented. When disruptive behaviors do occur positive guidance techniques are used. These techniques include:

- Expectations for behavior and limits are clearly defined and consistently maintained
- Children participate in forming the "rules" of the classroom; rules are few in number, simple, stated in positive terms, posted in the classroom and reviewed with the children
- Adults model appropriate behavior
- Children are given opportunities to choose activities and behaviors
- Appropriate behaviors are noticed and positively reinforced using attention and verbal encouragement; effort is recognized and encouraged, even if child makes mistakes or is unsuccessful
- Children are encouraged and assisted to "use words" to talk out their frustrations or solve conflicts with each other
- Redirection and logical consequences are used to correct inappropriate behaviors; teachers may also ignore a behavior if it appears the child is "asking" for attention
- As a last resort, a child may be temporarily removed from an activity for behaviors that endanger the child, other people or property and to allow quiet time for the child to gain control.

Child care staff will document evidence of recurring disruptive, violent or other unacceptable behaviors. The staff will attempt to change such behaviors using positive guidance techniques. If behavior continues or is extremely dangerous or disruptive, the

teacher and director of the center will discuss the situation with the parents and a behavior plan and timeline will be established. Outside consultants or referral for evaluation may also be used. If the child's behavior is consistently disruptive in such a manner that it puts the child or other children at risk of serious harm, despite these efforts at remediation, the Children's Center of Damascus reserves the right to give the parent notice of termination of services for the child.

Maryland **child care regulations** (COMAR 13A.16.07.01) prohibit abuse, neglect, mental injury and injurious treatment of children. Injurious treatment includes: spanking, hitting, shaking, or any other means of physical discipline or enforcement of acts which result in physical pain; failure to attend to a child's physical needs; subjecting a child to verbal abuse intended to cause mental distress, such as shouting, cursing, shaming, or ridiculing; and using discipline methods which create undue discomfort.

Child care staff may not force a child to eat or drink, punish a child for refusing to eat or drink or withhold food or beverages as a punishment. Child discipline shall be appropriate to the age, maturity and physical condition of the child.

Any staff person violating this discipline policy will be subject to personnel actions, which may include suspension or dismissal.

Important Information for Parents of Children in Child Care Facilities – The Children's Center of Damascus is licensed through the Maryland State Department of Education. For further information on MSDE Office of Child Care and Licensing go to www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/childcare/licensingbranch

Screen Time

The Children's Center of Damascus provides an activity-focused early learning environment. We believe children learn best through active participation, hands-on experiences, interactive conversation, and exploration. CCD follows the recommendations established by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has found that too much television viewing has been linked to poor performance in school, overweight children, and the establishment of poor dietary habits. As such, children at CCD under age two will not have access to television viewing, which includes watching videos, or DVDs, playing with video games, and using the computer. For children age two and older screen time is limited to 60 minutes per week and no more than 30 minutes at a time. "Passive" screen time is not permitted within the school; all screen time is facilitated screen time and only used to support the lesson plan for all children of all ages. Teachers are actively engaged with children before, during and after facilitated screen time. Computer use is limited to 15 minute increments per child not to exceed 30 minutes daily, and for the purposes of enhancing educational experiences only. School-age children who are completing homework, school work, or supervised enrichment activities will have additional access to computers and digital resources as needed. Parental controls are in place on all computers. Teachers will supervise the use

of computers to protect from exposure to inappropriate websites. We ask that all personal electronics and screen type devices not be brought to the schools. This includes but is not limited to iPods, iPhones, and tablets of any kind. CCD is not responsible for the replacement or repair of any such personal devices in our schools

Family Code of Conduct

One of our goals is to provide an appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of the CCD, but also of each family member or adult who enters the school. We require all adults to conduct themselves in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. The actions that hinder a positive environment are but are not limited to the following:

- Swearing or cursing
- Threatening of employees, children or other parents
- Physical or verbal punishment of your child or other children in the school
- Smoking
- Confrontational interactions at the school The law authorizes CCD to deny access to a parent or other adult if the behavior of that person poses a risk to the children or employees.

Security

Our doors have a keypad entry system. Parents are issued a code to gain access to the center. Do not share the code with anyone except your authorized pick up persons. No one is allowed access to the school without proper identification and authorization.

The Children's Center of Damascus has determined that the use of surveillance cameras is necessary to ensure the safety of employees, customers, Company property, and Company equipment. While the main purpose of the surveillance cameras is to promote safety and security and to deter theft, the Company reserves the right to use footage on such cameras for the purpose of monitoring the performance of the classrooms in compliance with Company policies.

The Company has installed multiple surveillance cameras across the premises. Access to footage will only be provided to authorized individuals on a need-to-know basis. Personal information contained on the footage shall not be used or disclosed for purposes other than those for which it was collected, except with the consent of the individual or as required by law.

Footage from the surveillance cameras will generally be kept for 2 weeks.

Emergency Procedures

Fire drills are conducted monthly. As required by the state, we have a plan in the event of an emergency. If we need to evacuate the premises, we can take the children to our center at St. Anne's Church on Ridge Road. Parents are notified as soon as possible in the event of an emergency. In the event of a tornado warning, all children are taken to an interior space with no windows. Children in the infant and Toddler room are taken to the basement of the house.

Policies and Procedures

The hours of operation at the Children's Center of Damascus are from 7a.m. until 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday for child care. The morning preschool curriculum program begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 12 noon each day. We offer a school year program and a separate summer program. You may enroll for each one separately or yearround.

Enrollment and Registration

The Children's Center of Damascus does not discriminate against race, color, religion or national origin.

We open registration each year in January for our current families first and then contact our waiting list families and continue to enroll until classes are full.

To enroll your child the following is required:

Enrollment Agreement

Registration Fee

Deposit of one half month's tuition. This is refunded upon withdrawal provided you have given two weeks' notice and do not have an outstanding balance.

Health Inventory

Immunization Record

Emergency Form

All About Form

Photo Permission Form

Tuition Express Registration Form

Parents must register each year by completing a Renewal Form and submitting a registration fee.

Checking in and Out

The state of Maryland requires that parents must sign their child in and out each day. We do this by using Brightwheel. The state accepts this as an electronic signature that is part of our child care software system. It is also used for billing purposes. If you fail to clock your child in or out, let the office know right away so we can sign them out.

Tuition and Billing

Tuition is determined in your Enrollment Agreement. Tuition is billed monthly. Tuition invoices are emailed at the beginning of the month. Monthly tuition is due on the first of each month and payable through the 7th of each month. A ten percent late fee is added to your balance after the 7th of the month. If the 7th falls on a weekend or holiday, tuition will be due the next business day.

Tuition for school age summer camp is billed weekly and payment is due each Monday by 5:30 p.m.

All payments are made via Brightwheel.

Late Pick-up

Children picked up after 5:30 p.m. are charged \$2.00 per minute.

Absence, Illness and Injury

Please report absence either by phone or email. We are required to keep track of attendance and absence and illness. This applies to all children enrolled in the center.

We are required to follow the guidelines of Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood publication of Illness and Reportable Diseases in Child Care dated May 9, 2016 as follows:

When it is Necessary to Exclude Sick Children from Care

A child may be excluded from care if:

The child's illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities that the facility routinely offers for well children or mildly ill children.

- 1) The child is displaying any of the signs and symptoms that require an evaluation from a health care provider as indicated by the child's age and condition. In this situation the parent is notified of the need for immediate emergent or urgent issues.

- 2) The illness requires more care than the child care staff is able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group.
- 3) The child exhibits an acute change in behavior, and examples include lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash.
- 4) The child with fever: Temperature at or above 100.0° F orally, 101 ° F rectally or or 99.4° F axillary (armpit) or temporally (forehead). Exclusion due to fever should be based on disease-specific guidelines or other clinical guidance from the child's health care provider.
- 5) The child with Diarrhea: Loose or watery stools of increased frequency that is not associated with change in diet or stools that are not able to be contained by a diaper or be controlled /contained by usual toileting practices. Exclude until diarrhea has resolved and child is diarrhea-free for at least 24 hours; or until cleared by medical provider.
- 6) The child with Vomiting: Two or more episodes of vomiting in a 24 hour period. The child should be excluded until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider clears for return.
- 7) The child has mouth sores with drooling unless the child's primary care provider or local health department authority states that the child is noninfectious.
- 8) The child with rash with fever or behavioral changes, until the primary care provider has determined that the illness is not an infectious disease.
- 9) The child with Impetigo/Scabies, until treatment has been started.
- 10) The child with Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease: Fever, uncontrollable "hand to mouth" behavior, not able to contain their secretions, such as ulcers in the mouth and the child is drooling, or draining sores that cannot be covered.

If child care staff is uncertain about whether the child's illness poses an increased risk to others, exclude the child until a health care provider notifies the child care program that the child may attend. If a child's illness does not meet any of the above criteria or infectious disease criteria for exclusion as listed in the DHMH Communicable Disease Summary, the child should not be excluded."

If your child shows signs of illness we will contact you to have you come pick your child up.

Staff will have prepared an illness report indicating the symptoms of the illness. Parents sign one copy for the child's record and take one copy with them.

If the event of an injury, our staff are trained in CPR and First Aid as is required by the state. Staff will prepare an "ouch report" for minor injuries. If the injury involves the head or is more serious we will call you. If it is a serious injury we will call 911 and then parents immediately.

Medication

Medication can be administered according to the following guidelines:

A medication form must be completed fully by a prescriber and parent in order for child care providers and staff to administer the required medication. A new medications administration form must be completed at the beginning of each 12 month period, for each medication, and each time there is a change in dosage or time of administration of a medication.

- Prescription medication must be in a container labeled by the pharmacist or prescriber.
- Non-prescription medication must be in the original container with the label intact.
- Parent/Guardian must bring the medication to the facility and hand to a staff person.
- Must pick up the medication at the end of authorized period, otherwise it will be discarded.

Only staff who are trained in medication administration are allowed to administer medication to a child.

For the use of **sunscreen and diaper cream**, a Topical Application Form can be completed by the parent. A Medication form is not required

Early Learning Program Calendar

Our Early Learning Program (9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. or 1 p.m.) follows the Montgomery County Public School Calendar for closings.

Please note, there will be no credit on tuition for any closing of the Center or your child's designated program, including closings due to any act of nature or mechanical failure of any kind.

Change of Schedule

If you need to increase your child's schedule, you must contact the center office to see if room is available. If so, you must notify a member of management via email by the 25th of the month prior to the schedule change. If you need to decrease your child's schedule, you must notify a member of management via email at least 2 weeks prior to the requested schedule change.

Termination of Enrollment by Parent

You may terminate your enrollment by giving us two weeks' notice via email. Failure to give notice will result in a forfeit of your tuition deposit. If there is any outstanding balance on your account at the time of withdrawal, the balance will be deducted from your deposit.

The refund of deposit is issued through an accountant and a check is sent to the office and the office then mails the check to you. It can take 6 weeks to complete this process.

*School Age summer camp enrollments must be finalized by the end of May each year. Finalized schedules cannot be changed or cancelled for any reason. All tuition fees will be charged and due regardless of attendance.

Termination of Enrollment by Center

The Center may terminate enrollment effective immediately if the child's or parent's behavior poses a threat to the physical safety or mental health of other persons in the center or if the parent fails to cooperate with professional guidance of our staff for the appropriate developmental progress of their child, any account is not current in accordance with the terms of the Enrollment Agreement or the Parent breaches any provision of the Enrollment Agreement. Upon immediate termination the parent agrees to pay all outstanding balances within five calendar days of the effective date of the termination.

Field Trips

Venturing out of the classroom fosters children's connectedness within the community and offers opportunities to try new experiences and enhance learning. You will be a given permission slip in advance listing all the details of the trip. We hire a licensed and insured contractor or we can use our own bus or van. A higher adult to child ratio will increase the safety and success of our field trips.

Birthday Policy

Birthdays are very special for young children, and we want to recognize that day. If you would like to provide a special treat for your child's birthday, please schedule the date

and time with the teachers in your child's classroom. Be sure to include enough treats for the entire class. Parents are asked to check with teachers beforehand on birthday party menus to ensure that allergies will not be an issue. If you are planning a home party or at another location, invitations may not be handed out at school unless all children in the class are invited.

Parent Meetings and Conferences

We encourage parents to communicate with staff anytime they have a concern about their child's developmental progress.

Newsletters

Each preschool class provides a monthly newsletter detailing upcoming events and objectives for the month. Newsletters are placed in children's cubbies or sent directly via Brightwheel.

Visitation

We have an open door policy. Parents must report to the office before entering the classroom.

Release of Child to Authorized Individuals

Only the parents and persons listed on your child's emergency form are allowed to pick your child up. If the staff has never met the parent or other persons on the emergency form, you will be asked for identification. If someone else is picking your child up, you must call the center, write a note to the teacher, or email the center to give authorization for us to release your child.

Parking Lot and Safety

Slow down when entering the driveway. Children may not be left in cars unattended. You may not leave your car running at any time. Be aware of other families and children on the parking lot and follow the standard bus safety rules. If a bus is dropping off or picking children up, you must not drive around the bus; you must come to a full stop. No child should be left unsupervised outside or allowed to leave a classroom without adult supervision. We care about the safety of all our families.

Notice of Policy Changes

CCD provides a parent handbook to uphold our promise to educate parents on our unique program offering. This handbook is subject to change without notice. Updated policies will be distributed to families from the school management.

Details of all our policies are contained in the Enrollment Agreement.

Please sign and detach the bottom of this page and return to the office.



Receipt of Children's Center of Damascus Parent Handbook

I have read and received the Parent Handbook and agree to abide by the policies.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Print Name

Print Name

Date

Date