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LIL TOTS LEARNING CENTER

HANDBOOK



WELCOME

Welcome to Lil Tots Learning Center. I am a professional childcare provider who loves kids. To facilitate greater understanding between us I have created this handbook. It covers my childcare philosophies, business policies and expectations. In order to make our relationship as enjoyable as possible, the following pages contain mutually beneficial requirements, which are necessary to ensure that there are no misunderstandings between either parties. The words "I" or "me" or "my" refers to the childcare provider. The word "you" or "your" refers to the child's parents or guardian.

* Please read this handbook carefully, and feel free to discuss with me any questions that you may have.

MY CHILD CARE PHILOSOPHY

As a family childcare provider, my goal is to provide a safe and happy place for children where they can learn and grow physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially at their own pace. I believe children learn through play and benefit from a structured yet flexible schedule. Activities will be offered which stimulate sensory motor development, language development and social interaction. The development of strong self-esteem is also a major goal. Children will be taught to respect each other, adults, and property.

MY BACKGROUND

I have one child of my own, a son, named Braden who will be in attendance after school at the childcare home. I have provided child care since I was in my early teens & was the neighbor babysitter. Before starting my own home daycare/learning center I was a back-up provider for Paula Hyden & her home daycare in Oklahoma when needed. I also provided child care for her own children in my teen yrs. I am actively involved with Special Olympics Texas. I am a volunteer and coach. I assist my husband's Special Olympics program at Lamar High School. I am also CPR/First Aid certified.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is very important to me. When I accept a new family into my business, I like to be sure that we can share openly any concerns or questions that may arise. It is important that there is a similar childcare philosophy between us. I welcome questions, feedback, or discussions of any kind that are oriented towards a positive outcome for the child(ren).

Sensitive issues will be discussed in private outside of regular childcare hours either by telephone or conference. Conferences will not be scheduled as a routine part of your child's care; however, should you like to have a conference, you may request one at any time.

I publish a monthly newsletter that will explain some of the activities we are doing, our current curriculum themes, events that will be happening during that month, my days off, and any other pertinent or fun information that may be of interest to you. You are always welcome to contribute to our newsletter.

Parents of infants will receive a daily communicator. Some typical things you may find on this paper would be feedings, diaper changes, schedule, temperament, and things to remember. Parents of toddlers & preschoolers will also receive a daily communicator. Some typical things you may find on this paper would be things to remember, rest schedule, activities, temperament, and meals. Also for the toddler & preschoolers they will receive a daily behavior communicator letting you know how well they participated, listened, followed directions, accepted corrections positively, etc.

You are encouraged to call me at any time between the hours of 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. If you call during the day, please be aware that I may be busy with the children and may not be able to answer the phone. If you would leave a message on my voice mail, I will call you back as soon as possible. The best time to call during the day is during our daily quiet time (12:30-3:30 p.m.). I am looking forward to a terrific relationship with you and your child!

ENROLLMENT POLICY

There are several forms that I must have completed and in my possession before I can assume the responsibility of caring for your child. NO EXCEPTIONS. This is to ensure that your child will get the very best care possible from me. The forms are as follows:

- 1) Admission Information
- 2) Copy of Current Shot Record
- 3) Health Record signed by Doctor
- 4) Authorization for Emergency Medical Care Form
- 5) Child Pick Up Authorization
- 6) Child •s Identification Record

- 7) Acknowledgement of Policies
- 8) Exclusion Policy
- 9) Behavior Policy
- 10) Over the Counter Medication Form
- 11) Child Abuse/Neglect Protocol
- 12) Activity Authorization Form
- 13) Basic Release
- 14) About Your Child
- 15) Parent/Provider Agreement (Contract)

- 16) Acceptance Form

*You are required to keep me informed of any change in addresses, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information listed on any/all of the above forms. If you have any questions regarding the completion of these forms, please feel free to ask.

REGISTRATION/SECURITY DEPOSIT

Before your child is admitted into childcare, you must pay a registration/security deposit. This is a non-refundable deposit. The deposit helps protect me from unexpected family departures. Deposits are equal to half of your normal weekly fee. (Example: If your weekly fee is \$135.00 then the registration/security deposit would be \$67.50.) In the event your child does not start care by the agreed upon date, your position will be forfeited. For all slots held longer than two weeks in advance, you will pay a \$25 fee for each week your child is not yet in attendance. All fee rules apply.

MATERNITY/EXTENDED LEAVE

In cases of your potential absence due to maternity or extended leave from your job, I still require full childcare rate payments for the entire time of your absence to hold your child's position. In cases of maternity leave where you will be placing your new baby into my care, you will be required to fill out all necessary enrollment forms no less than two weeks prior to the baby's starting date. A security deposit is also required at this time equal to the difference of your new weekly rates with 2 children in care and your current rate. If you are a long-term client and your child has been in my care before I required a security deposit, your deposit will equal a full one-week's pay for 2 children at the time of enrollment of the new baby. See Security Deposit for details.

TRIAL PERIOD

All new children will be cared for on a two-week (14 calendar days) trial period beginning on your child's first actual day of care. During that time the parent or provider may terminate the childcare agreement with 24 hours notice. After the trial period, a two-week's written notice is required by either party to terminate the agreement (See Termination Policy).

FEES/PAYMENT PROCEDURES

Your specific rates will be outlined in your Contract and Rate Agreement. Payment is payable in advance and is due no later than drop off time on the first contracted care day of each week. If this day is a holiday, payment is expected on the previous day. If you go away on vacation, payment is due BEFORE you leave. If it is my planned day(s) off, your payment is expected BEFORE I leave. In cases of illness, your payment is still expected unless other arrangements have been previously made. If I close the childcare due to my own illness or emergency, payment will be accepted on your first day back to childcare.

Payments may be made by check or cash as long as no checks are returned to me for non-payment. Checks must be dated for the day they are due, no post-dated checks will be accepted. There will be a late fee of \$15 for each day that payments are received late. This includes post-dated checks. Repeated late payments will be grounds for termination. I ask you to consider how you would feel if your employer came to you on your expected payday and told you that your paycheck would be delayed? I will give you a minimum of two-week's notice of any increases in your childcare fee.

TAXES

I will supply you with a year-end summary of all daycare fees paid during the year for tax purposes. This will be given to you by the end of January each year or when services are terminated. You may request a statement at any time.

NSF CHECKS

If a check is returned to me for non-sufficient funds, you will be required to pay a \$30.00 non-sufficient funds fee plus all fees that I incur from my bank as a result of the returned check. Childcare services will be immediately halted until full payment of tuition and NSF charges has been made, in CASH. In addition, I will only accept cash payment from you from that point forward.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Normal hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., but your specific hours will be determined depending on your work schedule & will be outlined in your Contract and Rate Agreement. (Hours will not be before 7:00 a.m. or after 5:30 p.m.) I require two-week's notice if you need to change your enrollment hours. I also reserve the right to terminate if the new hours will not work well for my childcare business.

I offer both full-time and part-time care. Full-time positions will generally be preferred over part-time positions. I reserve the right to terminate a part-time position, if the position can be filled with a full-time family. You may opt to pay for a full-time slot in order to keep your part-time position.

I do occasionally accept children for drop-in care if I have a space available on any given day. If you tell me that you will not be bringing your child, there is a chance I will fill your spot for that day and you could potentially lose your day if I do so. Therefore I do require that you give me a minimum of 48-hours notice if you change your mind and want/need to bring your child after all on your day. You are still responsible for paying all fees for your contracted days regardless of whether your child(ren) come or not. I do not accept drop-ins for the purpose of earning a little extra income; rather I do it as a service to all of my parents, which may possibly include you if you would ever need/want childcare on an unscheduled day.

Your 48-hour notice is not only put into place because I may schedule a drop-in on your day, but this will give me time to adjust my menus and activities accordingly. For example, I may plan a Field Trip if your child is not coming because I will have a smaller, more manageable group. 48 hours would give me ample notice to reschedule this activity should you decide to bring your child after all.

You are required to inform me if you are at any other location than what is listed on your Enrollment Record and to provide a telephone number for that place. You are required to notify me by 8:00 a.m. if your child will not be coming for the day or if you will be late in arriving. Your child could be the only child in attendance on any given day (this has been the case the past few months), and I will not like to be kept waiting for a child(ren) not knowing if they will be in attendance that day or not. I try to respect & limit inconveniences to each parent by giving ample notice (usually a month or more) when I am taking a day off, etc. I would like the same respect in return. Consistent disregard of these considerations will be cause for termination.

If you arrive after 10:00 a.m. you shouldn't expect a curriculum to be taught. If I have to wait for your child to begin our activities, then we would be too rushed and that wouldn't be fair to me, or any of the children.

I will not be available for evening or weekend care. In order for me to be the best provider that I can be, it is important to have adequate time to spend with my family. There are also planning, preparation and cleaning activities that are associated with my business that cannot be completed during daytime hours. Please understand: The hours in which your child is here are strictly "child care hours" and does not reflect all of the additional hours necessary to provide quality childcare.

I am available in case of emergency, but I do not want to work "overtime". If I am to do so, it must be worth my while. Just as you do, I schedule appointments around my scheduled work hours and am anxious to spend time with my family in the evenings. I would appreciate your consideration that if **you are done with your job early to let me know and please come and pick up your child.** Your personal errands (i.e. grocery shopping, golf playing, running home to change clothing, etc.) should not be done on my time. I am here to serve families who must "work" outside of the home.

Also I am one for children staying on routine. I believe a routine helps keep some things constant for children in an ever changing world. I am all for you bringing your child to school even if **you are off from work**, but I ask that if this is the case then **have your child picked up no later than 5:00 p.m. on these days.** There are times when all children are picked up by five, & only one child is left remaining until close of business. Your child could be that only child in attendance on any given day. This is not fair to the child as well as my family & I. I enjoy every moment with my daycare school children, but am also anxious to spend time with my family in the evenings as well.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

I maintain an open door policy for parents. This means that you are always welcome to call or drop in to see your children at any time during regular childcare hours. Open door policy does NOT mean that my door will be kept unlocked. I believe that it is extremely important to keep the doors locked for the safety of the children. I do not want unwanted or unexpected visitors to enter without my permission or knowledge. I also do not want little ones leaving the house unsupervised. Your child's safety is my first priority. I would appreciate your taking into consideration my schedule when dropping in or calling, and remember that visitors usually cause children to react in an excited manner that does not normally occur when I am alone with the them.

EARLY DROP OFFS/LATE PICK UP FEES

You are scheduled for childcare for the hours listed in your Contract and Rate Agreement. If you drop off before or pick up after these times, you will be charged a late/early fee. (Examples: If it's determined that 4:30 p.m. will be your pick-up time, your late fees will begin at 4:31 p.m. even though child care is open until 5:30 p.m. If it's determined that 8:30 a.m. will be your drop-off time and you drop off earlier than that you will be charged an early fee even though child care is open at 7:00 a.m.)

Late fees will also apply if you tell me verbally that you will be picking your child up early and do not arrive by the time you say. (Example: If you call me at noon and tell me you will arrive by 2:00 p.m. to pick up your child and you show up at 3:00 p.m. even though your contract may state your pick-up time to be 5:00 p.m.)

The late fees will be as follows: I will charge an overtime rate of \$1.00 per minute per child that you are late or early. Calling me to inform me that you will be unavoidably late does not waive your late fees. If overtime is pre-arranged, my fee will be \$10.00 per hour. (Pre-arranged overtime is approved overtime arranged 24 hours in advance.) This is to assure that children are picked up on time as not to impose on my family time. Late drop off does not constitute late pick up. Payment is expected in CASH the time of late pick up or early drop off. If cash payment is not made at this time, you will be given a bill due on or by your next regularly scheduled fee payment due date.

These rules will be strictly enforced, and your habitual tardiness will result in termination of services. The above late fees will also be charged to you if grandma or another person is suppose to arrive to pick up your child and is late. It is your responsibility to have your child picked up on time. If you know you will be unavoidably late then it is your responsibility to have an authorized alternate person to pick up your child. It is not my responsibility to tell you that I have plans after childcare hours so that you can be here on time.

Bad traffic or weather (except in extreme situations) will not be an accepted late excuse and you will be billed accordingly. Please remember that it is your responsibility to allow ample time to get here to pick up your child on time. In cases of extreme bad weather a phone call from you would be expected to let me know you are on your way. I would not want you to put yourself in danger in rushing to my home to be on time, but I would still expect to be reimbursed for my services at my overtime rate. Job-related lateness will not be excused for any reason. **Continued late pick-ups will mean breach of contract and you will forfeit your child's position in the learning center.**

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Children are to arrive clean and fed (unless arriving just before a mealtime). It is normal for some children to have difficulty separating from parents, or cry when being dropped off. Please be very brief (no more than 5 minutes is sufficient) during drop-off times; the longer you prolong the departure the harder it gets. A smile, cheerful good-bye kiss, and a reassuring word that you will be back are all that is needed. In my experience, children are nearly always quick to get involved in play or activities as soon as parents are gone.

Please be very brief at pick-up times also. This is a time of testing when two different authority figures are present (the parent and the provider), and all the children will test to see if the rules still apply. An early arrival to pick up your child does not mean you may stay until the close of business. If you'd like to stay and visit please arrange this with me beforehand. But typically pick-up time needs to be kept brief.

When picking up please make sure to hold your child's hand when leaving. I live on a very busy street, & little ones can be very fast. Please keep hold of them when leaving & until they have reached your vehicle. This also includes keeping hold of them when coming to school as well. Do not allow your child to run out to your car while you are still inside! The safety rule is "No one goes outside without their parent with them." **Whether arriving or leaving please do not walk in the grass,** but rather use the driveway & sidewalk to walk up & depart. There are times when the yard is wet & little feet leave track marks in the house after walking through the grass.

I will try my best to send your child home with a clean diaper, and would appreciate the same consideration when you drop off. During arrivals and departures, I expect you to back up my rules if your child's behavior is unacceptable (see House Rules), but if you do not, I will remind your child that their behavior is inappropriate and take action to correct, if needed. Please be in control of your child during these times.

I prefer that there are no pick-ups or drop offs during the designated daily quiet time (12:30-3:30 p.m.), but if it is necessary please be as quiet and brief as possible. Children who arrive during quiet time will be expected to remain quiet & lay down until quiet time is over so that others will not be disrupted from their naps. Drop-off and pick-up times are not good times to discuss problems. Little ears and minds hear and understand everything. I am not comfortable discussing children in the presence of anyone except their parents. Topics that concern day-to-day events or light-hearted discussion are fine.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

My normal procedure is to release the child only to his/her parents or someone else the parents designate. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, please notify me ahead of time. A written notice is required on the day if this person is on the list of people who are authorized to pick up your child. If the person is NOT on that list, I MUST have written permission to release your child. The written permission must be given to me at time of drop off. Please inform emergency contacts, or people designated to pick up your child, that if I do not know them, I will ask for photo identification and make a photocopy. I do not mean to offend them. This is simply a measure taken for your child's protection. I will not let a child leave without a parent's written permission even if that person is listed as one of your designated pickup people.

SIGNING IN & OUT

I am required to have all parents sign in and out for pick-ups and drop-offs each day. A sign in/out sheet, pen, and a clock are located by the door for your convenience. This gives me a written record of the child's attendance, hours, and the person who brought/picked up the child each day.

CHILD'S ABSENCES

There will be no refunds or adjustments made to your child care fees for your time missed due to illness, holidays, or days off. A place has been reserved for each child that cannot be filled on a short-term basis.

Although I will make every attempt to be available each day, there will be occasions when another family member or I are ill, and I am unable to provide service. You will be notified as soon as possible of any personal or family illness, funeral, or emergency. It will be your responsibility to obtain substitute care on such occasions and to arrange payment to the substitute.

If I am unable to provide care for any of these reasons, I will credit your next week of care day per day if I have used all of my sick days, etc. I strongly suggest that you have a family member, a friend, or a substitute provider lined up for the times I am closed due to illness or emergency. When I must be away for a short time (1 - 4 hours), backup care will be provided by my husband or substitute provider if possible. If I am unable to use one of my substitute providers then it will be necessary for me to close for half the day or the full day. My substitute provider is authorized to carry out the terms of this contract.

PROVIDER CLOSINGS: (HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS, SICK DAYS, PERSONAL DAYS, BEREAVEMENT, & TRAINING DAYS)

Although very rewarding, childcare is also a very high stress occupation. In order for me to be the best provider that I can be, I will need time to relax with my family, accomplish household or child care projects, or attend training seminars/conferences. Occasionally, I may need to take additional days off for appointments, family activities, to catch up at home, attend trainings, volunteer with Special Olympics, or just relax. I will try to schedule these days as far in advance as possible so that you can arrange other care for your child. I also will try to pick a day that is convenient for the majority of parents, if possible.

SCHOOL YEAR (AUGUST • JUNE): During the months of August through June I follow the Mansfield I.S.D. school calendar. If they are closed for conferences, holidays, spring break, etc I will be closed as well. These closing will be posted on my website at www.liltotslearningcenter.com. Also, in the event of inclement weather, I close or open delayed if Mansfield I.S.D. does so. Note: These closings are paid days. I will remain open for business the first week of Winter/Christmas break except for Christmas Eve day & Christmas day. The second week of Winter/Christmas break I will be closed. I will maintain normal business hours & be open during the summer.

HOLIDAYS: I will be taking 7 paid holidays. They are New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Friday after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. When a Holiday (listed above) falls on a Saturday, Lil Tots will be closed the preceding Friday with pay, when a holiday falls on a Sunday, Lil Tots will be closed the following Monday with pay. You will pay for these Mondays and Fridays taken if that would be a normally scheduled day for your child.

VACATIONS: Each year I will take 2 weeks' vacation time. The first will be taken at the end of July/beginning of August, & the other will be taken at the end of December/first of January. Both of these weeks vacations will be paid weeks off and will be taken as full weeks (5 consecutive days Monday - Friday). I will give no less than 3 week's advance notice of all vacation dates.

SICK DAYS: I will receive 2 paid sick days each year. In the event that I use both my sick days, I will credit your next week of care day per day.

PERSONAL DAYS: I may take 2 paid personal days each year. This will be used for scheduling Dr.'s appointments, etc. If for any reason I use both personal days I will credit your next week of care day per day. At least a two-weeks • notice will be given in the event of a personal day.

BEREAVEMENT: In the unfortunate event of a death in the family, bereavement time will be 1 week paid for immediate family members and two days paid for other family members.

TRAINING: I may take 2 paid training days per year to attend conferences to aid in the growth & development of my learning center.

* Remember it will be the parents' responsibility to find alternate care.

PARENT/CHILD VACATIONS

You may take one week unpaid vacation per year, providing that I receive a minimum of 2 week's advance notice in writing. NO EXCEPTIONS! Payment will be required for any other time off that is taken. One-week's vacation will be equal to the same number of days you are contracted with me for childcare services. Example: If your child attends childcare on only Wednesdays and Thursdays, you will receive two free vacation days per calendar year. No vacation days will be allotted during the first six months of childcare services. Any vacation days not used within your one-year period will be forfeited. Vacation days may not be applied to your final two weeks of childcare nor may they be applied to any outstanding childcare debts you may owe such as late pick up or late payment fees, etc. You may not use any of your vacation days for days when your child is in attendance. I will keep a record in your folder of your vacation days used; however, it will not be my responsibility to remind you of the number of days left so that you may use them before the end of the year.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

No toys should be brought from home. If toys are brought from home they will be placed either in your child's cubby or backpack until time to go home. Little ones have a difficult time, sharing with others, and it is even harder with their own special toys. Exceptions being their items for Show and Tell or other school related projects. All personal items must be clearly marked with the child's name activity days. I am not responsible for any loss or breakage of.

SUPPLIES

You are responsible for supplying diapers, a full change of clothing (including socks and underwear) appropriate for the weather, and any other supplies that your child may need. You may bring a whole package of diapers to be stored in the changing table (I will let you know when your supply runs low). (I provide nap mats & blankets for naptime. These items will be laundered every Friday afternoon when naptime is over.)

Good clothing is not recommended. Soiled clothing will be sent home and a clean change of clothes should be brought back the next day. If there is a special occasion that calls for special clothing (a visit or party right after child care or a trip to the photographer), please send the special clothing with your child and I will help them clean up and get dressed prior to your arrival.

You will be required to bring bathing suits to be kept at the childcare home in the summer. I will request certain items for certain times of the year such as boots or snowsuits. All items need to be labeled with your child's initials. You must maintain these items at all times. Failure to do so is grounds for termination. Please keep in mind that if you do not bring a needed item, it may prevent all of the children from going outside. If it becomes necessary for me to purchase supplies and/or requested items for your child (ren), you will be billed on your next payment due date.

Each year in August when our new school year begins I will send home a school supply list. Please make sure to have all items on the list brought no later than the first day of September when our new school year studies begin.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Young children, toddlers and babies enjoy a structured schedule that allows for flexibility. A schedule helps the day to flow more smoothly, allows the children to anticipate coming events, and aids in achieving a variety of goals. I will adhere to my written schedule to the best of my ability, keeping in mind that anything can happen when children are involved. There will be times when I have to make adjustments to the schedule. I would appreciate it if you consider my schedule when picking up or dropping off your children. It is better if arrivals and departures do not occur during quiet time (12:30-3:30 p.m.), but when they do, please take note of the fact that children may be sleeping. Come and go as quietly and quickly as possible. Children who arrive during quiet time will be expected to lay down & rest until the rest period is over.

MEALS

I am a participant in the Southwest Human Development Food Program. All food will be provided with no extra cost to you unless your child requires a modified eating plan/food due to allergies/medical condition then it will be the parent(s) responsibility to provide the required food otherwise there will not be a modified diet administered. All infant food/formula will be provided by the parent(s). I have set meal times depending on whether or not school is in session and also the hours of the children in current attendance. You are responsible for feeding your child if he/she will arrive at childcare after a mealtime. Please do not bring food with your child if they are arriving after the scheduled mealtime. A child coming with outside food is not fair to the other children, but also messes up our scheduled meal times for your child as well. If your child arrives after a meal time with food I will put the food away to be served at the next meal time or will send it back with you, the parent. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Infants are always fed on demand. Written feeding instructions are required from parents of infants including type of food and/or formula, amount of food and/or formula, and feeding times. Except for special occasions and when requested, please do not send any food, drink (this includes a morning sippy cup), or candy with your child. I believe mealtime should be a pleasant time; therefore, children are always offered food but are not forced to eat it. I do encourage each child to try one or two bites of everything, and they must eat a little of everything before given seconds of anything. Sometimes they are surprised by what they like! If a child refuses to eat their meal, there will be no food served until the next designated meal/snack time.

CLEANLINESS & HYGIENE

I do my best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed before and after meals and after bathroom breaks. I use paper towels for drying hands, so children do not have to use the same towel. I wash my hands frequently and also use antibacterial gel. Infants sleep in separate playpens used only by them. Beginning at about 18 months, washable nap mats are used. Each child has a separate nap mat, with sheets, blankets and pillows that are washed weekly (unless soiled, then they are washed as often as necessary). Children use separate cups, plates, bowls and eating utensils that have been washed in the dishwasher and dried on the heat setting. High chair trays, tables, etc. are disinfected with a bleach water solution after each use.

TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family. If potty training is begun when your child is ready, the task is easy and quick. If a parent undertakes the task of potty training when they want it to happen, the task is arduous and painful for all concerned. Thirty months of age is a good rule of thumb to start checking for signs of readiness.

When we agree that the time is right for your child and until he/she is totally successful in his/her toileting, he/she should wear clothes that promote their independence. In addition, your child must have two complete changes of clothes (don't forget the socks!) The best items are shorts and pants with elastic waists, or dresses. Try to avoid really tight clothing, pants with snaps and zippers and belts, overalls, and onesies. These are difficult for children to remove "in a hurry".

Do not bring your child in panties or underwear until he/she has nap time and bedtime control established. I ask that you begin toilet training at home during a weekend or vacation. I will follow through and encourage your child while in my care.

When a child is ready, the process should go pretty quickly. If your child does not have immediate success, he/she will be put back into diapers, and after a respite, the process will be attempted again. The child must be kept in pull-ups at all times. Putting a child in diapers part time, and training pants part time, can be confusing and delay the training process. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the potty, more so than at your home. Therefore, I will continue to use pull-ups until your child can and will announce that he/she must use the bathroom (not just at home, but here, as well) and can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond that announcement. Your child's readiness is something we can discuss because consistency between our homes will be very important. This is a special time for your child, a sign that he/she is growing up. Toilet training should be a good experience.

NAPS & QUIET TIME

All children are required to lie down for a rest period in the afternoon. All children must nap, or rest quietly during this period. Rest time gives everyone a much needed break during the day. Without rest time, some children are argumentative in the afternoon, short-tempered with others, and not real happy when they go home in the evening. Nap time is my only opportunity to take a break, clean up after lunch, do paperwork, fill out daily communicators, and do activity planning. I provide nap mats and child-sized blankets. I would ask that you please avoid picking up or dropping off your child during nap time (12:30-3:30 p.m.), as it disturbs the other children's rest period. Infants nap at varying times and their schedules will be accommodated. Somewhere between 12 and 18 months, children usually drop down to one nap per day. At this time, I will attempt to put them on the scheduled nap/rest period.

ACTIVITIES & CURRICULUM

The main goal of this childcare is to have fun, improve social skills, and encourage creative expression. I will utilize a variety of activities to accomplish this goal. Free play, reading, arts and crafts, music/singing, dancing, dramatic play/pretend, puzzles, and educational TV/videos are just some of the activities we will be doing.

I provide a preschool program from September through May for children ages 18 months - 5 at no additional cost to you. (Toddlers & preschoolers will have separate curriculums.) Some of the activities include arts & crafts, music, math, science, stories, games, as well as letter, shape, color, and number recognition in a monthly theme format. Some of the projects will be taken home to share with the family and others will be ones that you can ask about. I do not have one particular curriculum program that I prefer. Although, through the years I have developed my own curriculum by picking and choosing what I liked from different sources.

The goal of preschool is to have fun and provide a little extra learning stimulation for the older children. It will not be a rigorous academic program as young children still learn best from participating in and observing the environment around them. Music helps to develop young brains and will play a strong role in day-to-day activities. We may have special music activities and may also play music during other activities, for example, during arts and crafts or meal times.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

There will be times and ways you can get involved in your child's learning center experience. You are welcomed and encouraged to participate in any or all of these. Some examples of ways to be involved include:

- * Lending objects for units of study
- * Coming and talking about your job, when asked
- * Helping your child at home with the concepts we are studying here (see monthly newsletter)
- * Helping your child prepare for "Show and Tell"
- * Helping to provide treats or other items for our parties or activities

BIRTHDAYS & PARTIES

Each child's birthday is his/her "Special Day." If you feel you must purchase a personal gift for the birthday child, I ask that you give this outside of the childcare home. I will celebrate birthdays of the month for all children on the last Friday of each month. I will provide cupcakes for all children in attendance. I also have holiday parties occasionally throughout the year. Sign-up sheets will be posted at the front door for your assistance with these days as needed on a voluntary basis. Also a sign-up sheet will be posted for all supplies/treats that will be needed. At Christmas time, parents are asked to purchase and wrap a book to be used in our gift (book) exchange at our Christmas party.

HOUSE RULES

Please respect my profession, my home, my family, and me. The respect that you show me, including my home, furnishings, equipment, yard, and other children will communicate itself to your child and will make for a better working relationship. There are certain house rules that all children will be taught and expected to follow. In addition, although I realize that I must expect a certain amount of wear and tear where children are concerned, I do not want to have my home "demolished". The following rules are enforced for the safety and well being of everyone.

- 1) There will be no running permitted in the house.
- 2) Hitting, pushing, biting, grabbing, kicking, spitting, or pinching other children/infants/adults will NOT be allowed.
- 3) No standing or climbing on chairs, tables, or furniture.
- 4) There will be no use of obscene, derogatory or disrespectful language.
- 5) Children may not walk around the house with food, cups or bottles.
- 6) Children are not permitted to lift and/or carry other children while in my home or on my property.
- 7) Respectful treatment of other people and all property, toys, and furniture is expected. Willful destruction of property will be charged to the parent at the cost to replace the item. Toys are meant to be played with, and if they break it is most likely from wear and tear. Unless a child deliberately takes a toy and breaks it, you or your child will not be held accountable.
- 8) Support of me in the enforcement of these rules, in order to create a better environment for all.
- 9) No smoking is permitted on the premises.
- 10) Children and childcare families are not permitted in the bedrooms, except when they are in use for napping. Children and families are welcome in any areas of the home that are used for childcare purposes. My family and I also need some privacy and separation from the childcare. Please respect this. It is hard for my husband and son to share their home/wife/mother, so intimately, with other children/families, for so many hours each day. It is important for them to feel that they have their "own" space. My child is expected to keep any toys that she is not prepared to share, in his room, away from the other children.
- 11) If your car is leaking oil, please park along the street and not in my driveway while picking up and/or dropping off your child.
- 12) No walking on my lawn. Please use the driveway & sidewalk.
- 13) No parking in the driveway when picking up or dropping off, & no blocking of the driveway. When picking up or dropping off please park along the curb in front of the house or across the street.
- 14) Please no walk on or in the flower beds.

INDOOR & OUTDOOR PLAY

INDOOR PLAY: I provide a variety of age-appropriate toys for indoor play. Toys may be rotated or placed temporarily out of use so that the children do not become bored. Younger children have less-developed organizational skills and can get easily frustrated or upset when there are too many toys to choose from. It is also more difficult for them to help with clean up, when there are toys everywhere, because it is so overwhelming to them. For this reason, during free play times, each child may select one or two things at a time to play with. They will be shown how to put those things away before selecting something else.

OUTDOOR PLAY: We will be playing outdoors every day that weather permits. Please make sure that your child is appropriately dressed for outdoor play at all times. Our activities will include backyard playground (swing, slide), water play (sprinkler in summer), toy riding, and more. Our outdoor play will probably range from 20 - 45 minutes or more depending on the temperature, etc.

DISCIPLINE

My philosophy is that you use discipline to teach a child. I achieve this through love, consistency, and firmness. I stress two main patterns of behavior: respect for other people and respect for property. The children are explained the rules of the learning center frequently, so they are all familiar with the guidelines.

Please keep in mind that there WILL be disagreements between children. Young children especially who are not adept at communication have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit or throw toys, etc. Although teaching children appropriate behavior is what I will be doing, remember that this behavior is normal in most cases.

The following methods of discipline will be used:

- 1) Encourage children to solve problems themselves
- 2) Intervention and discussion
- 3) Re-direction to another play area
- 4) Loss of privileges
- 4) Time out to their thinking spot

If I feel there is a chronic behavioral issue that needs attention, I will let you know so that you and I are handling it in the same way and your child has continuity in discipline between our homes. These types of behaviors might include such things as biting, use of bad words, chronic hitting, etc. Together, we will try to find a solution. You may be called to remove your child if his/her behavior prevents me from being able to properly care for the other children. If the problem continues, other arrangements for the care of the child will have to be made, for the safety and well being of all.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, name-calling or isolation used. Neither food nor sleep will ever be withheld from children as a means of punishment. As a home care provider, I have a responsibility by law to recognize and report any evidence of child abuse--physical or emotional-or neglect. This is strictly for the benefit of your child.

ILLNESS POLICY

Under no circumstances will parents be allowed to bring a sick child to my home. Sick children expose other children, as well as myself, and my family to the spread of their illness and require additional care and attention that I am unable to give. Moreover, sick children want care from their parents in the comfort of their own homes. If other children become ill due to exposure to your sick child, either because he/she was returned to child care before full recovery or because he/she was not picked up promptly upon notice of becoming ill, other parents will be unnecessarily inconvenienced.

If my family or I become ill due to exposure to a sick child, all of the children may need to arrange alternate care, and it is possible that I may lose a portion of my income. Because this is disruptive to other children and their families, as well as my own, your cooperation on this issue is extremely important. The following illness policies will be strictly enforced, for the health, well being and safety of all concerned.

SYMPTOMS REQUIRING REMOVAL OF CHILD FROM CHILD CARE

- 1) **FEVER:** Fever is defined as having a temperature over 99 degrees F taken under the arm or over 100 degrees F taken orally. A child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to childcare; that means the child is fever free without the aid of Tylenol or any other fever reducing substance.
- 2) **DIARRHEA:** runny or watery stools, or 2 or more loose stools within last 4 hours. *As for infants with fevers and/or diarrhea and as it pertains to teething, I will only accept a child with these symptoms back into care after the child has seen a doctor and a note is sent from the doctor stating that these symptoms are due to teething.
- 3) **VOMITING:** No child will be accepted into my care if vomiting has occurred.
- 4) **RUNNY NOSE/COUGHS:** Your child may be brought to care if he/she has a common cold (slight cough, clear runny nose, occasional sneezing). Discharge of any color other than clear is not acceptable in childcare.

5) RUNNY/CRUSTY EYES: Watery, matted, and/or red/pink eyes are not acceptable in childcare.

6) UNEXPLAINED RASH OR EXCESSIVE CRANKINESS: Child is irritable, excessive whining or crying, wants constantly held, or requires more attention than I can provide without jeopardizing the health, safety, or well being of the other children in my care.

*Your child will not be accepted into childcare if he/she has had any of the above symptoms within the last 24 hours.

A sick child should be allowed to recover fully after an illness so that other children in the group do not risk exposure and so that the child is able to fully participate in childcare activities. If you are unable to remain at home with your sick child it will be necessary for you to make substitute child care arrangements at your own expense.

If your child becomes ill while in my care, I will notify you immediately. You are required to pick up your child within 60 minutes of notification. If you cannot be reached then your emergency contact will be called. If your child is out ill regular fees still apply. I reserve the right to determine when a child should be sent home due to illness.

Children may return to care 24 hours after symptoms of illness end or with written authorization from your doctor stating the name of illness and when child may return to group care. Please notify me as soon as possible when your child becomes ill so that I may notify the other parents. If your child is thought to have a communicable disease, you will be notified and asked to pick him/her up. He/she will be isolated from the other children and given special attention and comfort until you arrive. Your child will be accepted back into care when no longer contagious. All other parents will be notified of the possibility of a communicable disease and what symptoms to watch for.

If someone in my family has any of the above symptoms, I will call you the previous evening, or as soon as I am aware of the situation, so that you may determine whether or not you want your child exposed to such symptoms. However, I reserve the right to ask you to make other arrangements if I feel the illness (es) in my family will hinder the quality of care for your child.

Absences by your choice qualify as your sick or absent days and are to be paid as stated above. I have set aside time in my schedule to accommodate your schedule and feel that I should be compensated for the time that I am available.

Many times the childcare may get blamed for the illness of a child, meaning that I have "allowed" sick children to come here. Parents may not stop to think that when sick children are brought to my home, my entire family is also at risk of exposure. How would you feel if another parent brought their sick child and exposed your child?

I will always respect your need to be at work. I ask, however, that when deciding if your child should be at home, you give consideration to the other children. Ask yourself how you would feel if another child were as ill as your child? Would you want your well child exposed to these symptoms? Further, there are times when a child is not that ill, but is terribly uncomfortable, and really needs some "one on one". At those times I strongly urge you to consider keeping your child at home. If your child is unable to participate in the normal activities of the daily schedule, then your child must stay home.

MEDICATIONS

Both nonprescription and prescription medications, ointments, and creams can be given to your child if needed. Parents are required to fill out the proper forms and to supply all medications in their original containers. All written instructions shall be valid for six months unless a shorter time period is designated by the physician, dentist, or parent. These must be labeled with the child's name. NO EXCEPTIONS! I may not exceed the manufacturer's recommended dosage unless with written physician's instructions when administering nonprescription medication. I may not administer nonprescription oral medication for longer than 3 consecutive days. I may not administer nonprescription topical ointments, creams, or lotions for longer than 14 consecutive days when used for skin irritations. I will not administer medicines that are adult medicines to a child!

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In case of EMERGENCY, I will administer the necessary first aid. The Arlington Police Department or Paramedic Unit will be called and your child will be transported to the hospital designated on your Emergency Transportation Authorization form. YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY. If an ambulance is called to transport your child, the cost of the ambulance will be your responsibility.

I am prepared with emergency care givers in cases of unplanned absences of short duration caused by unanticipated circumstances such as illness or accident. You will be notified when an emergency care giver will be used. If an emergency care giver cannot be located, you may be requested to pick up your children.

You are responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation, if required. The owner, Kensesy Austin of Lil Tots Learning Center, my family, or substitute care giver will not be held liable for any sickness/injury of either parent/guardian or child while on these premises, or while the child is in attendance during field trips or outings.

FIRE SAFETY

I have a written fire evacuation plan and practice a fire drill with the children at least once each month. In addition, I incorporate fire safety curriculum into my program occasionally. My home is inspected regularly for fire safety. I also keep a written severe weather/tornado plan, & is practiced regularly as well.

TERMINATION POLICY

I reserve the right to terminate for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- * Failure to pay
- * Failure to complete the required forms
- * Lack of parental cooperation
- * Failure of child to adjust to the child care after a reasonable amount of time
- * Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property
- * My inability to meet the child's needs

- * Lack of compliance with handbook regulations
- * Serious illness of child or provider
- * False information given by parent either verbally or in writing

I appreciate as much advance notice as possible when terminating, and will give the same courtesy in return. You are required to give two-week's written notice when you decide to terminate childcare. The two weeks will be paid in full, regardless of whether or not your child is in attendance. I will give two-week's written notice of termination for which full tuition is due, whether or not your child is in attendance.

I reserve the right to give written notice of immediate termination where there are extreme circumstances that affect the well being of myself or other children in attendance. In this situation, the two-week's payment of tuition is still required. Termination notice will not be accepted while provider or parents are on vacation. You may pay two-week's fees in lieu of two-week's notice.

EXTRA IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You may contact the Child Care Licensing Office located at 1501 Circle Dive Suite 310 Fort Worth, Texas 76119. The number is 817-321-8604. You may ask for my most recent inspection report and/or questions about the Minimum Standard Rules for Registered and Licensed Child-Care Homes. I will have a copy of the Minimum Standards Rules in my possession if you would like to review it. You will also find the Minimum Standards Rules along with more information regarding other operations in this area by accessing:

www.txchildcaresearch.org

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call 1-800-252-5400 to make a report.

REVISIONS TO HANDBOOK AND CONTRACT

There may be a yearly revision to this handbook and the accompanying contract. All families will sign a new contract each year. I reserve the right to make changes in rates and policies, as I deem necessary. You will be notified, in writing, of any changes that may occur. Every attempt will be made to give at least two-week's notice of changes

Sincerely,

Kensy Austin

Lil Tots Learning Center

liltotshomedaycare@yahoo.com

www.liltotslearningcenter.com