Welcome! This Center is committed to providing high-quality childcare and early education. As an employee, you are expected to exemplify excellence and deliver quality care by adhering to the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. The Code of Conduct should guide all decisions and interactions involving children. All policies and expectations outlined here will be reviewed and discussed during paid monthly training sessions.

All new and continuous staff will be receive ongoing training and reinforcement in the following core values:

- We foster innovation.
- We embrace teamwork.
- We strive for excellence.
- We respect and support families.
- We commit to service at all levels.
- We value and celebrate diversity.
- We actively listen and seek to understand.
- We communicate openly, respectfully, and productively.
- We use resources creatively and responsibly.

General Guidelines

Educators are expected to provide warm, nurturing interactions at the child's level at all times. Direct and active supervision of all children is required at all times. Failure to maintain appropriate supervision may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Maintaining state-required child-to-staff ratios is a critical indicator of quality and safety. The Center is committed to upholding these ratios at all times. Educators must consistently monitor attendance and ensure compliance with state ratios, requesting additional support before ratios are exceeded. Adherence to ratios is a shared responsibility between teaching staff and management. Educators must never leave their assigned group and must ensure that the number of children in care does not exceed state limits.

Confidentiality

Due to the sensitive nature of the information entrusted to you as an educator of young children, strict confidentiality is required at all times. Educators must use discretion when discussing children's developmental needs, behaviors, or family information and should avoid such discussions in public or shared areas. Any significant concerns should be directed to the Director. Protecting the privacy and interests of each child and family is essential to maintaining professionalism, trust, and ethical standards.

Curriculum

The Center utilizes an approved curriculum on a daily basis, providing educators with clear guidelines for planning and implementing developmentally appropriate learning activities for all children.

Accidents

All accidents must be reported immediately to the Director or Assistant Director. An Incident/"Ouch" Report must be completed and reviewed, with signatures obtained from both the parent/guardian and the Director.

Close supervision is the most effective way to prevent accidents. Educators are expected to use sound risk management practices to maintain a safe, clean, and hazard-free environment at all times. The Center is committed to providing high-quality equipment that is properly maintained and kept in good working condition to support the safety of children in all classroom and playground areas.

EMPLOYEE POLICIES

All employees are required to meet established standards for education, experience, and qualifications. Teacher's Aides must have a high school diploma or equivalent and be at least 18 years of age.

The Center maintains a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment. Any form of sexual harassment is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Gross Misconduct

The following actions are considered gross misconduct and may result in immediate termination of employment without prior warning:

- Inappropriate or unprofessional behavior toward parents or guardians. All staff are expected to maintain professional, respectful communication at all times. Concerns involving a parent or guardian should be referred to the Director for guidance.
- Neglect, abuse, or endangerment of a child.
- Leaving a child unattended at any time.
- Sleeping while responsible for supervising children.
- Withholding of food, rest, comfort, or basic care from a child.
- Failure to report to work for three (3) consecutive scheduled workdays without proper notification.
- Falsification or alteration of Center records.
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Possession, sale, transfer, use, or distribution of alcohol or illegal drugs on Center premises or while on duty.
- Smoking in prohibited areas or in violation of Center policy.
- Conviction of a felony offense while employed by the Center.
- Fighting, threatening violence, or engaging in disruptive or disorderly conduct in the workplace.
- Habitual absenteeism, tardiness without notice, or unauthorized absence from an assigned workstation during the workday.

- Sexual harassment or any form of unlawful, unwelcome, or inappropriate harassment.
- Negligence or improper conduct resulting in damage to Center property or assets.
- Insubordination, including gross disrespect such as threatening behavior, profanity, or yelling directed at Directors or supervisory staff.
- Unauthorized use of Center telephones, mail systems, technology, or other employer-owned equipment.
- Unauthorized personal cell phone use during work hours.
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct that jeopardizes the safety, well-being, or operations of the Center.
- Sharing or disclosing confidential information regarding the Center, its employees, or its families without authorization.

Disciplinary action will be determined at the discretion of the Directors and may include a verbal or written warning, suspension of up to two (2) days, or termination of employment, depending on the nature and severity of the violation.

Reporting Abuse and/or Neglect

All employees are required to immediately report any actual or suspected child abuse or neglect to the Director. Failure to report such concerns may result in disciplinary action, in accordance with Center policy and applicable laws.

Employee Status

Full-time employees are regularly scheduled to work between 35 and 40 hours a week.

Part-time employees are regularly scheduled to work between 10 and 34 hours a week.

Staff Schedules

Staff schedules are communicated via group text message. Work hours may be adjusted at the discretion of the Director to best meet the needs of the Center and its families.

Requests for time off should be submitted in writing at least two (2) weeks in advance for approval. At the Director's discretion, last-minute requests may be considered when adequate coverage is available. Employees are encouraged to communicate with one another to determine whether shift coverage or exchanges can be arranged, subject to Director approval.

Paid Holidays

The Center provides four (4) paid holidays each calendar year to regular, full-time employees who have completed one (1) full year of full-time employment.

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November)
- Christmas Day (December 25)

Holiday pay is calculated based on the employee's regular rate of pay and normal work schedule. To be eligible for holiday pay, employees must work their regularly scheduled shift on the last scheduled workday before and the first scheduled workday after the holiday, unless otherwise approved by the Director.

Time Off and Attendance

The effective and efficient operation of the Center depends on consistent, reliable employee attendance. Children, families, and staff rely on each employee's presence. When an employee is absent, replacement coverage must be arranged, which can be disruptive to classroom routines and children's well-being. Employees who take excessive time off or misuse sick, personal, or vacation leave may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees requesting leave related to a medical condition affecting themselves or an immediate family member may be required to submit a physician's statement verifying the condition, the start date, and the expected duration of the absence. A signed doctor's note must be provided on the employee's first day back to work.

Transportation issues are not considered emergencies. Employees are expected to make reasonable efforts to arrange alternate transportation. If an issue arises, employees must contact the Director at 530-604-1475 as soon as possible.

In the event of tardiness, employees must personally notify the Director before their scheduled start time, provide the reason for the delay, and indicate their expected arrival time. Failure to personally report an absence or tardiness is a violation of Center policy and will be considered unauthorized. Notifications made by friends or family members will not be accepted. Failure to provide required documentation or notification may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

All absences and tardiness will be documented and monitored. Excessive, patterned, or unexplained absences may be addressed by the Director and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees who are experiencing stress or feel overwhelmed should notify the Director to request support or a brief regrouping period. Employees must not leave the Center during scheduled work hours without authorization, as doing so may be considered neglectful supervision and subject to immediate disciplinary action.

Employees who choose to resign are expected to provide a minimum of two (2) weeks' written notice prior to separation from employment.

Time Records

All employees are responsible for accurately recording all time worked. "Time worked" includes all hours spent performing assigned job duties.

Altering, falsifying, or tampering with time records, or recording time on behalf of another employee, is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Failure to properly clock in or clock out may result in delays in wage payment.

Staff Orientation

Each staff member will be assigned a mentor to support their onboarding and ensure that all Center policies, procedures, and expectations are clearly explained and demonstrated. A ninety (90)-day review will be conducted to evaluate the employee's performance based on the expectations outlined during orientation. All staff are expected to consistently uphold Center standards and may request clarification on any policy or procedure at any time.

Trainings

Child Care Resource and Referral and Valley Oak Education Resource offer free seminars and training opportunities for employees. Training dates are available monthly through the newsletter or by contacting these organizations directly.

The Director will regularly observe classroom practices to assess instructional methods, classroom management, and compliance with Center policies. Based on these observations, additional guidance, coaching, or corrective instruction may be provided as needed. The Director will also conduct monthly paid staff trainings and meetings to review required topics, share updates, and support ongoing professional development.

Proposed training topics include:

- Facility emergency procedures and evacuation protocols, including escorting children and emergency contact procedures
- Child development, including age-appropriate milestones and activities
- Adult and child health, including immunizations and communicable diseases
- Care of children with special needs
- Curriculum planning and implementation
- Risk management and safety practices
- Identification and care of ill children, including recognizing signs of illness
- Recognition of child abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, including mandatory reporting responsibilities
- Cultural diversity, including inclusive language, curriculum practices, and respect for individual differences
- Professional growth and development
- Infant Safe Sleep Regulations (emphasized daily), including sleep log documentation, approved bedding, prohibition of sleep positioning devices, supervision requirements, ratios, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) awareness, "Bare is Best," "Back to Sleep," individualized sleep plans, and Infant/Toddler Needs and Services Plans. The Lead Instructor will oversee updated documentation and supervise compliance among staff and children in care.
- Title 22 Regulations, including review and understanding of applicable requirements and responsibilities

Sanitization Practices

Employees are required to follow proper handwashing and sanitization procedures at all times to maintain a safe and healthy environment. Hands must be washed before and after serving food or meals, assisting a child with handwashing, diapering, and other caregiving activities. Diaper-changing mats must be sanitized after each use. The Center uses Citricide in place of bleach to prevent accidental damage to clothing and materials. Employees should direct any questions regarding sanitization procedures to the Director.

Handwashing is required at the following times:

- Upon arrival at the center
- Before and after diapering or toileting
- Before and after meals or food service
- After contact with toys, tables, or shared surfaces
- When caring for an injured child
- When caring for a sick child

Consistent adherence to sanitization practices is essential for preventing the spread of illness and ensuring the health and safety of children and staff.

Required Tests

Employees are responsible for obtaining and covering the cost of the following required certifications, tests, and clearances, as applicable to their position:

- CPR and First Aid certification
- Tuberculosis (TB) testing
- Required immunizations
- Physical examination
- Fingerprinting/Live Scan clearance

Introductory Period

The introductory period provides new employees with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform their job duties at a satisfactory level and to determine whether the position meets their expectations. During this time, the Preschool evaluates each employee's skills, work habits, and overall performance.

All newly hired and rehired employees serve an introductory period of ninety (90) calendar days from their date of hire. Any significant absence during this period will automatically extend the introductory period by the length of the absence.

Employment with the Center is at-will. Either the employee or the Director may terminate the employment relationship at any time, during or after the introductory period, with or without cause. When applicable, the reason for termination may be documented in writing and acknowledged by both parties.

Employment Termination

The following factors may be grounds for termination of employment:

- Unauthorized absences
- Failure to report to work as scheduled or failure to return from meal or rest breaks
- Failure to return from an approved leave of absence without notifying the Director, which may be considered a voluntary resignation

The Center may use coaching or progressive disciplinary measures when appropriate; however, the Director reserves the right to terminate employment at any time, with or without cause or advance notice, in accordance with at-will employment standards.

Personal Appearance

Appropriate dress, grooming, and personal hygiene contribute to a positive work environment and reflect the professional image the Center presents to children, families, visitors, and the community. The Center supports a workplace culture that allows staff to dress comfortably while maintaining a neat, professional, and safety-appropriate appearance. Employees are expected to dress in a manner suitable for their role and daily activities.

The following are not permitted while on duty:

- Excessive jewelry that may pose a safety concern
- Sandals, open-toed shoes, or footwear in poor condition
- Torn, tattered, or excessively distressed clothing
- Clothing displaying violence, obscenities, or adult themes
- Clothing that exposes the breasts, midriff, underwear, gluteal area, or tattoos not appropriate for a childcare setting

The Director reserves the right to address attire that does not meet Center standards and to require changes as necessary.

Professional Demeanor

Professional demeanor refers to an individual's attitude, mannerisms, tone of voice, and nonverbal communication. All educators are expected to remain mindful of the emotions and attitudes they convey through their words, expressions, and actions. Employees should greet parents and families in a warm, welcoming manner.

Key characteristics of a a professional demeanor include:

- A pleasant and approachable smile
- A calm, gentle, and respectful approach
- Friendly, courteous greetings and appropriate conversation
- Consistent professionalism in all interactions

Performance Evaluations

Employee performance is supported and evaluated through a variety of methods designed to encourage growth and success. Performance evaluations may include:

- Ongoing daily support and feedback
- Coaching and developmental meetings as needed
- A ninety (90)-day performance evaluation
- A six (6)-month performance review

Payroll Information:

Paychecks are issued on or before the 5th and 20th of each month. Direct deposit is available to employees who enroll.

Cell Phone Usage

Personal cell phones may be used only during designated break or meal periods and must not interfere with supervision, safety, or job responsibilities during the workday.

Meals

Employees are provided with a one (1) hour meal period. Eating is permitted only during designated meal or break times and must not occur while supervising children or performing assigned duties.

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Employee Handbook in its entirety. I understand that I am expected to comply with all policies, procedures, and standards outlined in this handbook.

I further understand that my employment is at-will and may be terminated by the Director at any time, with or without cause or notice. I acknowledge that the Center reserves the right to modify, amend, or discontinue any policy or provision contained in this handbook at any time.

I understand and agree to comply with the confidentiality policies outlined in this handbook.

Employee name (print)	Employee signature	Date

Director name (print)	Director signature	Date