



Parent Handbook 2022-2023

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center at its option, may change, delete, suspend, or discontinue parts or the policy in its entirety, at any time without prior notice.

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WELCOME FROM PASTOR BRAD

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.” - *Proverbs 22:6*

My friends, welcome to the Abiding Love Lutheran Church Children's Center! Partnering with parents in loving, caring for and nurturing the growth of children is a central part of our congregational life. Our Children's Center has been a primary expression of that ministry since 1986.

Our mission is to provide a safe and creative place for learning and play for the wider Austin community where children and parents can experience the love and grace of God as we grow together. Our great Center leadership and gifted teachers are devoted to the best practices in early childhood education even as they innovate to provide the right environments, activities, and contexts for learning in new ways. I love celebrating with all your kids in Chapel every Thursday morning!

You share a sacred trust with us, in these vital early years, to help your children step forward down the path toward healthy, happy, fulfilling lives. We work each day to be faithful to that trust and are here to assist you and your family in every way can, now and in the time to come.

Yours in abiding love,

Pastor Brad Highum

WELCOME FROM DIRECTOR

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center family! We appreciate the trust you have placed in us, and we will do everything in our power to exceed your expectations.

Please make yourself familiar with the policies in this handbook; it will save you time and worry as we share this exciting time in your child's life.

Of course, if you do have questions that are not answered here or if anything is unclear, we always welcome your phone calls, emails, and visits!

Our aim is to provide an outstanding educational experience for your child in an environment of spiritual growth. We take our name, Abiding Love, very seriously, and hope to impart positive values along with hands-on, meaningful learning experiences.

We are honored to share this adventure with you!

Terry Carnline

Interim Director, Abiding Love Children's Center

MISSION

Abiding Love Lutheran Church Children's Center offers a full-time program that was established to care for young children in a way that tells them and their family the story of God's love through Jesus Christ.

Birth through 5 years are a child's formative years. It is important that children of this age be given a stimulating environment that allows for creative play and sensory experiences. Learning centers (Bible, Dramatic Play, Blocks, Books, Manipulative, Art, Science, and Outside Play) are used to help develop the child's spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs.

1 PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center was founded as an integral ministry of Abiding Love Lutheran Church. The church believes that it is of utmost importance to provide a safe and loving place for families to bring their young children, nurturing them in the love of Jesus Christ each day.

The goal of Abiding Love is to provide teaching, training, and loving care that will foster a pleasant environment where children will feel loved and secure. The Children's Center strives to provide an enriched environment where children can grow in the following developmental areas:

A. Spiritual

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Develop awareness that the Bible is a special book that talks about God's love through Jesus Christ.
- Participate in worship experiences on individual developmental levels.
- Witness positive examples (sharing, kindness, helping, loving, etc.)
- Develop a habit of giving thanks through prayer for things that God gives us to enjoy.
- Increase their ability to make positive choices and understand the consequences of choices made.

B. Intellectual

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Understand that God gives us a mind to learn about all aspects of creation
- Participate in math readiness experiences (numbers, concepts, shapes, etc.)
- Explore science concepts (nature, senses, etc.)
- Immerse themselves in reading readiness and oral language experiences at appropriate developmental levels
- Express themselves in art and music

C. Social

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Understand that God gives us other people and a way to live with them in harmony
- Demonstrate acceptance of all people; people of all ethnic groups, those who are differently abled, and people of all ages
- Learn in small and large grouping arrangements
- Develop a sense of sharing, caring, loving, and kindness
- Participate in individual play experiences
- Give and receive approval, encouragement, and affection
- Set limits and boundaries

- Use interpersonal skills
- Choose "free choice" materials and activities regardless of gender
- Model language that is gender inclusive

D. Emotional

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Understand that God has given us our feelings and that there are acceptable ways to express them
- Recognize different expressions of feelings
- Feel secure and stable in this Center's environment
- Respond to different expressions of feelings
- Express themselves verbally
- Understand that other children have rights
- Develop awareness that body language expresses emotions (smiling, frowning, worrying, surprising, clapping, etc.)

E. Physical

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Accept that each child is one of God's individual creations
- Develop an awareness that each of us grow and develop at different rates
- Learn good hygiene habits
- Develop special awareness and adapt to spaces provided for specific activities
- Use books, toys, material, and activities that are age appropriate and inclusive of other cultures
- Keep rooms clean and organized
- Participate in both quiet and active activities
- Eat nutritious, appealing snacks
- Increase stimulation through changes in instructional environments (indoor/outdoor, walks, etc.)

Christian teaching and learning experiences are interwoven into all areas of the Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center's operation to convey knowledge of God in every aspect of a child's world. Our Christian foundations can be seen in the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth of our children.

2 LICENSING INFORMATION

Board of Directors

The Children's Outreach Ministry Board, a subsidiary of Abiding Love Lutheran Church, formed in 1986, establishes policies.

Parents may address the Board according to the following procedures:

- a. Discuss the issue with the teacher or aides as seems appropriate.
- b. Discuss the issue with the Director.
- c. Request in writing to be on the agenda for the next Children's Outreach Ministry Board meeting. The request should include the reason you wish to address the Board. Requests should be received by the Director of the Center 72 hours prior to the meeting.
- d. Bring your request/concern in writing to the Board meeting.

Governmental Licensing Information

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center is licensed by the State of Texas and receives periodic reviews by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Parents may view a copy of the minimum standards and the most recent Licensing inspection report at any time. Copies of the minimum standards are available in each classroom or the Children's Center office. The most recent HHSC inspection report hangs on the bulletin board near the kitchen.

You may contact the local Licensing office at 512-834-3195. The HHSC child-abuse hotline number is 1-800-252-5400. The HHSC website is www.dfps.state.tx.us.

3 ENROLLMENT

Waiting List

Classes at the Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center tend to remain full throughout the year. Abiding Love keeps waiting lists, divided by age and program. There is no fee for our waiting list, but we do ask that families contact us monthly to let us know that they still desire a spot in the Children's Center.

Children are considered for admission based on the following priorities:

- 1st: Current students
- 2nd: Siblings of current students
- 3rd: Abiding Love Church members
- 4th: Community at-large

Enrollment

A child is enrolled to the Center when you have attended a tour of the center, the Admission Information Form has been completed and turned in, including the physician's signature, and the registration fee has been paid.

A copy of your child's current immunization records must be submitted to the Children's Center office at least 5 days before your child's first day. **Children who are not current with their immunization will not be allowed to stay at the Children's Center.** For the safety and health of all the children enrolled at the Children's Center, it is imperative your child is up to date with his/her immunizations.

Affidavits for Exemption from Immunizations for Reasons of Conscience are not accepted. If you do not immunize your child for religious reasons, you must provide documentation from your religious leader. If you do not immunize for medical reasons, you must provide documentation from your child's Pediatrician stating why it is medically harmful for your child to be immunized.

Hours, Days, and Months of Operation

The Center will open at 7:30 a.m. and close at 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. **Due to staffing shortages, we will be cutting our hours by one hour until further notice.**

TUITION POLICY

Contracts and Fees

The Center requires that parents give a minimum of thirty days written notice of withdrawal so that the Center may advise others who are seeking admission. If less than a thirty-day notice is given, tuition is required whether your child is in attendance or not.

Family vacations, trips, and time at home are all wonderful and amazing gifts to provide your child. We do require that tuition be paid in full during these times.

Separate annual non-refundable registration fees are assessed for school year (September-May) and summer (June-August) enrollment.

Payment Schedule

Tuition rates for the school year (September-August) are announced each spring. Tuition is due on the 1st day of each month and is considered late on the 6th of each month. Tuition received later than 5 days past the due date will accrue a \$35 late fee that will be added to your next month's tuition. *if there is an issue paying on time, please make arrangements with the director

There is a \$25.00 charge for each returned for NSF check. After two NSF/returned checks, it will be necessary to pay tuition by money order or in cash.

Tuition does not include fees and extracurricular activities such as SportBall.

Child Care Assistance

We never want a lack of funds to preclude a child from attending Abiding Love. We currently have board approval for two children to attend through the Texas Workforce Commission CCMS program. We also have a partial scholarship program through the Mary Fetter Scholarship Fund for families in need.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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

Outside of Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law.

Any parent who violates the confidentiality policy will not be permitted in the Children's Center thereafter.

You may observe children at our center who are differently abled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e., biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child, but our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy.

MANDATED REPORTED OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities within 48 hours. The employees of Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of Abiding Love are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at the Children's Center take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of the Center cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services that are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Each member of our teaching staff receives at least one hour of annual training regarding the prevention, recognition, and report of child abuse and neglect. We support and participate in promoting awareness events for parents and staff members.

The director is available to help find resources for parents of children who have been victims of abuse or neglect. Our community has a variety of public and private resources to help children cope with the results of abuse.

PARENT'S RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their children whenever they are in care at Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Abiding Love must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

Should a situation arise where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Abiding Love suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Children's Center staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

DISMISSAL

The Director reserves the right to terminate a family's enrollment at his/her discretion. This will be done if the Director believes the parent or parents are not cooperating with the policies and philosophy of the Center.

WITHDRAWAL

The Center requires that parents give a minimum of thirty days written notice of withdrawal so that the Center may advise others who are seeking admission.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Upon arrival, Caterpillar and Duck parents may drop off at the classroom door, **all** other classrooms will need to be dropped off at the main front doors. This may change as the school year progresses. Children are encouraged to walk into the building and carry their own belongings. Drop-off is between 7:30 and 9:00. Children may not drop-off after 9:00. Dropping off after the dropoff time is disruptive to your child's routine, your child's friends and your child's teachers. *We understand that occasions come up when it may feel that a late dropoff is necessary, please do your best to schedule appointments within these parameters. Rarely will a late dropoff be permitted and only for a medical appointment AND with clear communication and authorization from the Director.* **No child may be dropped off for ANY reason after 10 am.**

Separation anxiety is normal for children of all ages and can change throughout the year. One day may be easy and the next may be more difficult. We are here to support you and your child through it! Parents can make the process smoother for the child by allowing the child to be as independent as their age allows (which may be earlier than you think) and having a quick, positive drop-off. When you linger at dropoff you are sending a message to your child that you do not feel comfortable, which they will absolutely pick up on. This makes the transition to the classroom very difficult. A swift dropoff with a good routine (one hug, two kisses and off you go!) is best. We will be glad to help with setting up a dropoff routine if needed.

Parents are required to notify the staff of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. These special instructions include but are not limited to: Early Pick Up, Alternative Pick Up Person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the childcare providers should be aware of to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

Abiding Love does not serve or provide breakfast in the morning. Parents are required to feed their child a nutritious and filling breakfast prior to arriving at the Children's Center.

Notification of Absence

Consistent and prompt attendance is advised. If a child will be absent, the parent should notify the child's teacher of the office. The Center will make no refunds for the absence(s).



TRANSPORTATION

The Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center does not provide transportation.



PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Pick-up is at the circle in front of the school building. Please make sure the staff member on duty at pick-up can see who you are, particularly at the beginning of the school year or if you come in a different vehicle. Your child will not be released until we see your face.

We have found that staggered pickup times work best and are less congested for our small parking lot. For our new families, you will need to let us know what time you will be picking your child up in the afternoons and for our current families let us know if your current pick-up time will change.

It is very important to stick to your schedule. If you are going to be later or earlier than scheduled, please email both Jordan and Terry. Pick up times start at 3:15 and go to 5:15 in 15 minute increments.

Late Pick-Up

The Children's Center closes at 5:30 p.m. We realize that traffic can be difficult, however, we are only licensed until 5:30. Please plan accordingly. Our teachers are also going home to their families and need to leave on time. There is a late pick-up charge per child for anyone who is still in the building after 5:30 p.m.

First time each school year – grace period up to 5 minutes; after 5 minutes, \$1 per minute per child, based on when you exit the building

Each subsequent time - \$25.00 plus \$1.00 per minute per child, based on when you exit the building. This fee is charged to your account with payment due no later than the next scheduled tuition payment. If your child is picked up late more than five times over the course of the school year, the Children's Center reserves the right to dis-enroll your child from the program. Families will be given written warning a month prior to disenrollment.

Safe Departure Policy

Children will only be released to parents, guardians or those persons authorized by the parents or guardians in the Enrollment Information. There must be at least two alternate pick-up people on the form if you are unable to pick up your child.

Special arrangements must be made for any unauthorized adult to pick up your child.

- a) Permission must be given in writing on the Enrollment Information Form. Including the full name and phone number of the authorized person who will be picking up your child.
- b) Provide your child's teachers with a note including the authorized persons full name and date of expected pick up (this can be written at the top of your child's daily sheet).
- c) Upon arrival of the designated adult, the teacher and/or director will ask for the adult's name and to see a picture ID to be copied for the child's file. Children will not be released to anyone under the age of 18 years or to anyone appearing to be under the

influence of alcohol or drugs.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS, INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Center will follow AISD in the event of a delayed start or weather closure. In the event of a delayed start, the delay will **begin** at 7:30am (e.g., 2 hour delay- ALLCC begins at 9:30am). Tuition will not be adjusted for bad weather days.

In the event of a COVID-19 or other health related closure, as mandated by Austin Public Health or other government organizations, we will notify everyone as soon as possible via the Facebook group and through email. Closures could be due to a case amongst the staff or children, government orders restricting attendance, or other unforeseen public health circumstances. Tuition will not be adjusted.

DAILY SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES AND CURRICULUM

The Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center day allows for a variety of learning experiences including, but not limited to:

- Cooperative and independent play
- A variety of planned learning experiences as well as the provision for unplanned and spontaneous activities
- A balance of indoor, outdoor, quiet, active, large and small group, individual child-initiated and adult-led activities.
- Structured group activity and explicit teaching opportunities
- Opportunities for the development of personal, social, and emotional skills
- circumstances and changing needs
- Use of a variety of developmentally appropriate resources, materials, and equipment
- Activities and language that is unbiased, non-sexist, avoids stereotypes and reflects a multicultural perspective.

Physical Activity

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center strongly believes in and supports the need for physical activity each day.

All children will participate each day in:

- At least two occasions of active play outdoors when weather permits.
- Continuous opportunities to develop and practice age-appropriate gross motor and movement skills.

Outdoor play is an essential element of our curriculum that supports children's growth in many areas. Except in extreme weather conditions, children go outside every

day. If a child is well enough to be at school, the child is assumed to be well enough to go outside. If you have questions about whether your child can participate in outdoor play, you may want to consider keeping your child home until you feel they are ready to fully participate in our daily program, both inside and outside.

Outdoor air quality is checked daily. In the event of unhealthy air quality, outdoor time will be adjusted to limit the amount of time spent outside. Extreme weather will include a wind chill at or below 30 F and heat index at or above 100 F.

During cold weather, children need to be dressed in warm clothing. Layered clothing allows children to adapt to changing weather throughout the day. Please keep extra clothes for your child at the center to help teachers adapt your child's attire to the weather.

During summer months, we ask parents to apply sunscreen (SPF-35 or higher) prior to arrival in the morning. School staff will reapply again mid-morning and afternoon. Insect repellent will be used when necessary. Water activities, drinking water, mister and shade are provided to help children stay cool.

When weather conditions prohibit outdoor play, physical activities will occur in the classroom during the scheduled outside time.

Appropriate Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing that is suitable for active and messy play. Please make sure your child has at least one complete change of clothes (seasonally appropriate) at school in case accidents or spills occur.

Children go outside every day unless there is lightning. We ask that you dress your child appropriately for the seasonal weather (e.g., cool, light clothing for summer; jackets, mittens, hats, and layers during colder months). Sturdy footwear will ensure the safety of your child both inside and outside. Shoes should allow for children to participate comfortably in indoor and outdoor play. Children's shoes must be closed-toed with a rubber or other non-slip, flexible soles (Pediped, and Splay are 2 brands I recommend). This style of shoe helps toddlers and children to develop their walking and running gait, build strong muscles in the foot, contributes to balance and keeps their sensory connection to the world beneath their feet. Crocs and flip-flops, while cute, are not safe for outdoor play. If a child's shoes appear to present a developmental issue or safety hazard, we will ask you to substitute with another pair of shoes (they may go without!). The playground is a "barefoot-friendly" place.

Parents are prohibited from dressing children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures as they are a hindrance to diaper changing and toilet learning.

In addition, there will be **no Pull-Ups used at the center**. Pull-ups add an unnecessary step on the way to toilet learning and are also more difficult at diaper changes. If Pull Ups are sent with your child, they will be sent home or donated to the Austin Diaper Bank.

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

Nap/Rest Time

Younger infants sleep on an individualized and as needed basis, as they grow older they will move to two naps a day. Parents may provide a sleepsack/wearable blanket for their child. Nothing else may be placed in the crib. Infants will be placed on their back to sleep until they have demonstrated the ability to consistently roll both back to stomach and stomach to back.

The infant(Caterpillar) and young toddler(Duck) rooms have a designated rest period of 2-3 hours as part of their schedule. Per Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, ***all children must have a rest period of at least one hour. While we understand that some parents may not want their child to nap, that is not something we can accommodate.*** Children who rise early are offered alternative quiet activities after one hour of rest time. Parents are responsible for taking home all nap items at the end of each week and returning them clean at the beginning of each week. All nap items must be labeled with the child's name.

Diapering

For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, parents should only bring disposable diapers (no pull-ups) as there is not a sanitary way for us to store used cloth diapers in the classroom. Our staff members check children for signs that diapers are wet or dirty at least every two hours when children are awake and upon waking from nap. Diapers are always changed when wet or soiled. We will begin stand-up diapering in the Duck classroom.

Birthday and Holiday Celebrations

Celebrations are important in children's lives and they help build the bond within each classroom family. If your family celebrates a holiday unique to your family culture, and you are comfortable, we would love to have you come and share it with the class. Each celebration will be child-led and we will let you know if we need anything to make our day perfect.

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center believes in the importance of sharing the love of Jesus with children through many avenues, including times of celebration within the church year, particularly Christmas and Easter. Our society has many ways to celebrate, in both religious and secular ways. While we want to emphasize Jesus as the focus of these holidays, we do welcome expressions of the holidays that are not religious.

Child Assessments / Parent-Teacher Conferences / Communication

It is important to us that all children are part of an ongoing developmental assessment. All our staff members have been trained to use our assessment procedures and interpret results as well as the conditions under which children will be assessed. The details of our process are outlined below.

- Instruments We Use
 - We assess children using the ASQ questionnaire as well as age-appropriate developmental checklists, parent conversations, self-portraits, work samples, photos/videos, and anecdotal observations.
- Use of Results
 - Assessment results are used for arranging for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated, identifying children's interests and needs, describing the developmental progress, and learning of children, improving curriculum and adapting teaching practices and the environment, planning program improvement, and communicating with families.
- Confidentiality
 - Our staff members keep assessment information confidential. We do not share any information with other families. We ask that families not request information regarding **other children's** development, special needs, or behavior.
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
 - Basic assessment information is shared with the parents twice a year during conferences. At that time, parents will also receive a written developmental summary. Teachers and parents collaborate on goals and plans for the individual child's learning and continued assessment in accordance with each family's values, culture, identity, and home language.

Good communication is a vital element in a successful school experience. We will use a variety of methods to keep you informed about your child and the events at Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center.

- Teachers are your primary point of communication at Abiding Love, although you are always welcome to bring questions to the director.
- Sharing information can help teachers relate to your child appropriately. You may email (with respect to the teacher's email office hours) or send a note on Procure. Zoom conferences may be scheduled with your child's teacher or the director.
- Teachers will provide a monthly newsletter, weekly updates, a classroom website, and/or have a closed classroom Facebook page.
- Important dates will be sent quarterly via email by the Director.

- Reminders, announcements, and events will be publicized primarily on the Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center Facebook group. Follow-up emails may also be utilized.
- Some teachers may utilize either parent/teacher communication sheets or daily sheets in the classrooms.
- Snack menus are available at the check-in table towards the beginning of each month.
- Reading classroom communication and making sure children are ready for whatever is planned is the responsibility of each family, not the teacher.

Pre-K Graduation Celebration

At the end of the school year, students enrolled in the Pre-K program will participate in a special celebration to commemorate their move to Kindergarten Graduation programs are held in the main sanctuary of the church. All family members are welcome. The program includes a performance, class recognition, and sometimes a special slide show. We look forward to sharing this very special occasion with you and your child.

Guidance (Discipline)

A caregiver may only use positive methods of guidance and discipline that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include:

- identifying and accepting children's feelings while encouraging emotional expression of those feelings
- encouraging positive behavior by acknowledging appropriate behavior rather than focusing on the unwelcome behavior
- anticipating children's behavior and gently reinforcing appropriate choices
- reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- redirecting children's inappropriate behaviors to a more acceptable alternative
- encouraging problem solving with peers by modeling and assisting when needed

Behavior issues are normal and are dealt with at school rather than parents being asked to discipline their child for events that occur at school. When behaviors continue to be a concern, parents will be involved in creating a guidance plan that will be implemented and evaluated over time.

All adults are expected to follow the above guidelines while in the center. This includes staff, administration, parents, family members and others authorized to drop off or pick up a child.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

Abiding Love desires to have an inclusive environment, where we can meet the needs of all children and to help all children successfully negotiate their classroom environments. When there are developmental or behavioral differences, we will make every effort to help families find resources to help meet the child's needs. It is never our desire to dismiss a child, and we will only do so when all other avenues have been explored. Children may be dismissed if:

- Behaviors endanger the safety of other children and staff. This would not include developmentally appropriate behaviors.
- Parents do not secure additional assistance and appropriate professional evaluations, including but not limited to occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and/or counseling, when a need is expressed by the staff of Abiding Love.

In addition, a family may be dismissed if the parents exhibit behaviors that are not in accordance with Abiding Love values, including, but not limited to:

- Disrespectful communication with any staff member
- Damaging or allowing children to damage Abiding Love property
- Requesting confidential information about other children or staff
- Habitual or excessively late pick-up

TOYS FROM HOME

Children may bring one small lovey for naptime. This will be carried in the backpack and kept in their cubby until naptime. Other toys may not be brought to the Center except when requested by a teacher for special occasions. NO weapons at any time. It is the parent's responsibility to set the boundary and ask your child to leave toys and pacifiers in the car.

PLEASE LABEL ALL OF YOUR CHILD'S ITEMS.

The Center will not assume responsibility for any lost or broken items.

FIELD TRIPS, ANIMALS, AND WATER PLAY

Field Trips

At this time, ALLCC does not have field trips. Should a classroom decide to go on a field trip, you will receive at least 48 hours' notice and a permission slip will need to be signed. We do not own transportation vehicles so field trips will most likely involve walking to somewhere nearby.

Animals

Some of our Abiding Love classrooms and common areas have pets, including fish, birds, tarantulas, and leopard geckos. We consider classroom pets to be a valuable learning opportunity, and we encourage teachers to let the children participate in their care.

We sometimes incubate chickens once a year, preceding Easter.

Children are not allowed to touch any animals that might spread salmonella.

Water Play

During summer months, water play will be allowed which includes sprinklers, splash tables, spray bottles, and other creative ways to stay wet. At no time do we allow wading pools that the children would be immersed in. At the beginning of each summer teachers will announce, through their monthly classroom newsletters or additional memos in children's folders, their class water day schedules.

Parent Communication and Participation

Open parent-staff communication is one of the cornerstones of quality childcare because it is only through open communication that we can work as partners to provide children with the highest quality care possible. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions and/or share any concerns.

Parent Involvement/Parent Board

Parents are encouraged to be active participants in their child's experience at ALLCC. Throughout the year there will be opportunities for parents to attend parent meetings, family get-togethers, and participate in special school activities.

ALLCC also has a Parent Board that meets on the second Wednesday of every month and is open to all parents. These meetings are a great time to get more of an in-depth idea of the goings-on at ALLCC and to coordinate with other parents for school events.

Parent trainings will be held quarterly, we ask that one parent/guardian be in attendance.

Each semester a workday is planned to thoroughly clean the children's classrooms and to complete major projects. We request that every family to participate in some way. A list of projects is posted, and if a family cannot be present on the workday, they can choose a project that can be completed before or after the workday or at home. If this is not an option, a \$75 workday fee will be added to the following month's tuition to cover the cost of not being able to participate.

Picnics, fundraisers, potlucks, and other gatherings are planned to provide an opportunity for families to come together to socialize and sometimes focus on a topic of interest to all.

All parents may set up a meeting to speak with the director to review or discuss any questions or concerns. She is always willing to discuss policy or help resolve concerns about your child.

Social Media

The Center respects the right of the families of the children in our care to use social media. However, because of the public nature of these sites, we request that you help us protect the safety and identity of children in our care by using good judgment and discretion online. Please do not:

- Disclose confidential or proprietary information about the Center employees, the children in our care or their families, or the Center in general including financial, health, or contact information.
- Post photographs or videos of the Center employees, the children in our care (who are not your own) or their families to your social media site (and any sites that you contribute to) without prior written permission. This includes classroom activities, parties, field trips, graduation, etc.

Parent Code of Conduct

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the staff of the Children's Center but is the responsibility of each parent or adult who enters the center. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct may be dis-enrolled.

SWEARING/CURSING: No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language in the earshot of children, including one's own. Such language is considered offensive by many people and is not part of what we want to teach in our program. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff, their own child, or another child in the Center.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN, OTHER PARENTS OR ADULTS: Aggressive or derogatory behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes written as well as verbal and physical. Making threats is not an appropriate means of negotiation and will not be permitted at any time.

INSTRUCTION OF OTHER CHILDREN: If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Center Director. Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior.

SAFETY: Parents are required to always follow all safety procedures. *This includes being fully present and phone-free when on campus.* These procedures are designed to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees, children and associates of Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center. Immediately report any concerns to the Center Director. Children should not be allowed to enter parking areas without being within arm's length of an adult. Parents must drive cautiously and slowly in our parking areas.

CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES, OTHER PARENTS OR ASSOCIATES: While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the staff or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. It is the responsibility of the adults involved to model appropriate behavior for the children. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited and grounds for immediate dismissal. Should a confrontation occur on school property, ALLCC reserves the right to contact the proper authorities.

VIOLATIONS OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY: Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the center. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with the Children's Center.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Pre-Enrollment Requirements

Parents are required to provide us with the most up to date health and immunization related information. Information is kept confidential and is only shared on a "need to know" basis. Classroom teachers are always given copies of emergency contacts, emergency releases, and allergy information.

All children are required to have a health statement signed by a licensed medical professional to attend Abiding Love. The health statement, indicating the child's capacity to attend the Children's Center, must be completed by a licensed healthcare professional and returned to the Center before enrollment.

Medication

In order for medication to be given at school:

- The parent or guardian must complete and sign the Authorization for Dispensing Medication form.
- Medication must be in its original container, labeled with the child's full name and the date the medication is brought to the center. Parents may want to ask for two separate containers one for school and one for home.
- **All medication must be given *directly* to a staff member upon arrival at the center.**
- Medication can only be given in the doses recommended on the label. If no dosage is listed for a particular age or weight, the parent must request written instructions from the physician (for example, most medication states "for children 2 and under see a doctor").
- An accurate measuring device that measures the dosage specified on the instructions must be provided by the parent and labeled with the child's name.
- The center will not accept primary responsibility for administering medication. Parents are encouraged to request medications that are only required twice daily and therefore are administered at home.
- A standing order, available in the office, authorizing medication for chronic medical conditions may be completed in special situations.
- **Under no circumstances may medication be kept in a child's cubby.** Medication boxes

are provided for each room for the safe storage of any and all medication.

Vision and Hearing Screening

All children who are 4 years old by September 1st of the school year must provide documentation, signed, and dated by the physician, of vision and hearing screening within 90 days of the beginning of the school year. If the child refuses to cooperate with the test, the physician must provide documentation to that effect.

Children with Severe Allergies

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed statement, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be signed by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every twelve months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child's allergy and must fill out an allergy action plan to be kept in their file as well as shared with staff.

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

There will be times when you may have a preference for your child's diet (i.e. no gluten, dairy, etc). Without a physician's report, the Center cannot guarantee that your child will not be exposed to these foods, but we will do our very best.

Communicable Diseases

The Center follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined by the Texas Childcare Licensing and the Texas Administrative Code.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of illness. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the Director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program. If a parent is called to pick up a child who is exhibiting symptoms of illness, the child must stay home a minimum of 2 full school days. *

Children excluded from the program due to a fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for 2 full school days. If the community level is high in Austin, the amount of time out will be extended to 72 hours.

A fever is defined as an underarm temperature of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more.

Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occur two or more times in a 24-hour period. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume and have been diarrhea free for 2 full school days* Children are required to be excluded from the program for vomiting two or more times in a 24-hour period. They must be vomit free for 2 full school days and eating normally before returning.

If a child exhibits signs of illness, which includes but is not limited to: lethargy , suspicious rash, or consistent crying where your child is needing one on one care, parents will be called to pick up their child. Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. It is the parent's responsibility to answer the phone when called. If a parent cannot pick his or her child up within 45 minutes, it is the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form within the 45 minute window. We do not have the space or staffing to quarantine a child for longer than 45 minutes.

If a child is sent home for *any* reason pertaining to illness, they may return after 2 full school days only if symptoms have abated.

COVID-19 POLICY

Because vaccines are now readily available to children 6 months and older, we will no longer quarantine classrooms when there is a single positive case in the group. We will notify families right away and allow individuals to decide whether or not they choose to attend. We will ask everyone in the specific group to test before returning as Covid remains very contagious and we'd like to keep our adults and caregiving staff well. We can't operate without them!

In the event of an outbreak, closure is still possible and will be assessed at that time.

If a child or staff member tests positive, they must be out for at least 5 days. On days 5,7 and 10, we will assess return based on symptoms and wellness. This would mean an abatement of symptoms and no fever (with no fever reducing medication). Asymptomatic positives will also be required to be absent for at least 5 days. We don't require a negative test to return after a positive case, as tests can show positive for longer than 7-10 days. We will, however, require an absence of symptoms and fever for 5 days.

*this protocol is subject to change based on CDC and state and local guidelines.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the Children's Center. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses, which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the Center, so that the parents of the children in the preschool may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Abiding Love will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school.

We do not currently require specific immunizations for staff.

Biting

Children sometimes bite other children. Although not all toddlers bite, biting is considered a normal stage in a child's development. Children may bite for a variety of reasons, rarely with the intent to hurt another child. Some reasons for biting include:

- **Teething:** Toddlers are often cutting teeth and it hurts. Chewing on something relieves the itch and stops the pain for a moment.
- **Sensory Exploration:** Toddlers are very good at using all their senses to learn about the world. The "oral mode," an important style of learning for infants, continues into toddlerhood. They bite everything, not just their playmates.
- **Cause and Effect:** Toddlers are eager explorers. They are constantly studying cause and effect. Biting produces a predictable response. Often, the response is dramatic: there is a lot of noise and attention from adults.
- **Pre- language Self-Assertion:** This is probably the most common reason toddlers bite. It is a way to express frustration when they do not yet have the language skills to do so.

Our staff acts to reduce the number of biting incidents, including providing access to teething toys, providing numerous sensory exploration activities, providing opportunity to explore cause and effect, and offering toddler's options and alternatives to reduce frustrations.

When a child receives a bite, that child is immediately comforted, and the bite is washed with soap and a Band-Aid applied if the skin is broken. The teacher says firmly, "Your teeth are for food. Biting hurts!" If possible, the teacher will try to encourage the bitten

child to express his/her feelings. "It hurts" or "I don't like that" are sentences teachers will model for the child to repeat.

Consistent with Minimum Standards and Abiding Love policy, parents will not be told the name of the child who bit their child. Parents of the child who bit are informed and work together with the teachers in hopes of preventing further incidents of biting. We recognize how upset parents may be when they learn their child received a bite; however, we also recognize that biting is a normal component of child development. Despite our many concerted efforts to prevent biting incidents, they are bound to occur. Our program does not exclude children because of biting alone.

Please feel free to ask the staff any questions about toddlers and biting. Parents should understand and take comfort in knowing that biting is a normal stage during a child's development, and, like all stages, he/she will quickly outgrow it.

Fire Drills

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center conducts monthly fire drills and quarterly emergency evacuation and lock-down drills.

Alternate Safe Location

Should the administration of Abiding Love or any emergency services personnel determine that any of the buildings that houses the Children's Center to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to the main church building or St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church. Once the children are assembled there, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call.

Medical Emergencies

In case of critical illness or injury during school hours, appropriate first aid or CPR will be given immediately, and the appropriate emergency personnel will be contacted. Parents will also be notified immediately. Please put the phone number of the Center into your phone.

Surgery

Children may not attend school the same day that they have surgery. This includes dental surgery. Young children recover quickly, but there is always a risk of reactions to anesthetics. This is not a risk we are comfortable taking.

SIDS Prevention

In accordance with commonly recognized SIDS prevention techniques and TDPRS requirements, we put all infants under one year of age to sleep on their backs. We will only make exceptions if you provide us with documentation from your pediatrician.

In accordance with best practices and the law, children must sleep in a "naked crib"; they may only have a flat, firm fitting crib mattress and a well-fitting crib sheet. Nothing else may be in or on the crib. If children need to have a wedge put under the mattress, the pediatrician must provide formal documentation and a waiver must be granted by Childcare Licensing.

Incident/Accident Reports

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. The Incident/Accident Report will be available to sign at pick up and will also be communicated via Procure

Food Policy

In each classroom, lunch is enjoyed together as a group. The teacher sits with the children to model table manners and converse with the children. Children are encouraged to get their own lunch boxes, open containers, and eat independently, as they are ready. Older infants and toddlers will use their water bottle or open-face cup at lunch. We are committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the early childhood experience. Not only do children benefit physically, but they are also learning the principles of good nutrition. In addition to good nutrition, we practice grace and courtesy and refrain from inconsiderate comments about other people's food.

All age groups:

All lunch containers must be labeled with your child's name. Due to possible allergies, ALLCC does not permit children to share or exchange food items.

Parents are required to provide written notification of any food/dietary restrictions (i.e., lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat free/gluten free diets). Children with diagnosed food allergies must have a physician's plan on file with us to be in care.

Abiding Love never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in lunch or snack time for behavior reasons. Nor will food be used to reward good behavior, as this sends an unhealthy message about the role of food in our lives.

Teachers may sometimes use food for classroom lessons.

Infant Classroom:

Children enrolled in the Caterpillar classroom must have all food items for consumption prepared and labeled each day the child is in attendance. This includes formula/breast milk bottles, baby food, snacks, and juice bottles. Be sure to prepare one more bottle than you think your child will consume in a day to assure that your child will not run out. Prepared bottles must be stored in the designated refrigerator and will be warmed in a water bath prior to feeding. No bottles will be microwaved. All bottles must be taken home by the parents each night to be washed.

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

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the classroom teacher.

Toddler and Preschool Classrooms:

Abiding Love does not allow candy or sugary treats, including pudding or cookies, in a child's lunch. Children this age often eat small amounts at one sitting and we want to be sure they are getting the most nutrition they can.

We are also not allowed to serve any beverages other than water, milk, and 100% juice in your child's lunch. If you wish for these foods to be a part of your child's diet, please give them to your child at home.

All food containers provided in your child's lunch must be labeled with your child's name. Simply labeling the child's lunch box/bag is not sufficient as we are all eating together and individual items can get disrupted.

Abiding Love will provide a healthy morning and afternoon snack for all children except young infants. A list of the daily snacks available to the children will be posted in the classroom monthly and is available upon request.

Pizza Days

The Children's Center has pizza on Fridays. If you purchase a pizza card, we strongly encourage families to send "healthy snacks" such as yogurt, fruit, and/or vegetables to go with their pizza.

Each pizza card is \$20 and is worth five pizza days, so each family purchases cards at a different time, based on attendance. Terry will email each family when they need a new card. At that time, you can come by the office to pay for a new card.

Gang-Free Zone / Firearms and Weapons

Any area within 1000 feet of the Center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of firearm, ammunition, and/or weapon on Abiding Love Children's Center property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

POLICY CHANGES

The Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to change any policies through written communication with families. Due to the high cost of postage, most communication is passed out "in-house" using email or Procare. Parents are responsible for gathering information and making sure that it is shared within each family regardless of who picks up the child on any day.

CENTER INFORMATION

For Your Child Related Needs:

Director

Jordan Maclay

Assistant Director

Terry Carnline

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Austin, TX 78749

Phone

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E-mail

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For Your Spiritual Needs:

Pastor

Brad Highum

E-mail

bhighum@abidinglove.org