

Childhood Expressions Parent Handbook

WELCOME!!!

The Windcrest United Methodist Church, Childhood Expressions Board of Directors and Staff welcome your family to Childhood Expressions Preschool. Childhood Expressions is considered an important outreach ministry of Windcrest United Methodist Church. We are a non-profit, church-related preschool. We endeavor to reach out to church member families and to families in the greater community.

This handbook contains school policies and procedures, which, as a parent, you need to know. There will be a 30- day notification of any changes and/or additions to policies and procedures.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE: To provide a safe, and nurturing educational experience in a Christian environment.

MISSION STATEMENT: To be a place where children and families feel welcome; where children grow spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually; where God's presence can be felt.

Goals:

1. Support families by making them feel welcome; providing a safe and nurturing environment for their children; providing support through literature, training and community resources; and including them as active participants.
2. Support children by providing a high quality early childhood program that includes a developmentally appropriate curriculum; provide experienced and trained staff; and create the foundation for success in school and life.

A TRADITION OF SUCCESS

HISTORY

Windcrest United Methodist Church started Childhood Expressions Mothers' Day Out Program on November 4, 1973. The Mother's Day Out Program was changed to Childhood Expressions Preschool and Nursery in 1984 to clarify that a preschool curriculum and learning environment for young children was being offered.

GOVERNING BOARD

The school is governed by the Childhood Expressions Board of Directors who meets monthly to set policy and review the finances of the school. The Board consists of the Director, four church representatives, four parent representatives, the Windcrest United Methodist Director of Children's Ministries and Ex-officio Members to include the Senior Pastor and Business Administrator.

ACCREDITATION

In May 1991, Childhood Expressions received national accreditation from the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Accreditation represents consensus of the early childhood profession regarding the definition of a high quality group program for young children. We continually strive to maintain those standards. Our parent information board has our most recent re-accreditation award.

STAFF

Qualified staff, trained in early childhood education, participates in a minimum of 20 hours of in-service training annually. They are trained in CPR and First Aid as well. The staff not only brings their experiences but also a genuine concern and love for children.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

SCHOOL HOURS

Childhood Expression offers classes Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The school will open the entrance at 8:55am. There will be a \$10.00 late fee charged for each additional 15 minutes that a child is left after 2:00 p.m. The teachers are not responsible for your child(ren) before they are signed in or after they are signed out.

ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION

Childhood Expressions operates August through May.

We accept children 2 months (after the first immunizations) through five years of age. Enrollment is limited to ensure a low staff/child ratio. We are open to all faiths, abilities and ethnic backgrounds.

Childhood Expressions is an inclusive early childhood program. Our program will work as partners to families whose child(ren) has been diagnosed with identifiable disabilities and/or special learning or developmental needs. Special consideration will be taken by the Director and School Board in the areas of developmental placement, adjustments to staff or schedules, additional training and/or modifications to the environment. Decisions will be based on the needs of the individual child, other children enrolled in the program and reasonableness in incorporating any or all changes. The parent may need to cover some or all the expenses incurred in providing additional staff, specialized training or other adjustments needed to accommodate their child.

Registration for the following school year takes place in February for church members and families already enrolled in the program. Open registration is in March. Registration fees are due upon registration and are non-refundable. The program understands some parent's individual preferences for specific classrooms/group and/or teachers, but the center is not always able to honor such requests or cannot guarantee the placement of teachers prior to the start of the school year. The placement of children in individual classrooms is based on the following: chronological age, appropriateness of a

class based on developmental and readiness factors, number of days enrolled and/or schedule desired and days available.

Upon enrollment, each family will receive the Childhood Expressions handbook and must sign a form stating that they have read it and agree to abide by the policies set forth. Upon request, this information may be provided in an alternate language. Enrollment packets include:

- Admissions Information
- Emergency Card
- Medical Statement
- Family History
- Tuition Fees
- Photo Release Form/School Directory
- Nutrition
- Parent Organization Interest Form
- What My Child Needs for School
- School Calendar/Events Calendar
- Childhood Expressions' Handbook
- Curriculum Pamphlet

In order for registration to be complete, all forms must be filled out and returned to the school office prior to the first day of school.

Any changes in address, telephone number or work location should be reported promptly in writing to the Childhood Expressions office. Telephone numbers of emergency contacts and individuals authorized to pick up the child should also be kept current.

Confidentiality: The following individuals may have access to your child's records.

- Parents and/or designated guardians
- Childhood Expressions Administrators
- Child's teachers
- Other Staff members with permission from the Director
- Licensing Representatives
- Representatives from NAEYC
- Health Department Officials and Health Consultants

Children's Screening and Assessment Results

- Childhood Expressions Administrators (placement and IEP)
- Childhood Expressions Teacher (IEP and planning)
- Educational and/or Health Consultant (IEP)
- Licensing Representative
- Representative from NAEYC

Family and child records are kept in a locked file cabinet. Parents will be notified if any outside representative (licensing, consultant..) reviewed the file.

TUITION FEES AND PAYMENT POLICY

Childhood Expressions has an annual tuition, which is divided into 9 equal months (August tuition is for 2wks). Vacations and absences from school are not deductible from monthly fees. Monthly tuition is due in the office on the 1st day of each month, September through May. Please make checks payable to Childhood Expressions. A service charge of \$25.00 will be charged for returned checks. A late fee of \$10.00 per month will be charged after the 15th. If tuition and late fees are not paid by the 25th of the month, Childhood Expressions has the option to suspend the registration of the particular child or children and to enroll a new child from the waiting list. ACH payment forms are available.

All fees are non-refundable.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

School Office	655-9350
Church Office	654-0404
PRS Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-252-5400

If you have an emergency and are unable to reach the school office please call the church office and they will contact us.

PARENT ORIENTATION

Childhood Expressions will schedule a Parent Orientation and Open House in August for children and parents to visit the classroom and meet the teachers prior to the start of the school year. Parents entering the program for the first time are required to attend a parent orientation. Families who enroll mid-year or those unable to attend the parent

orientation at the beginning of the year must make an appointment to meet the Director to discuss the philosophy, policies and other highlights of the program.

DISENROLLMENT

Complete Withdrawal: A thirty-day written notice, given to the Director, is required for complete withdrawal from the program. The parent is responsible for 30 days of tuition after such date. As the budget and staff decisions are greatly impacted by enrollment changes, we would very much appreciate notice of complete withdrawal as early as possible, so we can attempt to fill the slot.

Termination of Enrollment: In extreme situations, a child's enrollment may be terminated by the Director and/or Childhood Expressions Board after informing the parents of the problem through conferences, trying to work with the family to resolve the issue through various efforts and giving adequate notice and suggestions for other arrangements or referrals. A child's enrollment may also be terminated if the parent's account is delinquent.

DROP-INS

We take children as drop-ins, on a space available basis. Payment for a drop-in is to be paid that day.

ABSENCES

Parents should notify the office by 9:00 a.m. if their child will not be attending school to help us account for each child. Additionally, please let the office know if your child is absent due to an illness so staff can be notified of the situation. There are no make-ups for absences.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Parents are encouraged to talk with the Director with any concerns or issues. The Director is generally available during the day, however parents are encouraged to call for an appointment. If the Director is not able to adequately resolve the difference with the parent, the parent may seek input from the Children's Ministries Director or the School Board Chairperson. The Children's Ministries Director and Chairperson may meet with the parent with or without the Director. With some issues, a letter to the Childhood Expressions board may be appropriate after the Director,

Children's Ministries Director and/or Chairperson have attempted to resolve the conflict. If the above channels of communication do not resolve the issue, the parent may ask to meet with the school board.

While some issues may not be able to be resolved in the manner requested by the parent, Childhood Expressions recognizes that all families should be given ample opportunities to voice their concerns. The goal is to resolve the issue in a satisfactory manner for both parties.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

On an annual basis, parents will be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall program, the administrators and their child's teachers in meeting the needs of the children and parents. Parental feedback provides valuable information on the strengths and weaknesses as well as recognition for a job well done. Evaluation results with plans for growth and improvement are shared with families.

LICENSING

Childhood Expressions is licensed by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services and exceeds the minimum standards of childcare. Parents are entitled to see the following information. You may ask the center director to show you the most recent copy of:

- The Minimum Standards also available on the web at www.tdprs.state.tx.us or you're the local licensing office.
- The most recent Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Inspection/Investigation Report. Also available on the web at www.tdprs.state.tx.us or from the local licensing office.

Parents may contact the local Licensing office at:

Child Care Licensing
Agency mail Code 279-5
4023 Pleasanton Rd.
PO Box 23990
San Antonio, TX 78222-0990
210-932-5214

INSPECTIONS

Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, City health and fire officials routinely inspect our school.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The program begins at 9:00 a.m. during the school year. Parents must sign in their child at arrival and departure time on the Sign in/Sign out sheet located near the classroom door. Childhood Expressions requests that parents supervise their children in and around the parking lots and church premises. Parents are asked to refrain from lengthy conversations with teachers and understand when teachers need to end a conversation in order to tend to and supervise the children. Parents may request to speak to a teacher during teacher breaks or scheduled conferences. In addition, parents must ensure that the staff person responsible for their child is aware of their child's arrival and departure.

The policy for release of children will be strictly followed as stated below:

1. A child will be released only to a parent or adult designated by the parent in writing as the parent, emergency contact or individual authorized to pick up the child on the emergency card, emergency authorization and/or by letter.
2. If a person authorized to pick up a child is unknown to the staff, the teacher will require picture identification in order to record the driver's license or identification number before releasing the child. Children will not be released without picture identification.
3. If a parent calls to authorize the emergency release of a child when a written note/letter is not possible, the center will verify that the caller is actually the parent by calling one or both parents back at work or home.
4. Childhood Expressions will not release children to older siblings under the age of sixteen.
5. Once the child is released (signed-out) they are the responsibility of the parent or designee.

DRESS CODE

Comfortable play clothes are essential. Clothing should be labeled, washable and easy to manage for toileting. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are best for running and climbing on the playground. Each child must bring a bag or backpack with his/her name clearly marked on the front. A complete change of clothing must be kept at school at all times for all age groups. All articles of removable clothing (jackets, sweaters, hats, etc.) should be labeled with the child's name.

LUNCH

Children will bring their own lunch. Milk is provided by Childhood Expressions. Lunch should be nutritious with servings from the four basic food groups. Items high in sugar and salt (chocolate, sodas, chips, fruit roll up, candy, sugary cookies, etc.) are discouraged for nutritional reasons.

Please include the following each day:

- plastic cup, napkin, spoon and/or fork if needed

Please clearly label all cups, spoons, and plastic containers with the child's name or initials. It is also beneficial to label all food brought from home with your child's name to avoid mix-ups. Uneaten portions of food that can be easily re-packaged will be sent home so parents can monitor their child's consumption.

SNACK

Some classrooms will have an afternoon snack after rest. Families will be asked to bring a snack for the entire classroom to share. Snacks brought from home must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared foods in factory sealed containers. Teachers will provide additional classroom guidelines and suggestions.

REST

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services requires a rest time for all children who attend programs for five hours or more. Children will be required to lie down and rest, but they are not expected to fall

asleep. Once all children have a chance to fall asleep, those children who are still awake will be allowed to participate in quiet table activities.

Parents must provide a small mat for their child. Please be considerate of storage and provide the smallest mat possible. Parents must take all sleeping materials home on a weekly basis and have them cleaned.

DIAPERING

Children who wear diapers must bring a supply of diapers for each day, usually 2 - 3. Diaper rash ointment may be applied with parental permission and a medicine form filled out. Diaper wipes are provided by parents twice a year and on an as needed basis.

TOYS

Children may bring personal items from home that are necessary for their security during special times of the day such as separation from parent and nap time. They will be asked to keep such items in their bags when not necessary for their comfort. On special occasions a teacher may allow items that are related to the unit of study or that have educational value. Toy guns or weapons, gum, candy or money are not allowed at school at any time.

BIRTHDAYS/HOLIDAYS

Birthdays are special at Childhood Expressions. They are celebrated in the individual classrooms. You may bring a birthday treat for each person in your child's class. Please discuss the details with your child's teacher. Foods must be pre-packaged and nutritious; such as muffins with cream cheese frosting, frozen yogurt or ice cream with fruit toppings or fruit breads.

The San Antonio Metropolitan Health Department guidelines require all snacks brought in for consumption by others must be pre-packaged or foods prepared from a grocery store, bakery, deli or restaurant. This is to guarantee that foods we serve come from kitchens that have been inspected and are regulated by the Health Department.

Another suggestion for celebrating your child's birthday could be to donate a children's book, tape, or special item to our program with your child's name and birth date recorded on the item so he/she may receive recognition each time it is used.

Holiday treats must be appropriate to the class' developmental level and may include stickers, pencils, small packages of snack crackers or raisins, etc.

CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT

Childhood Expressions will schedule special activities and events throughout the year. Some activities will take place on days some children are not in attendance. In these cases, the children are welcome to participate in the special event if accompanied by their parents or other adult. Parents are always welcome to join any of the special events with their child.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

One of the values of a church - related preschool is knowing that your child will be reminded that this is God's World. The children say a simple prayer before eating, and Christian principles are taught as part of the curriculum. Chapel (lots of singing) is held on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 9:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary. Parents are invited to attend.

TOILET TRAINING

Teachers will work with parents whose children are ready to learn to use the toilet. Children who are new to underwear should bring extra as well as two complete changes of clothing to include socks and shoes. Toileting accidents will be dealt with in a calm, pleasant and casual manner. Teachers will not force a child to sit on the toilet. The staff will work individually with each child and their family when the child is showing clear signs of readiness.

VISITORS

Parents are welcome visitors at Childhood Expressions at all times to observe, to eat lunch with their child, to volunteer to help in the classroom, or to share a special talent with the children. Check in with the office when visiting so we may be aware of who is on campus. Long term volunteers will be required to have a background check.

GUIDANCE

Modeling the expected behavior, redirecting children to an acceptable activity and setting clear limits are methods of positive guidance that are used at Childhood Expressions. Children are given opportunities to develop social skills such as cooperating, negotiating and talking with others to solve

interpersonal problems. When dangerous or disruptive behavior persists, the child will be removed from the activity and other children for a brief time. Corporal punishment and other humiliating or frightening discipline techniques are never used.

COMMUNICATION

We believe that direct, effective communications is at the heart of a stimulating, safe, caring program for young children. Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns about day-to-day operations, the program, or their child's care with the teachers or the Director. At times, teachers may ask a parent to discuss their concern during naptime or over the phone during their break since the teachers' primary task during program hours is to interact with the children.

INFORMATION SOURCES:

Please check your child's cubby or message board daily, as notes, newsletters and general announcement will be given to you in this way. Upon request, this information may be available in languages other than English. The message boards are for school use only. Invitations to parties or activities outside of the program may not be sent out through the children's backpacks. Childhood Expressions does provide a school directory upon request so that parents may send out invitations to children in their child's classroom through the mail or over the phone. Anything sent out by parents through Childhood Expressions must first be cleared with the office, must be school related, and can be placed in the children's bags by school personnel only. The dry erase boards found outside/inside of each classroom will have a daily message for your child about the day's activities. Please read it to your child. Additionally each classroom will have a parent bulletin board with lesson plans, daily schedules and other pertinent information.

DAILY NOTES:

Children enrolled in the Infant, Toddler classes will receive daily notes from the teachers containing information on eating, sleeping and toileting.

NEWLETTERS/CALENDARS

A class newsletter and a school newsletter will be sent home on a monthly basis. We highly encourage parents to read both newsletters as they contain information pertinent to what is going on in individual classrooms as well as the school. We feel that it is very important for each parent to stay

informed. Additionally, parenting articles will be sent home regularly to provide parents with tips for raising young children.

A monthly calendar will also be sent along with the newsletter highlighting activities planned for the month. We encourage parents to use this when your child is scheduled to attend.

ANIMALS AT SCHOOL

Some of the classrooms may have small animals for the children to observe and learn from. Childhood Expressions meets the guidelines for animals set forth by the Health Department.

NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS

Please be advised that sometimes the teachers will take the children on a walk, "on campus." This is especially important when the children have been unable to play on the playground due to inclement weather. The Gathering Place located at the entrance of the Chapel is also used for large motor activities when the playground is unusable.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

MEDICAL AND IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Each child must have the medical form completed by a licensed physician that states the child has been seen in the past year and is physically able to take part in the program. Each child must have current immunizations according to the immunization schedule of the Health Department and Minimum Standards.

A Vision and Hearing screening is required for all children who turn four years of age by September of each school year. The State Health Department requires screenings be conducted by a licensed physician, qualified professional, or certified screener. The screening must be completed by October 31.

HEALTH AND ILLNESS GUIDELINES

- A child who has fever of 100.4 or higher and/or is otherwise ill or generally not feeling well should be kept at home until he/she has been free of fever without fever-reducing medication or other symptoms for a least 12-24 hours

depending on the illness. Childhood Expressions will not administer medications, i.e. Tylenol to reduce a child's fever.

- If a child becomes ill with a fever of 100.4 or higher, diarrhea (more than two in a two hour period and/or is not able to contained within a diaper), vomiting, is generally not feeling well or has other symptoms while at school, the parent or other emergency contact will be notified.
- A child without outward symptoms may also be sent home if it is determined that the child clearly is not feeling well (i.e. lethargy, severe pain, general malaise).
- Parents of children with chronic symptoms of colds and/or allergies including significant mucous, may be asked to have their child checked by a physician to rule out any infection.
- The guidelines set by the Metropolitan Health Department and NAEYC accreditation recommendations in Healthy Young Children will be followed for the exclusion and re-admission policies for children with transmissible illnesses. (A copy of Healthy Young Children may be reviewed in the Childhood Expressions office).
- Parents will be notified if their child is exposed to a contagious disease while at school according to Health Department guidelines and NAEYC accreditation recommendations. Likewise, parents should notify the school if their child has been exposed to or has a contagious disease such as pink eye (conjunctivitis), pin worms, head lice, ringworm, scabies, chicken pox, etc.
- If a child is not well enough to play outdoors, he/she must be kept home. Outdoor play is an integral part of the day's program.

MEDICATION POLICY

Childhood Expressions prefers not to administer medication to children and will not give the first dose of any medication. Childhood Expressions will not give fever-reducing medications to reduce or mask a child's fever. When absolutely necessary for a child to receive medication during the day, the staff will strictly adhere to the following guidelines for administration of medication set by the Minimum Standards of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services:

- Prescription medications will be administered only when it is in the original container labeled with the child's name, date, directions, physician's name and expiration date. The medication will be administered only as stated on the label that details the name and strength of the medication as well as directions on administering and storing. There must be written permission from parent on a signed medication authorization form obtained from the office in addition to the recommendation in writing or by another form of direct communication with a licensed health care provider.
- Nonprescription medications will be administered only if it is in the original container with specific dosage indicated for the child's age/weight. It will be administered only according to label directions and must be accompanied by written permission from the parent.
- Any prescribed, nonprescribed, sample, etc medication without a specified dosage, such as "as prescribed" or "consult a physician" must be accompanied by a signed note from the physician indicating the appropriate dosage.

All medication must be brought the Childhood Expressions office for safekeeping. Medications will be stored in locked cabinets in the office or the community refrigerator. It is the parent's responsibility to retrieve the medication at the end of the day.

ACCIDENTS/EMERGENCIES

The staff maintains current certifications in First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). The teachers will follow basic first-aid procedures for injuries and notify parents of any accidents requiring first aid at school through a written accident report. Should further emergency action be needed beyond basic first aid, teachers will provide immediate care, and call the parent, the child's physician and/or EMS as needed. The center is not able to transport an injured child.

Emergency Evacuation: Childhood Expressions conducts monthly fire drills and severe weather drill twice a year with the children. In the event the center must be evacuated due to an environmental emergency (gas leak,

toxic fumes or chemical release) or natural disasters, the staff will do one of the following depending on the location of and type of problem:

- walk to the Fellowship Hall (phone 654-0404)
- walk to John Calvin Presbyterian Church (8102 Midcrown) 657-4441
- if a neighborhood evacuation is ordered by the fire or police department, Childhood Expressions will transport students via Church bus and employee vehicle to: UC United Methodist Church (90 Winn, UC) 658-5761/659-5555 or follow local directives from authorities

BUILDING/ROOM SANITATION

The classrooms and bathrooms are cleaned and sanitized on a daily basis by a custodian. Toys and mouthed items in the infant and young toddler rooms are washed daily with a diluted bleach solution. Washable toys, pillows, etc. are washed in the preschool classrooms periodically.

A licensed exterminating company treats the school with pesticides for common household pests on a quarterly basis. The treatment is always done after school hours.

BUILDING SECURITY

The front entrance to Childhood Expressions will remain locked from 9:30am to 1:45pm. Please knock or ring the doorbell during those hours and a staff member will let you in. All guests must sign in at the office. Our Infant and Toddler classrooms also have video cameras that are viewed in the office. Video is kept for one week.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Because of continuing concern about the welfare of children, we have provided the following information: The staff at Childhood Expressions has a legal obligation to report any suspected child abuse.

Abuse includes the following acts or omissions:

- Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to child
- Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in causing substantial harm to the child

- Mental or emotional injury to a child, causing or permitting the child to be in a situation that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development or psychological functioning
- Sexual conduct harmful to or failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional or physical welfare

Neglect includes

- Leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child
- Placing the child in or failing to remove the child from a situation that requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities and that results in injury or substantial risk of harm to the child
- Failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child, with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development or functioning of the child
- Failure to provide the child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused

Childhood Expressions staff has a legal obligation to report any suspected child abuse.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Parents must not leave any infant or child under the age of 10 unattended in the car at any time of the year or even for a few minutes since the child would be left in a potentially dangerous situation.

MISCELLANEOUS

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Childhood Expressions will follow the Northeast School District for any closing due to inclement weather. Listen to the local TV and radio stations for school closing information.

LOST AND FOUND

Labeling all belongings is a great asset in loss prevention. Check the lost and found area in the classrooms and/or near the office for misplaced items. Lost and found items will be cleared out periodically during the year and unclaimed items will be given to a charitable organization at the end of the school year.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Childhood Expressions Director has knowledge about the use of other professionals in the community both as a supplement to the program's resources and as a referral source for parents.

Childhood Expressions maintains a resource library/rack for parents with books, magazines and articles on child development, child rearing and early childhood education. Parents are encouraged to check out books or magazine articles, which may be helpful.

PARENT ORGANIZATION

In January 1997, a group of CE parents started the CE Parent Organization. Having your child(ren) enrolled at Childhood Expressions makes you a member!

The goals for the group are:

1. Social - providing fellowship at meetings and functions.
2. Parent Education and Resources.
3. Staff Support

The Parent Organization meets quarterly or as needed prior to upcoming fundraisers or functions. A newsletter will keep parents informed regarding meetings and special events. Your involvement benefits both you and your child and helps the school.