

WELCOME

We are pleased that you have chosen Ashland Children's Garden as your partner in the care and education of your child. This handbook is designed to acquaint you with our policies and procedures. In addition to our center policies, we are licensed by the state of Missouri and abide by state rules and regulations, which can be found on the DHSS website. Ashland Children's Garden is an equal opportunity/ affirmative action institution. Students with disabilities have the right to certain free accommodations to ensure equal access to educational opportunities—we would be happy to meet with you and your child's other care providers to determine if we are able to meet your child's specific needs!

Mission Statement

To provide high quality childcare using developmentally appropriate practices to develop the whole, healthy child in a nurturing, home-like environment.

Program Goals

- To support social and emotional development through positive guidance and interactions.
- To provide a safe and healthy learning environment for children.
- To provide a daily schedule of activities that encourages and supports active and involved children.
- To partner with all families through collaboration and communication.

Key Benefits of our Program

- We believe young children learn best through play and exploration. We provide a comfortable, enriching environment with interesting materials and many opportunities to explore.*
- Our planned learning activities are developmentally appropriate, and work toward the goal of preparing children for school. These activities develop the children's early literacy and math skills, early scientific thinking and exploration, an awareness of the community and surrounding world, and music and the arts.*
- We also offer planned and free play opportunities to develop both small and large motor skills.*
- We limit technology and screen time to developmentally appropriate levels for each age group. Any screen time is educational and used to supplement learning—videos are not used in place of learning activities and play.*
- We support social and emotional growth through positive guidance and interactions.*
- We provide a menu with a wide variety of minimally processed food choices to develop healthy eating habits.*
- We are a nut controlled facility and offer menu choices for children with special dietary restrictions.*
- Our Director and Associate Director have over 35 years combined experience in early education; education degrees from the University of Missouri, Columbia; and are certified by the state of Missouri to teach at both the early childhood and elementary level.*
- Teachers understand the importance of ongoing learning and undergo regular, extensive training.*
- All staff and volunteers have a criminal background check and full time staff are first aid and CPR certified.*
- We encourage family members to be active participants in the childcare experience.*

Hours of Operation:

Our hours of operation are from 6:30 am to 5:45 pm. Early drop off and/or late pick up may be arranged for an additional charge, but must be approved at least a day in advance. Additional charges will be assessed for unscheduled late pick-up or attendance in excess of contracted hours, and for late drop-offs unless advance notice is given. (See "Payments and Charges" for more information about these charges.)

Severe Weather

We will not be closed for severe winter weather. If there are dangerous driving conditions we will allow early drop off (but no earlier than 6 am) with 30 minutes advance notice by a cell phone call to Allyssa or the business phone. We will also waive late pick up charges within reason. We would ask that you keep us informed if you will be late picking up (if it is safe for you to do so)

Holidays

We value our hardworking, professional staff and reward them with paid holidays. We all need some time to spend with family and recharge our batteries! We will be closed on the following holidays, however payment is still expected:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after
- Christmas Day and EITHER the day before or the day after. We close early on Christmas Eve.
- Typically, when a holiday falls on Saturday, we will close the Friday before, if it falls on Sunday we are closed the Monday after. However, this may change depending on staff availability.

Absences

Please notify us as soon as you know your child will be absent or will be arriving late so we can plan accordingly. If your child is absent due to an illness, please let us know the illness and the symptoms so we can watch for those symptoms at school

Payment for Vacation and Sick Days

Payment is expected for any regularly scheduled days your child is unable to attend. Beginning June 5th 2017, we will require the full-day payment for all students who attend Southern Boone for regular school or Pre-K on planned, single, no school days, such as teacher professional development days or Martin Luther King Day. You will be billed in advance and you will not have to notify us in advance whether your child will attend because we will plan for all students to attend.

We will not charge for unplanned, single no school days such as snow days, if your child is not in attendance. If you would like your child to attend, you **MUST** notify us in advance and care will be provided on a space/staff available basis.

For longer breaks spanning more than one day, you will be charged for the entire break unless we receive your schedule, via email or online survey, no less than 4 weeks in advance. You will be billed according to the schedule you provide and care will **NOT** be provided on any days we were not planning for your child.

This payment policy does **NOT** apply to part-time Pre-K students who only attend on the days Southern Boone Pre-K is in session. If your child is following the Southern Boone Pre-K schedule payment is not required for any school out days. However, if you choose to follow this schedule, care for all school-out days (whether single days or breaks) must be arranged 4 weeks in advance, and children who follow the regular schedule will have priority over children who follow the Southern Boone Pre-K schedule when requesting care on school-out and snow days.

Drop-off Procedure

The parking lot may be busy at drop-off. For your child's safety we ask that you hold their hand on the way in. We cannot be responsible for accidents while children are under your supervision. Older siblings and other children must remain within your eyesight at all times. Children must not be allowed to roam freely throughout the center or play in classrooms they are not enrolled in.

We ask that students arrive before 8:15 am so that they may participate fully in our activities. All children must be signed in upon arrival, with the time of arrival and your signature. Please plan to spend a few more minutes with your child after sign-in. The person dropping off must stay to help the child take off **shoes**, coats, hats etc., **wipe children's hands and face to remove any food residue**, and store all belongings, including taking clothing items that will be needed for the day out of backpacks. Parents must also check your child's mailbox/folder for any notes and sign them in at this time. All children must be escorted into their classroom or the designated drop-off room for their age group, and contact must be made with the teacher in charge. When you leave, be sure to say good-bye, then follow through and quickly leave. A prolonged good bye makes it more difficult for both the child and adult to separate and can make drop-off difficult for other children.

Sign Out Procedure

All children must be picked up by an approved adult (see authorized persons below) each day. Children may not be picked up at the playground gate/fence. Please go into the building. All children must be signed out with the time of departure and the signature of an approved person. Please check in with the teacher in charge to make sure the teacher knows your child is leaving. On your way out, check your child's mailbox and the parent information board for any notes.

The parking lot may be busy at pick-up. For your child's safety we ask that you hold their hand. We cannot be responsible for accidents while children are under your supervision.

Our primary concern is the safety of our students, and we are legally bound to prevent and report to authorities dangerous situations. We WILL NOT allow a child to be picked up by a person who appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, or does not have the proper safety seat. If we notice this type of situation, we will ask you to arrange an alternate or pick-up return with the proper car seat (no late charge will be assessed the first time this occurs). ***Please be aware that if you refuse to follow this policy and leave with your child under unsafe circumstances we will report the situation to legal authorities!***

Authorized Persons

Each family must have on file the names and phone numbers of those who are authorized by the family to pick up and/or care for the child in case of illness or emergency when the parent cannot be reached. Please be sure the persons whose names you give are aware that staff members will ask for identification of any person who does not regularly pick up a child. In the case of custody issues, the registered parent must indicate who has legal custody and who has permission to pick up the child on the enrollment form. We assume no liability if not properly advised. Whenever there are changes to the authorized persons, it is the family's responsibility to update the information.

Children will only be released to persons whose name appears on the emergency cards, or with an email, phone call, text, or signed dated note (including the full name of the person)

Wait List and Enrollment Fees

We accept infants and children to our wait list at any time. However, we reserve the right to fill openings in the way that best suits our program. Priority may be given to siblings of enrolled students, part time students who can fill the other 'part' of an enrolled part time student's hours, and students who fit well with

the ages of already enrolled students. We also reserve the right to decline enrollment for families who have goals for their children that do not match ACG's goals and policies. For example, families who are looking for a program with a heavy emphasis on rote learning, memorization, and seatwork will not have their expectations met at ACG because we do not do worksheets or skill-and-drill exercises like flashcards. This kind of mis-match in expectations results in a great deal of frustration for families and for our teachers, so we do not enroll families when we know our program will not be what they are looking for. *Please note, a spot on the wait list does not guarantee a spot will be available when needed or guarantee enrollment if a spot should become available!*

These enrollment policies are general; exceptions and adjustments may be made by determination of the directors. Individual enrollment arrangements made by the directors supersede this section of the handbook.

Preschool Students

When we have a preschool opening, waitlisted families will be notified and will have 48 hours to respond and arrange an interview. Once families have been notified they have been accepted, they have another 48 hours to accept the position and pay the enrollment fee. When we have a full-time preschool opening, we ask that all families pay an enrollment fee equivalent to two weeks tuition for each child expected to enroll. Upon payment of this fee we will hold openings for 2 weeks or as arranged by the directors. If the children begin attending within the arranged time after paying the enrollment fee, half of the fee will be applied to the first week of tuition. The remaining portion of the fee will be applied to tuition for the last week your child attends if you provide 2 weeks notice. If the child does not begin attending at the arranged time, the opening may go to another student and the enrollment fee *will not* be refunded.

Please note: Additional enrollment fees and end of enrollment notice may be required for part-week or part-day students, as these spots are harder to fill when a student leaves. This will be based on your child's schedule and tuition rate.

Infants

We encourage expecting families to add their infants to the wait list as soon as they know their infant will need care. When added to the wait list, families must give us an anticipated start date. If we do not anticipate having an opening near that date, we will let you know right away. However, you may still be added to the wait list if you like in case a spot becomes available. Families of infants on the wait list must pay the enrollment fee when a spot near their expected start date becomes available. If the infant's start date requires us to hold the spot open for more than 2 weeks parents may be asked to pay an additional fee to hold the spot. When the infant begins attendance, half of the enrollment fee will be applied to the first week of tuition. If the child does not attend the fee *will not* be refunded. The remaining portion of the fee will be applied to tuition for the last week your child attends if you provide 2 weeks notice.

Enrollment Procedure

Prior to the child's first day we MUST have on file the following documents found in the registration packet. *Your child will not be able to attend until we have these forms on file!*

- Child Profile
- Kindertales Enrollment forms
- Medical Examination Form and Immunization Records
- Medication Authorization (if applicable)
- A copy of any court orders regarding custody/visitation

Tuition, Payment and Charges

Tuition rates are subject to change and generally will not change more than once a year. Families will be given a minimum of 30 days notice of any tuition changes.

We schedule staff based on the number of enrolled students and their contracted hours. Tuition is charged whether or not your child is in attendance. If you have special circumstances such as a prolonged illness, military deployment, or family emergency, please let us know about your situation and we may be able to make special arrangements.

Rates:

Please see the Rate Sheet located on our website for the most up-to-date rates.

PLEASE NOTE: Part-Day preschool spots (including students who attend SoBoCo Pre-K) follow the Southern Boone Pre-K calendar, NOT our general calendar. If you are paying the discounted part-day rate, spots on days outside of the SoBoCo Pre-K calendar, including scheduled no school days, are subject to availability and should be scheduled in advance.

Payment, Tuition and Other Charges

Payments

Payment may be made online, by check, by money order, or in cash. Tuition must be paid **in advance** and may be paid weekly, biweekly or monthly. Payment for the next period of care is due on the Friday before,

by 6:00 p.m. Payment becomes 'late' on Monday at pick-up. If payment is not made by Monday at pick-up, late fees may apply. If payment is not made on Tuesday at drop-off, you may not be able to drop off your child until payment is made.

Payment for Vacation, Sick Days and Holidays

Payment is expected for all days the center is open while your child is enrolled and all scheduled holidays that fall during your child's normal schedule, including days your child does not attend due to illness or vacation. See "Hours of Operation and Attendance" for holiday closures and part-day preschool schedules.

Early Drop Off / Late Pick Up

- Early drop off and/or late pick up may be arranged for an additional charge, but is subject to staff availability and must be approved at least one day in advance. The more notice you give, the more likely we are to be able to accommodate.
- If attendance exceeds weekly contracted hours, there may be an additional charge of \$10.00 per hour, with a minimum charge of \$10.00. Sometimes this charge may not be applied, but ACG reserves the right to begin applying this charge if the length of time a child is at school is having adverse behavioral or emotional effects. This charge will typically not be applied if parents provide work schedules indicating they are not available to pick up within 10 hours.
- A charge of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed for pick-ups after closing, up to 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, the charge will be increased to \$5.00 a minute.
- Contracts may be reviewed for termination after two late pick-ups in 12 months.

Late Drop-off Charge

In the past, it has been our policy to allow families to drop off when it is convenient for them. However, we have begun to experience issues with children who have been allowed to sleep in so long they are disruptive at nap, lessons and meetings being disrupted by late drop-offs, and delayed teacher breaks because we don't know when or if students will be arriving. We prefer children to arrive at school no later than 8:00am, to avoid disrupting morning meeting. However, 8:15 am will be the official cut-off for drop-offs. After 8:15 am a late drop-off charge will apply. The late drop-off charge is \$5.00 for the first two late drop-offs, and \$20 per late drop-off for three or more occurrences. A drop-off after 8:15 is considered late, UNLESS:

- The child has an appointment. ACG must be notified by 5:45pm the day before the appointment. If an appointment is made after 5:45pm the day before the late arrival, ACG must be notified when

the appointment is made.

- The child must be dropped off by someone who does not typically drop off, like a grandparent. ACG must be notified by 5:45pm the day before. If you discover your child must be dropped off by a different person after 5:45pm the day before, ACG must be notified ASAP, no later than 8:15 the day of the late drop off.
- An emergency occurs in the morning (i.e. dead battery, flat tire). ACG must be notified prior to 8:15am that day.
- Your child feels ill when they first wake up and then feels better, or the 24 hour wait time for illness passes. You must call ACG ASAP, at least 30 minutes prior to drop-off to ensure staffing is adequate.

Late Tuition Charge

The late tuition charge is \$5.00 per day. The charge will be assessed daily until the account is paid in full and late charges are paid. The charges may be back-dated to the original payment due date. Children may not be dropped off if an account is more than one business day overdue. An account two weeks past due may result in cancellation of your child's enrollment unless a mutually agreed upon alternate repayment plan is in place. If a late charge is assessed two times in a year, your contract will be reviewed for possible termination.

Returned Checks

A charge of \$25.00 may be assessed for any returned checks/online payments, plus the late charge of \$5.00 per day until payment is made in full with cash or money order. After two returned checks, we may require cash or money order for payments.

Withdrawal Charges:

Full-time families are asked to provide at least two weeks notice when their child will no longer attend the center. **Part-Day and Part-Week families may be required to give more than two weeks notice, based on their schedule. If you paid more than two weeks deposit, you will be required to give more than two weeks notice.** If you give the appropriate notice your enrollment fee will be applied to the tuition fee for the last week. If you do not give the appropriate notice, your enrollment fee *will not be refunded*.

Discipline and Guidance

All young children can present challenging behaviors as they learn and grow. At Ashland Children's Garden we are committed to using positive guidance strategies when teaching young children how to manage their own behavior. All discipline is age appropriate and we never use corporal punishment (spanking, hitting, etc.) We provide all staff members support and guidance in managing young children with challenging behaviors. At Ashland Children's Garden we have the following goals:

- *Children learn to be successful group members by working and playing together.*
- *Children establish respect for people and materials with clear, consistent behavior expectations.*
- *Children develop self-discipline as they experience independence and choices.*
- *Children develop self-control when given appropriate alternatives to angry/aggressive behavior.*
- *Children thrive in the safe and secure environment built by warm, positive relationships with staff.*

To maintain simple and consistent behavior expectations and language about those expectations we have three basic rules for all classrooms: Be safe, be kind and respectful, and be responsible. All unacceptable behaviors will be related back to these basic rules.

Infants and Toddlers

As infants grow and are more able to interact with other children and their environment, guidance issues may begin to occur. We try to prevent these issues before they occur with our classroom environment. Furniture and equipment is arranged to allow plenty of choices and room to play safely. Teachers move around the room or playground to keep aware of all that is going on. When an inappropriate behavior occurs (such as climbing on furniture, grabbing a toy from another child or pushing) the child is told "No, no, that's not safe" or "No, no, that's not kind/respectful" and is redirected or distracted. This might include moving the child to a different area or handing the child a toy. Although an infant may not understand all the words, providing guidance in this way lays the foundation for the future.

As toddlers gain empathy and understanding, we begin to show them the consequences of their actions. We might say things like "Look at the book, you broke it and now we can't use it," or "Look at your friend's sad, sad face. You hurt them, and now they are sad." This is not done angrily or done to shame the child, but to help them understand how their behavior affects others around them.

Toddlers often begin to have tantrums or meltdowns when they encounter frustration or don't get their way. While this behavior is developmentally appropriate, we can't allow them to continue to the point where they may upset or injure other children in the classroom. When a child becomes upset, our first course of action is to name the child's emotion, and give them words to describe it, and offer comfort. For example, we might say "I know you are sad that you can't have that toy right now, but your friend is using it. You can

have it later, do you want a hug to feel better?” However, if the tantrum continues or escalates, we may need to remove the child from the area until they are able to calm down. They will be placed in a safe area away from other children. This is not time out—children may come back to be near friends when they are no longer hurting friends ears with loud screaming or crying. We tell children that we understand they are sad, but they are making their friends sad, so they can come back when they can stop crying. We then invite them to rejoin us when they are able to calmly return.

Twos and Preschoolers

We try to prevent behavior issues before they occur with our classroom environments. Routines and expectations are explained clearly and consistently so children know what is appropriate behavior. Furniture and equipment is arranged to allow plenty of choices and room to play safely. Teachers model appropriate behavior and move around the room or playground to keep aware of all that is going on.

If an unacceptable behavior occurs, we first draw attention to the behavior by using language that describes the appropriate alternative and explaining why it is inappropriate. Examples might be ‘Feet on the floor. Climbing on the shelf is not safe’ or ‘We use quiet voices inside. You are hurting your friend’s ears’ or ‘Put the toys away. It’s not fair to make your friends do all the work.’ This helps the child understand why what they are doing is inappropriate, but also teaches the appropriate alternative.

If the unacceptable behavior continues, the child will be directed to another activity or given a consequence. Examples might be ‘You are not keeping your feet on the floor. Climbing the shelf is not safe. You can keep your feet on the floor, or play somewhere else.’ ‘You are having trouble using your inside voice. Yelling hurts our ears. You may use a quieter voice or play a different game.’ ‘We put the toys away after we are done playing. Your friends are helping. You can clean them up with your friends or you can finish cleaning up all by yourself.’ This maintains the language that helps the child understand why what they are doing is inappropriate and teaches the appropriate alternative, but also make it clear that the inappropriate behavior will not be allowed to continue.

A child who refuses to be redirected will be removed from the problem activity and given the choice to stop the behavior or sit in the ‘choice chair’ for a short period of time to regain his/her self-control or to choose a new activity. Examples might be: ‘you are having trouble keeping your feet on the floor. Climbing on the shelf is not safe. You may go play somewhere else with your feet on the floor or you may sit in the choice chair until you are ready to go play somewhere else with your feet on the floor,’ ‘You are having trouble using your inside voice. Yelling hurts people’s ears. You may use a quiet voice to play or you may sit quietly in the choice chair, but you may not yell,’ ‘We put the toys away after we are done playing. Your friends are cleaning up now. You may clean up now with your friends, or you may sit in the choice chair now and clean up later.’ The choice chair gives the child time to calm down and gives a choice so we avoid a power struggle. It also gives children a space where it is acceptable to sit as long as they want to if

they truly are not ready to rejoin the group. If children look like they wish to rejoin the group, we remind them that they may choose to come back and do whatever they needed to do, as soon as they are ready. If they indicate they are not ready, they are not forced to rejoin the group. If the situation escalates into a tantrum, we will use the same strategies outlined for tantrums in the toddler section.

In order to keep all of our children feeling safe at school, behavior that is mean to another child, violent, or very aggressive will be dealt with immediately by placing the child in time out for up to one minute per year of age. A teacher will explain that the child chose to sit in time out by hurting their friend, explain why the behavior is not safe/kind/respectful and the child will be asked to make amends. We also may use time out when a child has repeatedly needed to go to the choice chair for the same issue, or goes to the choice chair and very quickly repeats the same problematic behavior. When an inappropriate behavior is persistent or severe we will call a conference with the child's family to develop a plan together to address the inappropriate behavior.

Because young children have difficulty distinguishing between pretend aggression and real aggression, we do not permit war/superhero games involving weapons, killing, or fighting because these games often lead to actual injuries and can be upsetting to many children. Pretend superheroes and military personnel are welcome to rescue people, do good deeds, and stop disasters at any time, but they may not pretend to hurt people, kill people, or use weapons. If a child consistently pretends to hurt or kill people at school, they will be asked to find other games to play so that everyone can stay safe or may be asked to play alone until they are ready to choose a different way to play.

Naptime

Infants

Our youngest infants will nap as needed throughout the day. As they become ready, we will move them to a more structured schedule of one nap in the morning and one nap in the afternoon. All nap schedule decisions will be made with parent input. Each infant will be provided with their own crib and bedding. Bedding is laundered, as needed, a minimum of once a week.

To minimize the risk of SIDS all infants must be placed on their back to sleep. Once a child is able to roll over from front to back on their own, we will not move them if they roll into a different sleeping position. However, we will turn them back on their back with written parent request. We will also place children in an alternate sleeping position if medically required with written instructions from a physician. Blankets and soft toys will not be placed in the crib until children are one year old.

Toddlers

Our scheduled naptimes for the youngest toddlers (one year olds) are one hour in the morning (if needed)

and two hours in the afternoon. With parent input, children may skip the morning nap and will be allowed to nap as long as they need to in the afternoon. If children awaken during naptime and are fussing or playing quietly, we will leave them for a few minutes in case they are able to fall back asleep. Each toddler will be provided with their own crib or cot and bedding, however they may also bring comfort items from home. Bedding is laundered, as needed, a minimum of once a week. Items belonging to children that are kept at school will either be taken home on the last day of the week to be laundered, or may be left to be laundered at school. With parent permission, toddlers over 12 months may sleep on a cot when appropriate. Due to liability, children under 2 who are able to climb out of a crib must either have parents sign the waiver to allow them to sleep on a cot, or may not attend during nap time.

Preschool

Our scheduled naptime is two hours; however (with parent input) children will be allowed to nap up to three hours for two-year-olds or two and a half hours for preschoolers. Each child will be provided with their own cot and bedding, however they may also bring **small** comfort items from home. These items must fit in the child's cubby. If children are unable to fall asleep they will not be made to stay on their cot for more than 60 minutes. If children awaken and are fussing or playing quietly, we will wait to see if they are able to fall back asleep. If they awaken and become upset or ask to get up, they will be encouraged to try to fall back asleep, with teacher help if necessary. If they are unable to fall back asleep after 30 minutes, they will be allowed to get up and play with quiet toys. If there is a family emergency, event, or illness that causes your child to be extra tired, let us know so we can arrange extra naptime. Bedding is laundered, as needed, a minimum of once a week. Items belonging to children that are kept at school will should be taken home on the last day of the week to be laundered.

Food and Mealtime Policies

Because we are a nut controlled and allergy friendly facility we ask that no food or drink (other than breast milk or formula) be brought into the facility at any time. It is safest if your child does not eat in the car on the way to school, but if your child must eat in the car, please either wipe their hands and face or notify us so that we can wash their hands and face when they come in. This is a serious (potentially life-or death) issue for some of our students and employees.

At Ashland Children's Garden we are committed to providing children with a healthy eating experience and have created policies that reflect that commitment.

- We are nut controlled and allergy friendly, and are happy to make medically necessary menu modifications with a doctor's note including specific instructions and the reason for the restriction. We are also happy to discuss menu modifications for reasons such as religious restrictions. Because we make these modifications, we do not allow meals and snacks brought from home.

- Our menus are planned to offer a wide variety of minimally processed foods and generally follow the USDA requirements for portions offered. When demographics allow, we participate in the USDA food program (CACFP), and rely on the food program reimbursements to provide our high-quality meals and snacks that often go above and beyond the minimum program requirements. For this reason we strongly encourage, but do not require, you to fill out the CACFP eligibility form.
- Per licensing rules, all children are served the minimum portions at the beginning of the meals and are never forced to take a bite of a food they don't want. However, we strongly encourage adventurous eating and trying new foods. To help achieve this goal, alternate meals will not be provided based on student preference.
- All children in a class will eat together. This creates a more home-like environment and offers an excellent opportunity for children to practice conversation and social skills.
- To promote good manners and keep chaos to a minimum, we ask children to raise their hands and wait to be acknowledged before asking for more.
- Before leaving the table, children will be asked to acknowledge that they are 'all done', or ask to be excused. With few exceptions, children will not be allowed to return once they have left the table.
- Children arriving 10 minutes after their mealtime begins must be fed at home, as they will not have time to eat before the meal is over. If you are running late and are not sure whether your child will arrive in time to be served breakfast, please call!
- We prepare meals based on your contracted hours. If your child will miss a meal or snack due to changes in drop-off/pick-up time, please let us know as soon as possible. Repeated failure to do so may result in a charge equal to the reimbursement price of the missed meal/snack being added to your next invoice. This allows us to continue to provide high-quality food for your children without excessive waste from uneaten meals.

Menu Planning

We plan menus monthly, but to keep food costs affordable we change them as needed to take advantage of weekly sales, and availability of fresh produce. Menus for the following day will be posted each afternoon at the center and will usually be posted each morning on our Facebook page.

Breastfeeding

We support parents who choose to breastfeed their children. Please let us know what we can do to make breastfeeding more convenient and successful for your family. Breastfeeding mothers may nurse their children in the classroom or may breastfeed privately in another room. We have training and experience

with the safe storage, handling and feeding of expressed milk.

Infants

Our youngest infants will be fed breast milk or formula as needed throughout the day. With parent input, we will begin to move older infants to a more structured schedule based on individual needs. When infants are ready for solid food, we ask that you meet with us to create a plan that works at home and at school.

Toddlers

Toddlers will be served the foods on our menu, presented in a way that is developmentally safe. Toddlers are asked to take a bite of everything before they may have another serving, and we may wait a while before giving them more to encourage balanced eating, but eventually they will be allowed to eat as much or as little of each food as they prefer. If your child develops an allergy or intolerance to a food, please let us know as soon as possible so a substitution can be made. A doctor's note will be required.

Whole milk is served with breakfast and lunch to children between 12 and 24 months of age, as mandated by the Missouri Department Health and Senior Services. Children with a dairy/milk allergy must have on file a written exclusion from their physician. However, due to our food policy almond and other nut milks will not be allowed unless a child has a documented allergy to **all** other milk substitutes. Then the decision will be made on a case by case basis. Children able to sit up and self-feed will use a sippy cup at mealtimes, even if they still take a bottle at other times during the day.

Preschool

Preschool children are asked to try all the foods on the menu before they have another serving. After they have tried everything, they may have up to two more servings of an item (provided there is enough food). After 3 servings of an item, they will be asked to eat the other food on their plate before they may have a fourth serving of that item. This ensures children are able to eat until they are full while getting a balanced meal, instead of overeating a favorite item. If your child develops an allergy or intolerance to a food, please provide us with a doctor's note as soon as possible so a substitution can be made.

Milk is served with breakfast and lunch, as mandated by the Missouri Department Health and Senior Services. In accordance with recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and USDA, we serve skim milk to children ages 2 and over. Due to the expense of alternate milk products, children with a dairy/milk allergy must have on file a written exclusion from their physician.

Clothing and Supplies from Home

All items should be labeled clearly with the child's name. We ask children to put clothing in their own cubbies and leave it there when it is not being worn, but that does not always happen. If your child's clothing is not labeled we will have difficulty returning stray items to the proper owner. We have a lost and found basket you can check if your child is missing something.

With the exception of comfort items to be used at naptime, food, toys and any items of value should be left at home. Videogames and small electronics from home are not permitted at school under any circumstances. If your child has a blanket or other comfort item they are used to keeping with them at all times, please discuss this with us and we will help them learn to be comfortable without it. Due to limited storage space, comfort items used at naptime should be smaller than an adult hand.

If using a backpack please choose one that will fit in your child's cubby along with the other items they need at school. Remove clothing and other items that will be needed for the day such as jackets, gloves, hats, shoes, socks, etc... from the backpack and place them in the cubby at drop off. If your child wants to remove their socks with their shoes, please tuck socks inside of shoes. Please hang coats on a hook with gloves tucked in pockets or a sleeve, and hat tucked in a sleeve or hanging on the hook. Hang extra changes of clothes in a plastic bag on the other hook. Comfort items may stay in backpacks or be placed in cubbies. We know this may seem like a hassle, but when each parent takes a minute to organize their child's belongings in their cubby at drop off it saves all the children many minutes of waiting when we are dressing to go out!

Required Items: Infants and Toddlers

- Each infant must have at least 2 changes of weather appropriate clothes at school. Clothing should be comfortable and easy to manage for diaper changes (snaps and zippers in front).
- To keep our floors clean, children don't wear shoes in the classroom. Walkers need socks with gripper bottoms or shoes/slippers that are for indoor use only to be left at school. We have solid surface floors that are very slippery so if your new walker is slipping in the footwear you provide we will have them go barefoot to prevent injuries!
- We will have outdoor play whenever the weather allows, even for infants, so send weather appropriate clothes on chilly days. By mid-October a winter weight, windproof coat, hat, waterproof gloves or mittens, and waterproof shoes or boots are required at school every day. If you dress your infant in leggings or other thin pants please send an additional pair for layering or snow pants.
- Infants and Toddlers who use a pacifier should have at least 2 extras at school at all times.
- Infants and Toddlers who are breast-fed or drinking formula must bring the amount they usually drink daily, plus at least three extra feedings on hand on the *first morning* of each week.
- Infants and Toddlers must have diaper rash medication and a minimum of 30 diapers and a pack of

100 wipes on the first morning of each week. If your child repeatedly runs out of supplies, you will be asked to replace emergency supplies or pay to replace them.

Required Items: Preschool

- Each child must have at least 2 changes of weather appropriate clothes at school. ***If your child is toilet teaching or is still having accidents frequently please send additional changes of clothes.*** Clothing should be comfortable and easy for the child to manage (buttons/snaps in front, elastic waist bands, etc.) and appropriate for messy activities.
- Closed-toe shoes, sneakers or other soft-sole shoes are advised for outside wear for the prevention of injuries. To keep our floors clean children don't wear shoes inside. Please send your child in socks with gripper bottoms or with shoes/slippers that are for indoor use only to be left at school. We have solid surface floors that are very slippery so if your child is slipping in the footwear you provide we will have them go barefoot to prevent injuries!
- We will have outdoor play whenever the weather allows, so children must have weather appropriate clothes on chilly days. By mid-October a winter weight, windproof coat, hat, waterproof gloves or mittens, and waterproof shoes or boots are required at school every day. If you dress your child in leggings or other thin pants please send an additional pair for layering or snow pants.
- If your preschooler is in diapers they must have diaper rash medication and a minimum of 30 diapers and a pack of 100 wipes on the first morning of each week. If your child repeatedly runs out of supplies, you will be asked to replace them or pay to replace them.

If providing the required changes of clothes or winter weather gear creates a financial burden please let us know. We have extras at school for those who need them. If your child has outgrown clothes we would love to pass them on!

Toilet Teaching:

At Ashland Children's Garden we will never put pressure on your child to move out of diapers before they are ready. Toilet teaching decisions are made by the family and we try to support the family efforts at school. Toilet teaching may begin in the toddler classroom or the Early Preschool classroom. However, because of staffing limitations, we are not able to begin toilet teaching until children are fairly independent in the bathroom and can manage their own clothing with little assistance. If your child is using the potty **regularly and reliably** at home and can manage their clothing and diaper/pullup with few reminders and little assistance, let us know so that we can make a plan together to meet your child's needs. We may

make exceptions to our policy on a case-by-case basis but only when those exceptions do not interfere with our ability to care for the other children.

Please note: Although we try to accommodate each family's toilet teaching style, there are some things we cannot or do not do in regards to toilet teaching. We **do not** take children to the potty on a "schedule" (i.e. every 30 minutes, every hour) but we do ask them to use the potty at routine, logical times (i.e. after eating, before going outside.) Because of when these logical times fall, children will be asked to go to the bathroom at least every two hours. We are not able to "force" children to use/sit on the potty, use any punishments, or bribe with food. This is due to licensing requirements and because this can lead to serious "power struggles" when children learn we cannot actually make them go.

To facilitate self-dressing, children who are toilet teaching should wear loose fitting or stretchy elastic waist pants. NO dresses (they get wet in the potty) overalls, clothing with snaps at the legs or pants with buttons!

The decision to send children to school in underwear only (not covered with a pull-up, waterproof pants, or something similar) MUST be made in conjunction with the child's classroom teacher. MANY children are toilet-taught at home but not at school, or vice versa, so a child who is accident-free at home may not be at school. If children are sent to school in underwear without prior discussion with the teacher, they will be asked to change into a diaper/pull-up. We know this could be upsetting to children, so PLEASE talk with your child's teacher before making the transition to underwear-only at school. Children will generally not be allowed to wear underwear only until they have been accident free with a pull-up or plastic pants on top for two weeks.

At Ashland Children's Garden, we strongly believe in following a child's lead in the toilet teaching process. We understand that parents want their children out of diapers as quickly as possible—as providers that is much easier for us too. However, studies show that children who start potty-training early may be more likely to have issues like constipation, regression, and accidents. Anecdotally, we have found that children who feel a lot of pressure to use the potty—whether it is from not getting rewards or from having negative consequences—sometimes act out or develop other problematic behaviors due to the stress. If you feel very strongly that your child should be taken to the potty using a "timer" or set time frame, if you feel very strongly about using bribes/rewards at school, or if you feel very strongly that your childcare provider should make your child sit on the potty even if they say they don't need to go, Ashland Children's Garden may not be a good fit for you until your child is through the toilet teaching process because we do not use these methods. If you are going to be upset if your child is not accident-free by a certain time, Ashland Children's Garden will not be a good fit for you because we will not pressure a child to use the potty.

Rate Changes Related to Toilet Teaching:

To make the toilet-teaching process as stress-free as possible and to encourage parents to let children learn to use the potty when they are ready rather than by a certain date, there are no rate changes related to toilet teaching.

Licensing

Ashland Children's Garden is licensed by the state of Missouri to provide care for children. We have a copy of the applicable licensing regulations on hand or they can be found online on the Department of Health and Senior Services website. Meeting licensing requirements means we meet at least the minimum standard of care set forth by the State for the physical requirements of the facility; fire safety; furniture, materials, and equipment; staff qualifications and training; programs; health care; nutrition; and record keeping. At Ashland Children's Garden we meet these standards, and then go above and beyond to provide high quality care for your child.

Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness

We meet or exceed all regulations for fire safety and are inspected regularly. We conduct monthly Fire Drills, and we conduct Disaster Drills every three months. We have an evacuation/emergency plan approved by the fire marshal.

Maintenance and Cleanliness

Keeping our facility clean and well maintained is a point of pride at Ashland Children's Garden. We conduct regular inspections of the facility, furniture, materials, and equipment to find areas that need attention. All furniture, materials, and equipment are cleaned on a regular schedule. We ask that parents please notify us immediately if you notice a cleanliness or maintenance issue.

Staff Qualifications and Training:

Director

Lisa Huskey holds a bachelor's degree in Educational Studies from the University of Missouri, Columbia, and has completed graduate coursework in literacy, also at the University of Missouri. Lisa is certified to teach at both the early childhood and elementary levels and has over 25 years of experience working with children in

public and private elementary schools, home childcare and childcare centers. Lisa served as an assistant teacher at Stephen's College Children's School in the preschool, kindergarten, and multiage elementary classes, taught a K-2 multiage class at Morningside Community School, and was a reading support teacher at Southern Boone Primary School. Lisa also served as the director of a home childcare business, and worked at several local preschools.

Co-Director

Allyssa Huskey holds a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Missouri, Columbia and is certified teach in early childhood, with pending certification in elementary and early childhood special education. She has been working with children since middle school, including experience in elementary schools, Title 1 Preschool, and child care centers. As part of her formal education, she completed field placements in Columbia Public Schools in 3rd grade at West Boulevard Elementary, Kindergarten at New Haven Elementary, and Field Title I preschool. She also completed a practicum in Columbia Montessori's infant room and a semester of service learning at MU's Student Parent Center.

Other Staff

We believe high-quality training is essential to high-quality care. All staff are required to by the state of Missouri to receive 12 clock hours of training per year. At Ashland Children's Garden, we use the needs of the teachers, students, and center as a whole to determine which trainings we choose. For example, if we notice our preschool children are really into science, but our teachers are running out of ideas, we would select a science training for those teachers to expand their knowledge in that area. We also incentivize higher education for our staff with increased pay and flexible scheduling to allow them the time they need to pursue further degrees and credentials

Illness

If your child is absent due to an illness, or visits a doctor for suspected illness, you must let us know so we can watch for those symptoms in other students at school, even if your child is no longer contagious or is diagnosed with something like allergies or the common cold. If they are sick enough to see the doctor, we need to know so we can better take care of their needs. Families will be notified of any contagious illness occurring in multiple children. Teachers monitor unusual behavior closely and contact families if it continues or other symptoms develop. These behaviors include, but are not limited to: acting cranky/ less active than usual, crying more than usual, general discomfort or feeling unwell, cough that interferes with sleep/activities, and loss of appetite.

If your child's doctor has determined that they need to be seen for symptoms, or if their symptoms are concerning enough that you have made an appointment for them to be seen, they may not attend until they have been seen by a doctor and cleared to return. Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis, but in general if a child is sick enough to see a doctor, they are too sick to be monitored effectively in group care without negatively affecting the care of the other children. If your child has an appointment for symptoms, parents must call and speak with Lisa or Allyssa to discuss the specific symptoms and circumstances before dropping their child off.

The family will be contacted when signs of illness are observed. A child with *no more than* one of the following symptoms may remain in care. ***If these symptoms occur at home we must be notified:***

- A temperature of **up to** 99.99°F by mouth or 98.99°F under the arm
- The child has been to the doctor, medication has been prescribed, and any period of contagion has passed (as determined by the doctor)
- The child has a common cold
- The child has vomited once with no further episodes, and/or no other symptoms
- When a child has experienced loose stools only one time with no other symptoms

If children exhibit any of the following symptoms, they must be sent home:

- Diarrhea (more than one loose stool), grey or white stool
- Severe coughing—gets red or blue in the face or makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds after coughing
- Difficult or rapid breathing (especially important in infants under six months)
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Pinkeye-tears, red eyelid lining, irritation, followed by swelling or discharge of pus
- Unusual spots or rashes
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Infected skin patch(es)—crusty, bright yellow, dry or gummy areas of the skin
- Unusually dark, tea-colored urine
- Fever over 100°F by mouth or 99°F under the arm
- Headache and stiff neck
- Vomiting more than once
- No wet diapers (or urination) in 8 hours
- Severe itching of the body or scalp, or scratching of the scalp

When you are informed your child must be picked up due to illness, pickup must happen within one hour. After one hour, an ill child care fee of two dollars per minute will be charged unless you have called to make other arrangements. This is to pay for the additional staff costs involved with isolating and caring for an ill child. All families must provide phone numbers where at least one parent/guardian can be reached during working hours. If ACG staff cannot contact parents/guardians within fifteen minutes, emergency contacts will be called.

Please understand that we are as flexible with these policies as we can possibly be without violating licensing policies, impacting the care of other children, or risking the health of the ill child. Although we try to be as lenient as possible about children returning with a doctor's note, we do not have much flexibility in when we send children home. Additionally, if a child requires one-on-one care for more than an hour because they are not feeling well or due to symptoms, or if a teacher is having to attend to a child's symptoms so frequently it is impacting the care of other children, a child may be sent home even with a doctor's note clearing them to return or if their symptoms would not usually require them to be sent home.

Return to Care

In general, a child with the above symptoms may return to care EITHER:

- after the child has been symptom-free for 24 hours
- with a doctor's note stating that the child is not contagious and is well enough to return to care

However, there are some exceptions. For example, if a child has diarrhea due to a non-contagious cause like medications or "toddlers diarrhea," they may still need to stay home if the diarrhea cannot be contained by a diaper because feces itself has bacteria. Additionally, if a child has an illness which is not contagious like an ear infection or a UTI, they may still have to remain home if they are unable to participate in classroom activities because they do not feel well. In general, if a child requires one-on-one attention or their symptoms are impacting the care of other children, they will need to stay home until the symptoms have resolved and they can participate normally.

Medication

- We are not required to administer medication, but we are usually able to.
- All medication shall be given only with dated, written permission stating the length of time the medication may be given.
- Prescription medication should be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, instructions for administration, including the times and dosages and the physician's name. This may include sample medication provided by a physician.
- All nonprescription medication shall be in the original container and labeled with the child's name, and instructions including the times and amounts for dosages.

- Please bring the appropriate measuring device for the medication.
- The date and time(s) of administration, the name of the individual giving the medication and the quantity of any medication given shall be recorded promptly after administration. This information shall be filed in the child's record after the medication is no longer necessary.

Medications at Home

If you give your child a dose of medication before they come in to school, you **must** let us know in writing (either with a Facebook message, email, text or old-fashioned note). This should include the name of the medication, the dose, and the time it was given. This helps us keep an eye on your child for symptoms when it wears off and to watch for any drug reactions, which can appear hours after taking the medication and can happen even if you've used a medication before. All medications must be given in accordance with label instructions **OR** we must have a dated note/email from your doctor authorizing the off-label use.

A note about fever reducers: If your child is sick enough to need a fever reducer, they are probably sick enough to stay home, and if their fever was above 100° in the last 24 hours they **MUST** stay home.

Injuries and Accidents

We make every effort to keep your child safe; however, active children will have some unavoidable accidents and injuries. As a partner in the care of your child, we realize that you will want to be aware of your child's injuries or illnesses that occur at the center. We will provide you with an Accident and Incident Report for each occurrence requiring first aid. In case of a serious injury, we will make every attempt to contact you for instructions. If we cannot reach you, we will call the person you have indicated on the emergency card to make medical emergency decisions about your child. Please keep all these numbers updated. A staff member will stay with your child until your arrival. Staff will not administer medical treatment, other than emergency first aid. Staff with CPR/First Aid training is on site at all times.

Other Special Health Care Needs

We welcome students with special health care needs. Please discuss these issues with us prior to the start of attendance so we can create a plan together that will best meet your child's unique needs.

Immunization

Immunizations must be up-to-date. Because of the health risks to other children, especially our infants who are too young to be fully protected by immunizations, we are unable to accept children who have not been

properly immunized unless we have a written plan to bring them up to date from a physician. Please get updated immunization records each time your child receives a new immunization.

As required by State of Missouri law, you may request at any time to know if there are any children enrolled with immunization exemptions. We cannot tell you who or what class, but we must tell you if they are enrolled here. We do not accept immunization exemptions except medical exemptions for life-threatening reasons—i.e. children with compromised immune systems who cannot receive vaccinations. We also accept in-progress notes, which are only valid if children are following the approved catch-up schedule.

Smoking

As required by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and due to the dangers of second hand smoke, we are a non-smoking facility. Due to health concerns, we also prohibit smoking within 50 feet of the building and playground. This policy extends to families, so we ask that you extinguish any smoking materials *prior to entering the property* and wait to light smoking materials *until you have left the property*. As a courtesy to Ashland Children's Garden staff, and to keep our students safe, please do not dispose of cigarette butts or other smoking materials in our parking lot or anywhere on our grounds.

Family Communication and Involvement:

At Ashland Children's Garden we are committed to creating strong partnerships with families to provide high quality care. To honor that commitment, families are encouraged to share the values, expectations and factors that shape their lives at home. We also provide many avenues of communication about the program and their child's development, as well as opportunities to be involved in the program through volunteer and at home learning activities.

Communication About Your Child

- Families of infants will be provided with a daily report including naps, diaper changes and meals.
- Classroom teachers will attempt to check in with families of older children regularly during drop off or pick up. However if you drop off or pick up between 8:00 and 3:30 this may not be possible because we will be busy teaching or with meals.
- If you have a question or concern that needs to be addressed right away, please text or leave a voicemail and we will return the message as soon as possible.
- If you have a question or concern that is not urgent, but can't wait until the next scheduled family conference, let us know so we can schedule a conference sooner.

- We try to schedule family conferences twice a year. During this conference we will provide information about your child's development and progress. This is also a time for families to ask questions and voice concerns. We ask that families let us know about concerns in advance so if the concern relates to a licensing or child development issue we can research our options!

Communication About the Program and Center

- We have a weekly newsletter, which will be sent out via email, usually on Saturday afternoon. The newsletter will include announcements, important dates and reminders. Our newsletter will also include articles about child development, activities to do with your child, and other helpful tips depending on the topic.
- Our daily menu will be posted on the parent information board and on our Facebook page.
- We have a website, childrensgardenchildcare.weebly.com, where you can find the most recent copy of our handbook, our schedule, program information, photos, and informational articles.
- Our Facebook page includes happenings in your child's classroom, announcements, current early childhood education news, product recalls, and community events, as well as pictures, work samples, and quotes from our students.

Opportunities for Involvement

We believe that the most important way families can stay involved in their child's care experience is to keep communication open by taking advantage of the communication opportunities mentioned on the previous page. However, we also believe that it is important for the children and families to feel like a community.

We offer the following additional ways to be involved at school:

- Depending on family interest, we may organize garage sales or swap events. Families can bring in gently used clothing, equipment, toys, or books to swap with other families.
- When we have specific funding needs not met by our regular budget, we may have fundraisers families can choose to participate in.
- We want Ashland Children's Garden to be an important part of the community and will try to participate in community events and volunteer efforts. Family participation will help us make these events a success.
- We accept clothing donations to be used when children's clothing becomes soiled or dirty at school and they do not have anything to change into. We also provide these clothes to children at school whose families are having financial difficulty. Please consider donating clothing if you are able.
- At least once a year, each family will be asked to complete an anonymous survey about their

experience at Ashland Children's Garden for each enrolled child. Confidential comments can also be submitted in the payment box.

- We welcome family volunteers. We have opportunities inside and outside the classroom, such as helping students with a special project, being a guest reader, and sprucing up our dress-up clothes or playground. If you are interested, please ask about volunteer opportunities.

Grievance policy

We make every effort to make Ashland Children's Garden a great place for children and families. Our employees are familiar with the policies contained in this handbook, as well as the expectations we have for them. They are given regular training and support, however we know there will be times when there are differences of opinion between families, teachers, and directors. We have thought very carefully about the policies contained in the handbook, and they are in place for the safety and learning of all students. Although we want to be as flexible as possible, in general, we cannot make exceptions to these policies to fit the individual preference of a single family.

As a parent, your first step should be to calmly and respectfully address the issue with the teacher, at a time they have to talk. Please realize that at pick-up and drop-off, teachers are responsible for supervising and greeting students, so this may not be the best time to talk. You may need to schedule another time when the teacher can give you their full attention. If you are not satisfied with the result of that conversation, please bring the situation to the attention of the director (Lisa) or associate director (Allyssa).

We cannot resolve a situation we don't know about, and we want our families to be happy. However, our first responsibility has to be making ALL of the children and employees in our care feel safe and respected, so we ask that if you are angry or upset about a situation at school, you make a phone call, send an email, or make an appointment for when you are calmer. Angry, aggressive, or disrespectful behavior toward any staff member will NOT be tolerated, even if we believe you have a right to be angry.

When we are resolving your grievance, we will discuss with the teacher and family separately, mediate a meeting between the teacher and family if necessary, and develop a plan in keeping with our handbook policies that all parties feel comfortable with. If you have questions about this policy, or any policies contained in this handbook, please feel free to contact us!