



THE LEARNING CENTER
AT LIVING WORD LUTHERAN CHURCH

Family Handbook

THE LEARNING CENTER
a ministry of
Living Word Lutheran Church

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An Introduction to The Learning Center

Congratulations, you have chosen an early childhood program for your child that is licensed by the state of Texas, accredited by The National Accreditation Commission (NAC), and holds memberships with the Association of Early Learning Leaders (AELL), the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA), and the Early Childhood Christian Network (ECCN). The Learning Center is a high-quality early childhood program providing a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children.

In this program you will see:

- Frequent, positive, warm interactions among adults and children
- Planned learning activities appropriate to children's age, such as building, painting, stories, Bible lessons, dress-up, and active outdoor play
- A research-based and accredited academic program-Frogstreet
- Specially trained teachers
- Enough adults to respond to individual children
- Many varied age-appropriate materials
- A healthy and safe environment for children
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Regular communication with parents who are always welcome
- Effective administrative staff
- Ongoing, systematic evaluation
- Weekly Chapel services

Statement of Purpose

The Learning Center is an outreach ministry of Living Word Evangelical Lutheran Church. Living Word Evangelical Lutheran Church has been a congregation since 1976. At our former location, we worked with a private childcare operation on our premises for 10 years. In our vision for the future, one of our goals was to open our own Christian based preschool as a ministry to the community. Our grand opening was on June 2, 1997. The Learning Center seeks to provide a safe place where children are nurtured and shown God's love. Our commitment to offer the best possible program, with Christian faith and values, is a strong one. Our center offers a developmentally appropriate program focusing on growth of the whole child, physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually. We are thankful to be partners with you in raising healthy, happy, well adjusted, and faith-filled children.

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About Our Program

We would like to welcome you and your child to The Learning Center! Our main goal is to bring out the best in every child while providing a safe, nurturing, and academic Christian environment. Here, while surrounded in the comfort of God's love, your child will be given the opportunity to learn independence, to share responsibility and make new discoveries.

Learning through experience will be a large part of your child's day here. He or she will learn about others' feelings, ideas and needs, as well as their own. At The Learning Center your child will develop a sense of self-confidence and enjoy enriching experiences along the way. Your child will be shown God's love every step of the way.

The children's daily schedule at The Learning Center is developed to meet the needs for a balance of active and quiet play, large and small group interaction, and indoor and outdoor activities. Our teachers strive to use age appropriate, developmentally correct activities to suit the abilities and maturity of the class.

You, as a parent, are a very important part of our school. We encourage you to participate in class parties, field trips, and various other activities common both to parent and child. Our staff wants you to always feel welcome to come in and observe the classes in session, because parental interest is fundamental to your child's learning process.

The Learning Center offers a diverse staff, several of which are fluent in a variety of languages. Please see the front office if you need an interpreter.

Remember, The Learning Center is here for your child, so make the best of all it has to offer. We hope that you and your child will grow from your wonderful experience with us!

Some of the program goals are:

- Spiritual Development – Bible lessons promote knowledge of God and Christian character and values.
- Language Development - Pre-reading skills taught through phonics-based activities, letter recognition, and handwriting.
- Numbers/Math Readiness – Hands-on approach to early math concepts and number recognition.
- Basic Readiness Skills
- Fine/Gross Motor Coordination
- Social/Emotional Development
- Good Work Habits

The Learning Center provides:

- Preschool and Extended care programs
- After school program for Elementary age children
- Professionally planned academic and faith-based curriculum
- Certified and specially trained teachers
- Low student to teacher ratios
- Super summer program
- Field trips and age-appropriate special activities
- Balanced meals and snacks
- State Licensed

- Accredited by National Accreditation Commission

Philosophy

"...Train a child in a way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it..."

Proverbs 22:6

Christian values and moral standards can be learned at a very early age, especially through modeling. Children grow when they are loved by God and by people. They blossom in a stable, consistent environment. They mature emotionally, physically and spiritually when the best resources and committed teachers intently focus on their development. More than gifts to resources and people, God loves them- and we want to share the caring Christ with these young minds and hearts through prayer, Bible stories, weekly chapel services, and dedicated Christian teachers.

Programs Available

The Learning Center offers several programs to meet the needs of the families in our community. We have 5-day preschool programs for children ages six weeks through five years; extended hours are available for the convenience of our working parents. The Learning Center also offers an after-school program for children attending elementary school.

Our Mother's Day Out program offers 2-day and 3-day classes for children ages 13 months to 3 years old by September 1. Our school year begins in August and ends in May. We also offer Summer Camp for our currently registered families.

Transportation and Field Trips

The Learning Center provides transportation to and from several area elementary schools (schools are listed on current registration forms). We also have planned field trips for our Pre-K and school age students. Parents must sign a permission slip acknowledging the trip and giving permission to transport prior to each field trip.

Hours of Operation

6:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Preschool Hours:

9:15 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. Monday through Friday

Mother's Day Out Hours (M/W/F or T/TH)

9:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

9:15 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Extended Care

(9.5-hour day): 5 Day schedules pre-select a 9.5-hour time frame. For example, 7:00am-4:30pm, 7:30am-5:00pm, or 8:30am-6:00pm.

Full Day

6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Please be considerate of the staff and the children and be on time for pick up.

Please drop off and pick up your child from their classroom. Children must be in their classrooms by 9:15 a.m. to maintain a smooth transition. Children may not be brought in after 10:00am.

Enrollment Policy

Enrollment at The Learning Center is open to all children without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin. We recognize the uniqueness of each child and provide individualized experiences to help children reach their maximum potential. We are dedicated to helping your child develop age-appropriate skills. We encourage independence, nurture self-confidence, and stimulate creative intelligence. Should you have questions regarding The Learning Center's policies and procedures please schedule an appointment to see the center director.

The Learning Center reserves the right to un-enroll any child who does not conform to school policies. This includes children who do not demonstrate readiness to separate from home and bond with a new adult in a non-home situation. We also reserve the right to place a child on probation to help resolve some situations. It is expected that parents will be cooperative in doing what is best for the health and welfare of their child and others at The Learning Center. We also expect parents to abide by the policies of The Learning Center. Should you have any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures of The Learning Center, please make an appointment with the center director to discuss and review these issues.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

The Learning Center parents/guardians are responsible for all the following:

- Follow all policies and procedures of The Learning Center including: illness policy, parking lot safety & safety procedures, and parent/guardian supervision responsibilities
- Provide complete enrollment forms and keep them up to date
- Communicate with teacher about child's needs and participate in conferences
- Provide extra clothes, sunscreen, and insect repellent (*ALL AGES*) and diapers, diaper cream, and wipes (*AS APPROPRIATE*)
- Pay all tuition and fees on or before due dates
- Follow arrival and pick-up times
- Participate in school events

Current Enrollment Information

In order for the staff of The Learning Center to provide your child with the highest standards of safety, the parent must be of assistance in updating your child's enrollment information as necessary and appropriate. The most important information to update is a change of telephone number and email address for emergencies. Please provide this information in writing to the Director as soon as the information has changed. As your child is immunized, please be sure to provide the Director with a copy of your child's current records. Your child must get a physical every calendar year acknowledging that they are healthy and able to participate in physical school activities. A copy of this acknowledgement is to be provided to the Director along with current shot records within 7 days of starting school.

Classroom Transitions

Transitions can be difficult for children, so at The Learning Center, your child will stay in the same classroom for the school year session. This allows your child to form relationships with his/her teacher and the other children in the room. If through conferences with the teacher and the Director it is determined your child should transition to a different class for developmental reasons, then that transition will happen over a week's time and will begin with short "visits" to the new class.

Visiting and Parent Participation Policy

Parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom at anytime. You may also bring your lunch and join your child during their lunch period. We encourage parent participation at TLC. Your positive attitude towards education will encourage your child's love for school. We host

numerous functions/fundraisers throughout the year and appreciate parent volunteers. If you wish to volunteer for these functions, please see your child's teacher or the front office.

Conferences

While parents are welcome to schedule a conference with their child's teacher at any time during the school year, regular conferences are offered twice a year; check the TLC yearly calendar for current dates.

Referrals and Resources

The Learning Center team takes immense pride in helping children develop to the best of their abilities. If at any time our staff feels your child could benefit from any outside source, we will provide information to help parents/legal guardians receive all help available. The following local services are available to all parents/guardians:

- ECI Project Tyke is an Early Childhood Intervention program which serves children under the age of three that have developmental delays
- ECSE-Early Childhood Special Education is a program offered through the public school district and serves children ages three-five years old

There are informative handouts on common early childhood topics located in the front office. Please see an administrator if there are any certain behaviors or subjects on which you need further information.

Withdrawal from The Learning Center

Parents who withdraw their child from The Learning Center are required to give written notice two weeks prior to withdrawal. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of any tuition money due back.

Children with Disabilities

The Learning Center will review each family's situation on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss your child's needs with the Director prior to enrollment at The Learning Center.

Immunizations

Per Texas Minimum Standards: Each child enrolled or admitted to childcare centers must meet and continue to meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services (DSHS). This requirement applies to all children in care from birth through 14 years of age.

All children are required to be current on their immunizations unless the child is exempt or excepted from an immunization, and the exemption or exception is verified by the date of admission. Any child that is not up to date on their immunizations will not be allowed to attend school. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to submit updated records when the child receives immunizations. *2025-2026 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Childcare and Pre-K Facilities chart is attached to the back of this handbook.*

Hearing and Vision Screening

Children who are four years of age or will be four by September 1st of the current year, must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems within 120 calendar days of enrollment, or present evidence of screening conducted within one year prior to enrollment.

Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Policy

State law requires all staff members to report suspected child physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff members who suspect any case of child abuse or neglect must immediately report it directly to Childcare Licensing and also to the Director. Once the case has been reported, the Department of Family and Protective Services will investigate and notify the school. The DFPS Statewide hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

The Learning Center's complete "Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Policy is on pages 18-20 of this handbook.

Illness or Accident

The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services has mandated minimum standards and guidelines for childcare centers concerning children who are ill or become ill while attending a day care center.

Section 746.3601 of The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Child Care Centers states in part:

Unless you are licensed to provide get-well care, you must not allow an ill child to attend your child-care center if one or more of the following exists:

- (1) The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child-care center activities including outdoor play;
- (2) The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care;
- (3) The child has one of the following (unless a medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the child-care center's activities):
 - A. An oral temperature above 101 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - B. A tympanic (ear) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness. Tympanic thermometers are not recommended for children under six months old;
 - C. An axillary (armpit) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - D. An infrared temporal (forehead) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or
 - E. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill; or
- (4) A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

If your child develops any symptoms and/or illnesses while at home, please do not bring him or her to The Learning Center. Parents of children who demonstrate any of the above-described symptoms and/or illnesses will be notified immediately. For the comfort of your child and to avoid infecting other children, your child must be picked up **WITHIN ONE (1) HOUR** of notification. If parents do not arrive within the hour, an emergency contact will be called for pick up.

Children with a temperature of 102 or higher will be removed from their classroom and kept in the front office until a parent or emergency contact can pick them up. A child who has vomited

2 times or who has had diarrhea 3 times, with or without fever, will be sent home, and may not return to school until 24 hours **after the last episode** of vomiting or diarrhea.

Children must be fever free for at least twenty-four (24) hours without the aid of fever reducers, and symptom free; a note from your child's physician may be requested before your child returns to The Learning Center. The Learning Center may request a note from your child's physician if your child is exhibiting a yellow or green discharge from either their nose or eyes.

Please notify the Director immediately should your child develop symptoms of any communicable disease so parents of other children can be notified. Communicable diseases include the usual childhood diseases such as Scarlet Fever, German Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox, Whooping Cough, Hepatitis, Strep Throat, Pink Eye, Hand, Foot & Mouth, Ring Worm, any current pandemic, or anything else your physician states is contagious. The Learning Center reserves the right to request a note from your child's physician before your child may return to school.

All staff members of The Learning Center are certified in CPR and First Aid. If your child receives a minor injury (scrape, cut, bite, etc.) your child's teacher will be able to treat the wound and comfort the child. In the event of a more serious injury, parents will be notified as soon as the child's medical needs have been met. If a parent is unable to be reached, an emergency contact will be called. The child's physician may also be consulted for medical advice. In case of serious accident or illness, parents will be notified, 911 will be called, and an ambulance dispatched. Parents/legal guardians will be responsible for all associated fees if 911 must be called.

Health Checks

The Learning Center conducts daily health checks on each child at the time of drop off each morning. A health check is defined as a visual or physical assessment of a child to identify potential concerns about a child's health, including signs or symptoms of illness or injury, in response to changes in the child's behavior since the last date of attendance. The teacher with whom the child is being left will greet the child and conduct the Health Check using the following guidelines:

Look for:

- Breathing Difficulties
- Severe Coughing
- Discharge from the nose or mouth
- Changes in skin color
- Bruising or swelling
- Cuts, sores, or rashes
- Give the child a hug and gently check for temperature or a cold, clammy feeling
- If the child can talk, ask questions

Talk with the parent to find out about changes in the child's:

- Sleep
- Eating and drinking
- Toileting habits
- Mood and behavior at home

If a child is suspected to be ill or injured, staff will refer to Texas Minimum Standards and follow current policies for the handling of sick children. The Learning Center will review health check procedures annually, and new hires will be trained to conduct health checks as a part of the New Hire Orientation. The health check procedure and any notable changes will be documented upon completion.

TLC Employee Vaccination Requirements

TLC Staff members are not required to receive vaccinations before employment. Employees are required to receive a yearly physical from their personal doctor.

Documentation that the employee has met this requirement is kept in their personnel file.

If the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Center for Disease Control, the Texas Health Department, or Texas Health and Human Services ever recommend or require vaccinations for adults, The Learning Center will comply and retain written proof for each employee in their personnel file.

Employees who do not comply will be given first a verbal warning, and secondly a written warning. Continued non-compliance can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Medication Policy

Medication will be administered at 12:00 noon and 4:00 p.m. daily. Prescription medications must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, date, directions, and the physician's name. The Learning Center will not administer expired medication, the first dose of any medication, prescription medication that is prescribed for another person, medication with a twice daily dosage indicated on the container, or medication "as needed". Non-prescription medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, date, and directions. Non-prescription medication may only be administered for the suggested number of days as labeled on the medication. The Learning Center reserves the right to request a physician's permission to administer any medications.

The Medication Log must be filled out each day medications are to be administered. The Medication Log is located at the front desk. No medicine will be given if it is not signed in. **Medication must be taken home daily. Only emergency medication may be left at The Learning Center on a long-term basis.** All medication is stored in the front office in a secured cabinet and will be administered only by specially trained staff.

Behavior Management

The staff of The Learning Center will practice positive guidance and redirection. Good behavior is recognized and encouraged. If a behavior problem is recurring, parents will be notified to schedule a parent/teacher conference. If a child demonstrates consistent aggressive behavior or biting within a short period of time, suspension and/or dismissal may result. Please do not discuss behavior concerns during drop-off or pick-up time, or in the presence of children, but rather at a scheduled conference time.

Discipline and Guidance Policy: (per Texas Minimum Standards)

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control

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

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements; redirecting behavior using positive statements
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- (3) Grabbing or pulling a child;
- (4) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- (5) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- (6) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- (7) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet;
- (8) Placing a child in a restrictive device for time out;
- (9) Withholding active play or keeping a child inside as a consequence for behavior, unless the child is exhibiting behavior during active play that requires a brief supervised separation or time out that is consistent with §746.2803(4)(D) of this subchapter (relating to What methods of discipline and guidance may a caregiver use?); and
- (10) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Arrival and Departure

To help our program run smoothly, we ask that children be dropped off and picked up as quickly as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about your child, please arrange for a parent/teacher conference, or ask the teacher to call you on his/her break.

When bringing your child into The Learning Center in the morning, you are required to clock them in on the time clock by the front door. We also ask that you personally take your child to his/her classroom. **To minimize classroom disruptions, children are required to be in class by 10:00am.**

Upon enrolling your child at The Learning Center each parent is registered by dual code to enter the building. This procedure is used to document the arrival and departure of your child(ren). For security purposes, we ask that you give no one this code. Children will only be released to people who are listed on the emergency card. Anyone other than parents will be asked to show proper photo identification. When you pick up your child in the afternoon, you are required to clock them out on the time clock.

Parent/Guardian Supervision Responsibility

Prior to a child being signed in, and after a child is signed out the child is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. The Learning Center's classrooms and playgrounds are for use during child's registered school hours or school/church sanctioned events only.

Late Pick-Up Fees

The safety of your child is important to the staff at The Learning Center. Therefore, it is important that your child be picked up in a timely fashion so that The Learning Center will always be at the proper staff/child ratio.

As each child becomes accustomed to the daily routine, it can be stressful for your child if you do not arrive as expected. **Parents picking up children past their scheduled pick-up time will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute per child for each minute the child is picked up late. This fee, which will be charged to your account, increases to \$5.00 per minute per child after closing time.**

Outside Employment

Employees of The Learning Center are prohibited from outside employment with parents of the organization. This includes, but is not limited to, babysitting and/or nanny-type jobs.

Social Media Policy

The Learning Center encourages strong teacher/parent relationships. These relationships are to be developed via face-to-face interactions, conferences, notes, classroom communication, and school telephone. Contact with parents using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Tick Tock, etc. or blogs is not allowed.

Court Orders

To ensure that The Learning Center is in compliance with any court orders pertaining to the custody of your child, we require a certified copy of the current custody order. We will keep this information confidential. It is our policy to remain neutral in custody matters.

Safety in the Parking Lot

Your child's safety is our primary concern. The following guidelines must be followed in our parking lot:

- Please hold your child's hand when crossing the parking lot. Do not allow your child to run out ahead of you
- Our parking lot is very busy with TLC and church traffic. PLEASE drive slowly and carefully, watch for children and adults
- NO CHILD may be left in a vehicle unattended, even for a brief period of time
- Parents/guardians must refrain from using cell phones or other electronic devices in the parking lot
- Parents/guardians assume responsibility of their child at the time of leaving the classroom
- Do not leave vehicles running or idling in the parking lot
- Do not leave any personal belongings in your vehicle

Security Cameras

The Learning Center has security cameras in the front entrance, lobby, hallway, parking lot, playgrounds, and all classrooms. Our cameras record what is taking place throughout the campus. These cameras are closed circuit, and for the protection of the children, are not internet accessible. If necessary, the digital information may be collected and handled by the center Director and authorized personnel.

Emergency Closings/Weather Conditions

TLC will follow all Katy ISD emergency and weather-related closings. Watch local television channels for school district closings. If the weather is severe enough that Katy ISD closes, then for the safety of our families and employees, we will do the same. If the KISD meteorologist advises a late start, we will open ½ hour earlier than the school district. The Learning Center will also close in the following cases: being without electricity for more than 2 hours, without water for more than 1 hour, or if the Health Department has concerns regarding spread of illness. Tuition credit is not given in these situations. If you have any questions regarding school closings or emergency procedures, please contact The Learning Center. Parents should expect to be contacted through text message, phone call, and/or email to pick up their child in case of bad weather conditions or other emergency closings. Please be sure we have a current cell phone number and email contact on file that you can access throughout the day.

What To Bring To School

The Learning Center will provide a personal rest mat for your child labeled with his/her name. Please bring a small lightweight blanket and crib sheet to use during rest time. Your child may bring special items needed for rest time such as a pillow, stuffed animal, etc. Otherwise, toys from home are not allowed.

A seasonally appropriate change of clothing is required for every child. Include underwear and socks to leave at school in case of an accident. Please include plastic bags for wet or soiled clothing. Be sure every article of clothing is labeled with your child's name. TLC is not responsible for any lost or misplaced items including clothes, games, toys, and dancewear.

Parents must also provide diapers, pull-ups and baby wipes for children who are not yet potty trained. Teachers will send a note home when supply is running low.

Potty Training

This is a team effort! We will make every effort to coordinate our training program to the program you are using at home. When the time is right, we ask that you supply us with at least two complete sets of clothing and an ample amount of diapers and training pants for each day your child attends. He or she may still need to wear a diaper during rest time. Children must be potty trained prior to enrollment in the Teddy Bears or Butterflies classes (36-47 months).

Technology Use Policy

TLC encourages hands-on experiences and physical activities as enrichment to our curriculum rather than computers or other technology devices. Children in the Infant, Toddler, and Two-year-old programs will not use technology devices in their classrooms. Preschool and School-Age children may use technology devices upon occasion in accordance with Texas Minimum Standards time limits and only with permission given by the Director. All programs/applications must be previewed and deemed appropriate for the age group and serve an educational purpose. Other activities will be made available for children who do not wish to participate.

Outdoor Play

Outside play is considered an extension of the classroom at TLC. Weather permitting, the children will participate in structured and unstructured outdoor activities every day. High and low temperatures as well as air quality alerts will be monitored. If weather is not permitting of outside play, children will have equal time to play in the Indoor Play Gym. Please be sure you send your child with seasonally appropriate outerwear. As always, supervision is a priority. For the safety of your child, open-toed footwear, sandals, and crocs are not allowed. Tennis shoes and dress shoes are permitted. If for any reason, such as illness, your child would not be able to be outside, we suggest they not attend class that day for their comfort.

Water Activities

Our summer program includes scheduled "splash day" activities for students 13 months old and up. These activities are limited to low sprinklers with water spray less than 24 inches high and slippery slides with no more than one inch of standing water. Children are required to wear water shoes for outside water play on splash days. On splash days when a waterslide is used, parents must sign a permission slip allowing their child to participate.

Rest Time

A rest period is scheduled each day from 12:30-2:30 p.m. for all pre-school children. Beginning in January, Pre-K classes rest time will change to 12:30-1:30 pm. A rest mat is provided, and your child can bring their favorite sleep toy from home along with a lightweight blanket and crib sheet to use during rest time. We ask that you label each item and take them home to be washed each week.

Infant Safe Sleep Policy: (per Texas Minimum Standards)

All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at The Learning Center will follow these safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS):

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight-fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size cribs and for non-full-size cribs
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight-fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed in a crib include soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing
- Do not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation
- Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult
- If an infant needs extra warmth, use an infant sleep sac as an alternative to blankets
- Place only one infant in a crib to sleep
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep, but the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional
- Our childcare program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas childcare operations (this includes e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers)
- Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound

- If an infant can roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position
- Awake infants will have supervised "tummy time" several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally
- Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional

Holidays Observed

The Learning Center is **closed** on the following holidays:

New Year's Day

Labor Day

Good Friday

Thanksgiving Day & Friday after

Memorial Day

Christmas Break (2 Weeks)

Independence Day

***Professional Development Days**

When the holiday occurs on a Saturday, The Learning Center will be closed the preceding Friday. When the holiday occurs on Sunday, The Learning Center will be closed the following Monday. *TLC typically closes on Martin Luther King Day, two days before The Learning Center school year begins, and the week of Memorial Day for building maintenance, Staff Professional Development and planning days.

Registration Fees

A **non-refundable** registration fee is required to be paid prior to enrollment and then again annually to reserve a place for your child at The Learning Center. There is a discount for two or more children.

Tuition

For the convenience of our parents, we offer two different payment arrangements: monthly payments, or bi-monthly payments. Tuition is due in full with no deductions for absences, holiday closures, or closures due to weather related causes or circumstances beyond our control. We accept checks, money orders, or cashier's checks. Credit card and ACH payments may be set up through Procure Tuition Express. Please see the front office for more information.

Monthly tuition is due on the first (1st) day of each month. A late payment fee of \$10 *per day* will be added to tuition not paid by the close of business on the third (3rd) day of the month.

Bi-monthly tuition is due on the first (1st) and the fifteenth (15th) day of each month. A late payment fee of \$10 *per day* will be added to tuition not paid by the close of business on the third (3rd) day and seventeenth (17th) day of the month.

Pandemic/Emergency Tuition Policy

Should the center need to close for emergency or pandemic reasons, full tuition will be due for the first two weeks of closure. If the center is closed for longer than two weeks, 50% of tuition will be due. Parents may give a 2-week notice to withdraw from the program if they feel it is in the best interest of their family. 50% of the tuition will be due during the 2-week notice period *after* the initial two weeks of closure. A full registration fee will be required to re-enroll in the program.

Late Payments

Past due tuition fees are assessed a ten dollar (\$10.00) late payment charge for each day payments are past due. Fees are due in full without deductions or discounts for absences or holidays. Unpaid tuition fees for a period longer than two (2) weeks will result in forfeiture of a reserved place at The Learning Center. To re-enter our program at The Learning Center, all past due tuition fees and late payment charges must be paid in full as well as another registration fee. If the classroom has a waiting list, your child will be placed on the waiting list in date order.

A fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) will be charged for each returned check. The returned check fee will be due in addition to any past due tuition fees and applicable late payment charges.

Tuition rates and fees are subject to change at The Learning Center's discretion.

Family Discounts

If you have two children enrolled at The Learning Center, you will receive a 10% discount off the lesser of the two tuitions. If you have 3 or more enrolled, you will receive 10% off their combined tuition.

Food and Nutrition

Please advise the Director and your child's teacher of any special dietary needs or allergies your child may have. The Learning Center does not serve peanut butter or any foods containing nuts. Please keep this in mind when bringing any food into the school.

Infant Feeding Provisions

The Learning Center provides a comfortable place to enable breast feeding mothers to breastfeed their child. We will also provide a refrigerated space to store extra breast milk for your infant.

Lunch and Snacks

The Learning Center provides the children with nutritionally sound lunches and morning and afternoon snacks as part of our program. Hot Lunch and Snack menus are on the school website and are also posted on the board outside of your child's classroom. If you feel your child will not eat the food provided, you are welcome to bring a healthy substitute from home; however, no discounts will be given.

Birthdays

We love to celebrate birthdays! If you wish to send a special snack for your child's birthday or have a small party which you plan to attend, please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. Healthy snacks are suggested. Texas State Minimum Standards requires all food items to be commercially prepared. Homemade items cannot be served to the children.

School Uniforms

The Learning Center has a school uniform policy that applies to all children in the Teddy Bear, Butterfly, and Pre-K classrooms. Chapel Day requires a specific uniform and occurs once a week on alternating Mondays and Tuesdays. Please refer to monthly calendars for scheduling of Chapel Day; on all other days the children may wear standard uniforms. "Special Dress" days are shown on the activity calendar such as "Pajama Day" and "Go Texan Day". Children are not required to wear uniforms on Fridays, school picture days, or during our summer program.

Girls

Chapel Day:

White Blouse with navy trim

Green Plaid Jumper ***girls must wear shorts under their dresses**

All other days:

Red, Navy, Hunter Green, or Light-Yellow Polo Shirt with
The Learning Center monogram

Khaki, Navy Shorts or Khaki, Navy Long Pants

Boys

Chapel Day:

Navy Sweater Vest with white button-down shirt

Khaki Shorts or Khaki Long Pants

All other days:

Red, Navy, Hunter Green, or Light-Yellow Polo Shirt with
The Learning Center monogram

Khaki, and Navy Shorts or Khaki, and Navy Long Pants

Uniform information

All uniforms are available from Flynn O'Hara Uniforms. Other generic makes of polo shirts without a company logo and pants are acceptable in school colors. Monogram service is available through TLC for a fee of \$5 per item. Each year The Learning Center will have a uniform resale, which will allow parents to buy and sell uniforms at a discounted price.

Sweatshirts and sweaters are available in the school colors with the monogram but are not a necessity. All other sweaters and coats are acceptable. No open-toed footwear or any form of crocs or sandals will be allowed due to outdoor activities. Tennis shoes and dress shoes are preferred.

Anti-Idling Policy

TLC requires vehicle ignitions to be turned off when dropping off and picking up your child.

Idling vehicles contribute to air pollution and emit **air toxins**, which are pollutants known to cause or are suspected of causing cancer or other serious health effects. Children's lungs are still developing, and when they are exposed to elevated levels of these pollutants, children have an increased risk of developing asthma, respiratory problems and other adverse health effects.

Aerosol Spray Use

Aerosol sprays are not used in the classrooms or any areas where children may be present.

Acceptable areas for use include the adult restrooms and the hallway during times when children are not present.

Smoking/Drug Policy

Smoking and/or the use of illegal or recreational drugs is not permitted on premises, indoor or outdoor, or within sight of children, including hours children are not present.

Weapons Policy

Bringing, possessing, selling, dispensing, manufacturing, using, or having under one's control any objects such as explosives, firearms, knives, or any other components is not permitted on premises, indoor or outdoor, or within sight of children, including hours children are not present.

Gene LaGrone Scholarship

The Gene LaGrone Scholarship is an established fund at The Learning Center to provide appropriate grant aid to families seeking Christian Education who are currently unable to pay full tuition. If you are interested in receiving more information, please contact the Director.

Licensing Information

The Learning Center is licensed by Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation. Texas HHSCCR, the Fort Bend Health Department, and the Fort Bend County Fire Marshall regularly inspect our school to ensure that we meet the State of Texas requirements as well as our own high standards of quality health and safety. As a licensed child-care facility, we are governed by Texas Minimum Standards. To view a copy of Minimum Standards you may borrow a copy from the front office or download your own copy from www.txchildcaresearch.org. For questions or concerns, you may contact the following:

1. Local Licensing Office – (713) 287-3238 www.hhs.texas.gov
2. TDPRS Abuse Hotline-1-800-252-5400 or visit their web site at www.txabusehotline.org.

Parent Notifications

Open communication is very important to children's success. The Learning Center has multiple ways of communicating with parents. In some situations, parents may be asked to sign documents acknowledging that communication has taken place. Listed below are ways The Learning Center may communicate with parents:

- Electronic monitor located in the front lobby
- Email notifications
- Written memos placed in your child's daily/weekly folders
- TLC's website: www.tlclivingwordkaty.org
- Text notifications through Procure
- Verbal communication with the child's teacher and/or the Director
- Social Media Sites

Operational Policy Updates

Parents will be notified in writing of any changes to operational policies and/or The Family Handbook.

Communication and Problem Resolution

The Learning Center Board encourages people to talk directly to the person with whom they have a problem. As it says in Matthew 18, *"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one."* Therefore, if a parent has a complaint about a teacher, the parent needs to talk directly with the teacher. This is true for other relationships: staff person/director and director/board member. This helps us avoid behind the back murmurings and deal with problems directly. We also recognize that hearing "no" and saying "no" are as much a part of our journey as hearing "yes" and saying "yes".

After having this kind of direct communication and remaining dissatisfied with the response or action, the person with the complaint may request a meeting with the director, board chair, or church representative. It is the responsibility of The Learning Center Board to address concerns that are owned and specific. The person with the complaint will be asked to write a summary of their concern and the desired response or action. This then will be reviewed by the director, board chair, and church representative together. It is important to The Learning Center Board

to address concerns case by case, to encourage different voices in processing, and to allow a variety of options in response in reaching a constructive resolution of the issue.

TLC's Emergency Preparedness Plan

The Learning Center practices preparedness in the event of an emergency. All teachers and staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. Children and staff practice fire drills monthly, and severe weather drills and lockdown drills every three months. Details are outlined in TLC's Emergency Preparedness Plan which, along with this handbook, is given to parents at registration and made available again at Meet the Teacher. Both documents are also available on our website.

Pest Management

The Learning Center uses professional pest management techniques to control pests, including insects and vermin. Products used are non-toxic and are applied outside of operation hours. Families will be notified via Procure text messaging prior to date of application.

Requirements Regarding Gang-Free Zones for Child Care Centers

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This new statute requires that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed childcare centers. The following is a tip sheet to assist in complying with the new law. This information may be posted at your childcare operation or copies may be provided to parents.

What is a gang-free zone? A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your childcare center. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends? The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. Parents may contact their local municipality or courthouse for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

What is the purpose of gang-free zones? Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

What does this mean for my childcare center? A childcare center must inform parents or guardians of children attending the center about the new gang-free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

When do I have to comply with the new requirements? The law is already in effect, so providers should begin sharing information regarding gang-free zones immediately. Licensing staff will offer technical assistance to facilitate compliance until rules are proposed and adopted, which is estimated to occur in March 2010. In the meantime, providers should update their operational policies and procedures to include providing the information mandated by this law to the parents or guardians of the children in care.

For further information please contact your licensing representative or local licensing office.

The Learning Center: Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT POLICY

State law requires all staff members to report suspected child physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff members who suspect any case of child abuse or neglect must immediately report it to directly to Childcare Licensing and also to our Director. Once the case has been reported, Department of Family and Protective Services will investigate and notify the school. The DFPS Statewide hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

PROCEDURES:

Director

1. The Director must report all suspected child abuse cases to the Child Abuse Hotline. A person may not make the independent determination of whether a report is necessary or not.
2. The Director must send a written report of suspected child abuse to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) of the alleged abuse within 48 hours.
3. The Director must immediately report all suspected cases to the Owner.

Employees

1. You must immediately report a suspected case of child abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline and to the Director.
2. When reporting suspected cases of child abuse, you must include the following information:
 - a. Name of child
 - b. Age of child
 - c. Child's present location
 - d. Type and extent of abuse
 - e. Name of individual making the report
 - f. Individual's title
3. **Due to the confidential nature of such reports, no information concerning the incident can be shared with other staff members or parents.**
4. Remember that you are not to conduct any kind of investigation regarding the suspected child abuse.

Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children requires:

STAFF TRAINING

The Learning Center at Living Word Lutheran Church will provide training for all staff on the identification and reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect each program year. The director will provide this training for new staff at an orientation within 7 days of their hire date. Any new staff hired during the school year and will document such orientation in the

employee's file. All employees must complete at least one clock hour of annual training from the Department of Family and Protective Services Website:
<http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Reporting> or other source including but not limited to face to face and /online training.

PARENT EDUCATION

The Child Abuse and Neglect Policy will be given to all parents at Parent Orientation in the operational policies handbook. The policy will be discussed with parents at the time they receive it. Parents will be offered training on the prevention of abuse and neglect and will be informed of available community resources from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Department of Family and Protective Services Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP Program).

The CBCAP program makes parents aware of prevention services in their communities and encourages them to use them. It also strengthens community and parental involvement in child abuse prevention efforts. CBCAP funds a variety of contracts with community-based organizations to provide child abuse and neglect prevention services. These include Respite and Parent Education, Fatherhood and Leadership for Effective Parenting, Multidisciplinary Approach to Prevention Services, Family Support program, as well as various special initiatives. These include the "Help for Parents, Hope for Kids" campaign, which reaches out to parents through advertising and inspirational testimonials, and gives them a website:
<http://www.helpandhope.org> to connect them with statewide prevention and support services.

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

DFPS uses definitions of abuse and neglect found in the Texas Family Code (TFC):
<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/FA/htm/FA.261.htm>

DFPS defines abuse and neglect as the following acts or omissions by a person:

Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including any injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given. This does not include an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing possessory conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm.

Sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of continuous sexual abuse of young child or children under Section 21.02, Penal Code, indecency with a child under Section 21.11, Penal Code, sexual assault under Section 22.011, Penal Code or aggravated sexual assault under 22.021, Penal Code.

Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

Neglect includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

Placing a child in, or failing to remove a child from, a situation in which a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical

condition, or mental abilities and that result in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child.

Failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of a child.

The failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.

What if I'm not sure it's if it's neglect?

While it would be ideal to have a clear-cut guide that would determine whether any given situation constitutes abuse or neglect, there are many factors that determine whether a situation warrants an investigation. When in doubt, proceed forward with the child's safety in mind by making a phone or Internet report to the Texas Abuse Hotline. Remember, while TLC staff members are not to conduct an investigation when presented with information regarding any type of suspected child abuse (physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and/or neglect), each staff member is a mandated reporter.

