



**CAHABA VALLEY LEARNING CENTER**  
151 Narrows Parkway, Suite E, Birmingham, Alabama 35242

Cahaba Valley Learning Center, Inc.  
Operating Policies & Procedures & Family Handbook

Cahaba Valley Learning Center, Inc. serves Shelby County and its surrounding areas with distinction through provision of high-quality education programs for children and families. Our work transforms the understanding of education to include all children as capable learners, all teachers and families as full partners in the education system, and quality programs for children as integral to the success of all communities.



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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Cahaba Valley Learning Center, Inc. is to provide high-quality child care for the children of Shelby County and its surrounding areas. Cahaba Valley Learning Center is located in The Narrows between Old Highway 280 and Highway 280 at 151 Narrows Park Way.

Cahaba Valley Learning Center's only funding sources are:

- The fee that parents pay
- Capital Contributions by the Owner

Our programs utilize an open classroom format, which promotes the concept that children learn through play experiences. The programming strives to ensure each child a valuable experience, whether he or she is in attendance for long or short periods of time. We have an open-door policy, and we welcome you to be involved in the activities carried out in the classroom and to find ways to bring your personal interests, skills, and resources to your child's room.

This handbook has been written to orient you to policies, practices and procedures of the Center and its rooms. We hope that Cahaba Valley Learning Center will provide a rewarding experience for you and your child (ren).

Please be sure that you read this handbook thoroughly and carefully. You are responsible for being aware of its contents. If you have any questions, feel free to inquire in the main office. Thank you.



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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

### Eligibility

Applications will be accepted regardless of age, race, sex, color, creed, handicap, political persuasion, national origin, or sexual preference.

Children must be at least 6 weeks of age to be enrolled. The school-age (summer months program accepts children to 11 years). We also have an after school program for elementary aged children that attend any of the three Chelsea Elementary Schools. (Mt. Laurel, Chelsea Park, Forest Oaks)

### Hours of Operation

Cahaba Valley Learning Center operates Monday-Friday from 6:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

The Center is closed for the following paid holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day (teacher training)
- Independence Day
- Veteran's Day (teacher training)
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after Thanksgiving
- Labor Day
- Memorial Day
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, the center will close on the Friday before that day. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the center will close on the Monday after that day.

### Fees

Fees vary according to the age of your child. See our Fee Structure for the current rates.

No credit or refunds will be issued if the Learning Center is closed due to snow, severe weather, or other emergency. All fees are subject to change. Advance written notice will be given.

### Sign In/Out

Children must be signed in/out by a parent or an authorized person when they arrive/leave; this includes the time when they are signed in/out and the full name, (not initials) of the person signing them out. Parents are responsible for signing in/out at the correct time.

*Tardiness* – Parents are asked to notify the Center by phone if they are going to be late in picking up their child.



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Emergency tardiness at the end of the operating day:

If the Center is notified that the child will be picked up late (but before 6:10 p.m.) due to an emergency situation, we will waive the tardiness penalty fee. In a non-emergent situation, the penalty fee for picking up a child after 6:00 p.m. – per child/ per 15 minutes or portion thereof is:

1st & 2nd time: \$20.00, 3rd time: \$30.00, 4th time or more: \$50.00

(After the 4th time, a conference will be held with the Director before your family may continue using the Center.)

## Billing

While tuition is due on a weekly basis, we will happily provide balance information upon request. Balance information is also reflected on your check in screen of the Procure System. A late payment fee of \$10.00 per week will be charged to accounts which are past due after 6:00 PM on the third working day (Wednesday) of the week unless prior arrangements have been made with the billing department. Past due accounts will be subject to collection action. That action may include cancellation of enrollment, and/or placement with a collection agency. We prefer that all parents enroll in our autodraft system, Tuition Express. Tuition Express will draft your tuition account on a weekly basis. Sorry, but there is no other frequency of collection other than weekly through Tuition Express. Payments can also be initiated by the family online through Tuition Express where any amount can be paid. There is no fee for using Tuition Express. Should you need to pay via check: Checks should be made out to: “Cahaba Valley Learning Center”, or “CVLC” and dropped off in the mailbox located near the Learning Center reception desk.

Amounts paid in excess of amount owed will be refunded to families no longer attending the Center.

## Parking Your Car to Drop Off & Pick Up Your Child(ren)

There are plenty of non-reserved parking spaces in front of our facility. Please not park in designated handicap parking spaces unless you have the appropriate handicap parking designation.

## II. REGISTRATION INFORMATION

### Parent Classifications

Parents are classified as either “Continuing,” “Wait List” or “New.”

*Continuing:* To establish continuing priority status for registration, your child(ren) must be enrolled for at least 10 months during the preceding year. Families may elect not to



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enroll their child for the summer semester and still keep their continuing status. These families will be placed at the top of the waiting list if one exists as to give them priority over new students that wish to start in August. This policy does not guarantee that your child's spot will be reserved if another student wishes to enroll during June or July. Newly enrolled children with a continuing sibling are also considered continuing.

*Wait List* parents are those not currently enrolled, but are on the wait list for an opening in their requested classroom. Parents who are on the wait list have priority over new parents.

*New* parents are those who are registering their children for the first time or after a 3 month period of non-enrollment or after un-enrolling their child (ren). (See “Continuing” status above.)

### III. ATTENDANCE/SCHEDULING

#### Scheduling Options

The Learning Center provides only one scheduling option for infants/toddlers/preschoolers. Full-Time– This is defined as a 57.5-hour week (6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.), Monday through Friday, excluding the periods when the Learning Center is closed. Our center will accept school age children if their school closes for an additional fee (see daily rate schedule). Please note that the full time schedule is the only option available for children. While we do not require that your child be in attendance every day, there is no discount or credit for a part time schedule.

#### Arrival/ Departure

The building is accessible via the front door entrance that faces Highway 280. Please do not attempt to use any other exit only door to enter the Learning Center as these entrances are secured. Any unfamiliar family or person picking up children must stop at the business office and show picture identification before being shown to the child's classroom. (This includes parents/guardians, emergency contacts or any other person you've designated as authorized to pick up your child.)

The Learning Center's responsibility for a child begins when a child is signed in by the parent or other authorized person, and ends when the child is signed out by the parent or other authorized person. Both the correct times and the individual's full name (not initials) must be recorded. Because of the importance of having accurate



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accountability for all children at all times, a penalty fee may be assessed for failing to sign in or out.

During the warmer months, it is requested that parents apply sunscreen to their child before they come to the Center. If you prefer to apply it here, you will be required to complete a medication authorization form and provide the sunscreen for your child.

Only those persons authorized by the parent(s) on the application are authorized to sign-out/pick-up or visit a child. Please make sure that someone other than the parents is authorized to be an emergency pick-up person and that these persons are aware that they are on your child's emergency list. We may need to contact these adults in urgent situations (i.e., a child is ill and needs to be picked up and the parents cannot be reached, or the parents themselves have had an emergency situation come up and are unable to pick up their child by the end of the day). These adults should be able to handle an emergency (i.e. the child is having a seizure and is on their way to the hospital and the parents are not able to be reached by phone). In a situation where the parent is unavailable or cannot be reached for a prolonged period or after the Center has closed, and we have no emergency contacts, we will need to contact Protective Services to care for the child (ren) until the parents are able to do so. In families where the parents are separated or divorced, the custodial parent must have on file at the Learning Center a copy of legal documents stipulating custody. Only the parent who is listed on the child's most recent application form as having legal custody is authorized to pick up the child, unless that parent lists the other parent as authorized to pick up the child. If there are no documents stipulating custody arrangements, we cannot prevent a parent from picking up a child.

If someone else will be picking up your child just for a day (example: grandparents are coming in from out of town), put it in writing when you drop off your child. Parents may give us written authorization on the day of the occurrence for this purpose.

Parents need to be aware that, for safety purposes, the Center closing person, must stay in the building until all the classrooms are empty. Many of these employees teach, take classes, have family obligations, or have children of their own to pick up. For this reason, please be courteous to our teachers and make every effort to have exited the building by 6:00 pm.

### ***Releasing a child to an adult who is under the influence***

The safety and well-being of the children in our care is of primary importance. If any





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child care staff believes that an adult who is picking up a child is not in a condition to drive or adequately care for the child's safety, the staff should not release the child to an adult until the child's safety is assured. Staff will offer to call a cab or call another authorized adult to assist in picking up the child.

### Vacations/Illnesses

One vacation week per year will be granted for year-round children, and can be utilized during the 10th – 12th month. This vacation credit can only be used if your child will not be in attendance for a particular week (or 5 consecutive days) and cannot be broken down into days. This is designed to allow families to reduce their cost burden to take a vacation, not to provide free child care. There is no illness credit provided for children who are absent. Families may elect to use their vacation credit for a child who is absent due to illness for an entire week. Please remember, the vacation credit is not earned until your child has been enrolled for at least 9 full months at the Learning Center and can only be taken during the 10th through the 12th month of enrollment. Should the parent decide to take a vacation prior to the 10th month of enrollment, they can still receive their "credit" at the 10th month by letting the office know the specific week that year that was missed.

### Snow/Severe Weather Policy

In the event that public school classes are canceled due to a snow/severe weather emergency or other emergency by or before 2:00 p.m., we will be closed. Official announcement of cancellation of public school will be made on area television and radio stations. We will contact all families via text alert and will attempt to contact all parents via phone to announce Center closing's due to weather. We will also update our website to include closing information and will also announce this on WBRC Fox 6 News. You can also obtain information regarding school cancellations by calling your local news station or by going to your local schools website. No credits or refunds will be issued if the Center is closed due to a snow/severe weather emergency or other emergency.

### Cancellation

If you wish to cancel your enrollment, please let the Owner or Director know by email or written letter. We require a 2 week notice for cancellation of your enrollment. You will be billed and liable for the entire week in which your child has attended up to the Friday following your notice of cancellation. Cancellation includes loss of continuing status and seniority. If a family then chooses to reapply, they would be considered a new family and may be subject to a waitlist.





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## Discharge

We reserve the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for any of the following reasons:

1. The child is not in attendance at any time during two consecutive weeks of any enrollment period and the Center is not notified that the child will not be in attendance;
2. Non-payment or excessive late payment of fees;
3. Non-compliance with the policies and procedures as outlined in the Operating Policies/Family Handbook;
4. The child has special needs which the Center cannot meet, including disruptive behavior which requires a disproportionate amount of one-to-one attention or is putting the safety of themselves, other children, or teachers in jeopardy;
5. Physical or verbal abuse of staff or children by a child or parent;
6. Excessively neglecting to fill out and return required forms promptly.

## IV. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Staffing

The Center has, in addition to the Director and Assistant Directors, a Teacher for each classroom. The Teacher contributes to Center-wide policy development and is involved in the issues and concerns of child care in general. The Director and Teacher work full time (or nearly full time) and are the primary teachers in each classroom. To achieve low child to staff ratios, each class will have additional teachers that follow the direction of the Teacher. While all of our teachers have prior child care or teaching experience, additional training of staff is done primarily by the Director and Teachers. The Center also employs a number of full time substitute staff who works in all of our classrooms in the event that regular classroom staff is ill or absent.

### Curriculum

The Learning Center has created a theme based curriculum from many valuable resources. Our 4/5 PreK classrooms utilize a combination of Explode the Code (Literacy/Phonics), Singapore Math (Mathematics), and Creative Curriculum. Our 3K Preschool classrooms utilize a combination of Handwriting without Tears (Literacy/Phonics), Numbers & Math by HW Tears (Mathematics), and Creative Curriculum. Our Infant and Toddler classrooms utilize the Creative Curriculum.

Bible Lessons for Preschool for students ages 12 months – 5 years are also shared in the classrooms.



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In each of the classrooms, there exists a shared belief in the value of play and exploration as the major vehicle by which children learn. Teachers facilitate play activities and help supply the words for the concepts and feelings children express in their play as they learn how to interact with the various elements that comprise the world. In group play, children learn sharing, consideration and tolerance, and develop meaningful relationships with other children and adults who care for them.

Importance is placed on overall development rather than isolated parts of it, and on creative environments in which both children and adults are encouraged to learn and grow. Our programs operate in an open classroom setting with interest areas (i.e., role play, blocks, science, etc). Structure is suggested through materials, classroom design, teacher activities and child-initiated activities. Structure also occurs through daily routines, which provides a natural, real-life structure. Although room materials and ways of learning may outwardly appear to be the same in each room, the complexity and manner in which your child interacts with these materials and the way in which they are presented, change as your child grows.

### Documentation, Assessment, Screening and Child Files

Quality programming is essential in all of the programs at the Learning Center. As a part of our program planning, teachers in the classrooms use the following tools to record and gather information on each child and the group of children that are in their care. This information is shared with the individuals families, used for curriculum planning, setting up the classroom environments, documentation of children's work and assessment for future planning.

Assessments are ongoing, as teachers document children's work on a regular basis. Written information is given to families during the Fall and Spring semesters, and on a daily basis teachers are available to families to talk about the child's day, interests and development. Families and staff are encouraged to collaborate to best meet the needs of each individual child. Assessments and screening describe for teachers and families the developmental progress of children. This information is helping in adapting teaching practices, family involvement and program development.

### Approach to Holidays

Throughout the year, holidays represent signposts to both adults and children. Passing seasons, changes in growth and development, and cycles of weather are all part of our yearly celebrations. The Learning Center celebrates the spirit of the season – family, friendship, and goodwill. Although we value holidays for their fun, festivities and



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ability to bring us together, certain dilemmas confront us. The word “holiday” derives from “holy day” denoting the origin of most holidays in religious practice. Staff and families at the Center represent many cultures and religions, and thus celebrate many different holidays in their homes. We want to be sensitive to and respectful of the variety of beliefs and traditions of all families and staff in our Center. Out of respect for this diversity, we do not want to assume that everyone celebrates holidays the same way or that all of us celebrate a specific holiday. Therefore, we encourage children, with their families, to share their traditions and activities with their classmates. This means that your child may be introduced to a variety of seasonal activities that other families and children are sharing in a way appropriate to that room’s age group.

### Cultural Diversity

A culturally diverse approach provides us with a framework for developing classroom activities that promote respect for individual differences. Here are some of the guiding principles:

- A culturally diverse curriculum is based on what we know about the stages of development children go through in developing their identities and attitudes about others.
- Children live in a diverse and complex world, interacting daily with people different from themselves. A culturally diverse curriculum is a proactive approach, which reduces prejudice and promotes inclusiveness.
- An important aspect of a culturally diverse curriculum is helping children to recognize biases and stereotypes when they encounter them in themselves and others.

### Becoming Involved in Your Child’s Curriculum

In order for children to learn and grow, it is important that the adults in their lives demonstrate a respect, excitement and involvement in the activities children engage in. We encourage you to be involved in the themes and activities carried out in the classroom and to find ways to bring your personal interests, skills, and resources to these. Keying into classroom topics and activities can also mean thinking of: 1) items you may have at home that may complement classroom activities (e.g., special book, a table loom, specialized maps, a collection of some sort); 2) guest demonstration that you or a friend or relative can provide (e.g., silk screening, dental tools, violin playing); 3) discards from your work place or places of business you come in contact with.



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## V. CLASSROOM ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES

### Preparing For the First Day

Please visit the classroom with your child prior to their first day in the Center. Spend time in the room with your child while they get acquainted with the teachers, the children, and the new surroundings. This is especially important for your child if they have never been in a group care situation before. Prior to your child's starting, the Director and or Teacher will call you for an intake conference (via phone) to get information from you about your child. Generally, these take 5-10 minutes.

Please remember to label and bring with you on your child's first day:

- A complete change of season-appropriate clothing.
- A favorite cuddly, if your child will be napping and favors a certain item. Please note that items, including blankets are not permitted in the infant cribs under any circumstances. To reduce the spread of infection, we discourage children from bringing blankets from home. We provide clean cot sheets and blankets each day for students. If a child prefers to sleep on a pillow, please ensure that the pillow is travel size and can fit in a backpack.
- An adequate supply of disposable diapers/pullups and wipes, if your child wears them.

The length of time it takes for your child to feel comfortable with the room and the children and teachers in that room depend on your child's personality and past experiences. The Center's staff members will work with you to make the adjustment go smoothly. If possible, arrive early so you are able to say good-bye to your child in a relaxed manner. Rest assured that your child will be attended to and not left to cry. If you'd like, wait outside the room out of sight until you feel comfortable leaving, or call the Center later to ask how things are going. You can also "check-in" on your child via our live streaming internet video system.

### Lunches and Snacks

Our nutrition guidelines and snack/lunch procedures are based on USDA guidelines. All children attending the Center will be provided a food in each of the following categories.

- Protein source, such as meat, poultry, eggs, cooked dried peas or bean or cheese.
- Two servings of vegetable(s), or one vegetable and one fruit, or two servings of fruit(s);
- Cereal or whole-grain or enriched bread products;



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- Grade A vitamin D milk for children between 1-2 years of age who are not on formula or breast milk, 1% milk for children over 2 years of age, unless the parent requests whole milk. (The Center provides both types of milk.) If your child is unable to drink cow's milk, please bring in an alternative milk (i.e. soy milk, lactose-free milk, etc.). Unless by written request from your child's physician, children under 9 months old will not be given any cow's milk. Lunches are generally served sometime between 10:45–12:00. No lunches will be served after 12:00 p.m. except in infant programs, as children are fed on their own individual schedules or under special circumstances. The infant classrooms have its own refrigerator to keep perishables cold until served and a shelf or other designated spot in the classroom for lunches that do not need to be refrigerated. For infants eating baby food, the remains in jarred food WILL NOT be saved to take home. However, the child's teacher or head teacher will provide a note to the parents to determine what their child has eaten that day. Generally, if children are offered small portions and a number of healthy choices, they will choose adequate diets for themselves. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat snacks or lunches. At no times are foods used as threats or bribes. The children will be served a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack, with lunch being offered sometime between 10:45-12:00. Snacks for children aged 1-12 will consist of two of the following components (milk, water, or juice is also offered at every snack): fruit or vegetable, grain, or meat alternative. Portions are dependent upon the child's age. We substantially reduce sweeteners and serve sugar free lemonade. We do not serve any products that contain peanut butter, peanuts or other nuts.

Parents need to provide food, formula, and a supply of bottles/nipples from home for children in the infant rooms. These must be permanently labeled with the child's name. Bottles will be heated in crock pots for children in the infant rooms. Baby food jars must be factory sealed – if they are already opened, we will not be able to serve it. The baby food will be served at room temperature (or warmed in a crock pot, if requested by the parent). No solid food or juice will be served to children under 6 months without instructions from the family. If your child is bottle fed, please be sure to bring in prepared and bottled breast milk or ready-to-feed formula labeled with your child's name for your child's consumption during the day. Please also bring a small can of the ready-to-feed formula to be stored at the Center for your child for emergency use when your child has already used the bottles you supplied for the day. If you are breastfeeding your child, you need to leave enough prepared bottles for your child's consumption during the day and at least one serving of breast milk in our freezer to be used on an emergency basis when you will not be able to come and





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nurse him/her. Your child's teacher will communicate if this "emergency serving" has been consumed or has expired. Mothers may feel free to comfortably breastfeed their child in the classroom. We provide milk for lunches, and milk or juice and water for all snacks. The Center will serve all children no more than 6 oz. of juice per day. Drinking (tap) water will be offered to all children throughout the day. Parents give permission, as part of our application process, to post children's allergies, medical conditions and any parent special requests for staff caring for their child. If your child has special dietary needs, you will want to send along snacks for your child that meets these needs. If your child is on a special diet and must eat at specific times, be sure to notify your child's teacher. We provide appropriately-sized utensils and drinking cups for lunches and snacks. Staff will wash hands and wear gloves before handling foods and children will wash hands before and after eating.

### Birthday Treats

We want birthdays to be a very special day for the children whose families celebrate birthdays. Whether or not those families bring in a treat, the classroom will acknowledge your child's special day. If you do bring in a treat, please keep in mind our practice of not serving nuts.

Foods that are brought from home to share with others must be commercially prepared and in factory-sealed containers with the ingredients listed on the container. Purchased foods from a bakery, deli or restaurant are fine as long as there is an ingredient list on the label so we can verify ingredients against known allergies. Suggestions for shared treats include: Fruits and veggies (must be uncut, or prepared and packaged by a commercial kitchen/store/deli). Factory- or bakery-sealed (not homemade) banana bread/carrot muffins/zucchini bread/whole wheat or bran muffins/cornbread. These items must have an ingredient list on the label so we can verify ingredients against known allergies. Unopened yogurt, frozen fruit bars, cheese and crackers, string cheese. No peanuts, peanut butter, or any products containing peanuts. Please provide enough for each child in attendance during snack time. We'd like to offer you an alternative (or addition) to bringing treats for your child's birthday. Celebrate by bringing a book for the classroom with your child's name and birth date inside the front cover. Gift-wrap it and we'll enjoy opening the gift and reading the book on your child's special day. (Please be sure the book follows the Center's multicultural, non-violent philosophy.)



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### Food Allergy Management Plan

The Learning Center has a number of children who have allergies to various foods. Allergic reactions can vary from a relatively minor reaction of itchy, watery eyes to a reaction that is life threatening. To avoid allergic reactions to foods, the Center has adopted these practices:

1. All families are asked to give the Center information on any food allergies that their child has. This information is then posted in the classroom for all staff who work with the child. Families are asked to complete a Health History form so that staff working with your child can be alerted as to the allergy and specific action to take should an allergic reaction occur.
2. Allergic reactions, specifically to peanuts and tree nuts, can cause a life-threatening (anaphylactic) reaction for individuals. The policy of the Center is to not serve any product containing peanuts or tree nuts in any of our snacks throughout the Center. Children with anaphylactic reactions to foods should have an Epi-pen at the Center at all times.
3. Families are asked to bring in their own snacks for their child when none of the Center provided snacks meet the individual health needs of a child.
4. The practice of the Center is for children to not share lunches.
5. While we do not isolate children with allergies, we may designate a table “milk free” or “egg free,” if needed to help alleviate concerns with children accidentally getting a food they are allergic to.
6. Food preparation tables and counters are washed and sanitized prior to preparing and eating foods.

### Diapering/ Toileting

It is our policy that the Center Staff use only commercially available disposable diapers or pull-ups. We cannot accommodate children who wear cloth diapers. Parents of children who wear diapers are responsible for having an adequate supply at the Center. Diapers should be clearly labeled with your child’s name to avoid mix-ups. All children are changed as needed and checked once every 1 ½ - 2 hours. Parent provided baby wipes are used for washing bottoms. Staff will wash hands before and after diapering each child. If you want staff to apply diapering ointment, please see a classroom staff for information on how your child’s diaper ointment needs to be labeled and obtain a medical authorization form. If you are out of diapers and the room uses one from an emergency supply, please be sure to return one to them.





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**Potty Learning:** We generally do not attempt to teach children less than 24 months of age to use the toilet. As soon as you and your child are ready to begin potty learning, let us know. A cooperative effort between home and Center is most effective. For the first couple of weeks, continue to send diapers in addition to extra underpants and clothes. Staff will wash hands before and after assisting children with toileting. The Staff will assist children in learning and carrying out habits of personal hygiene. Independence and the development of self-help skills are encouraged. As with diapers, rinsing soiled underwear is not possible (per state health codes). They will be placed in a plastic bag and put in your child's cubby/bag. Please take these items home on a daily basis. Children learning to use the toilet at the Center are taken to the bathroom more frequently. Potty learning can be a difficult time for children and is handled sensitively, with patience, and positive reinforcement. Any suggestions that you can give us in regard to your child's individual needs are much appreciated. The Center believes in developing positive attitudes about our bodies. In keeping with our education goals for the development of positive self-concept, teachers help supply children with the correct anatomical names for all body parts. In response to children's curiosity about their bodies, questions are answered in an age-appropriate and matter-of-fact way. In a group care setting, it is important for staff to have a consistent approach in this area.

### Napping

- Rest and nap periods will be provided for all children ages 5 and under. We provide a crib or cot and a sheet for each child who will be napping. In accordance with licensing, beds are placed two feet apart and are stored in a safe and sanitary manner. Sheets are laundered at the Center daily or more often as needed. If you will be bringing a special blanket for your cot sleeping child, please be sure it is clearly labeled with your child's name, and take it home daily to be laundered. Please remember that crib sleepers are not permitted to have any items including blankets in their crib under any circumstances. Let us know what your child's napping schedule and needs are. Parents will be notified as to their child's napping frequency on a daily basis. Infant rooms nap children in their classrooms throughout the day. Programs for older children have specific nap times. These vary from younger to older age groups, as younger children usually begin napping earlier in the day than older children do. All staff that work at Cahaba Valley Learning Center, Inc. will be trained in SIDS Reduction (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) prior to their start of employment in a classroom.



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- All infants 12 months and younger must be placed to sleep on their backs. Infants who are capable of rolling over may do so on their own, but AFTER the staff has physically placed the child down on their back. (A child 12 months or older may be put in a different sleep position if they can roll over on their own.)
- Doctor authorization is needed when using a wedge in the infant's crib
- An infant's head must remain uncovered at all times while sleeping.
- Items such as pillows, quilts, comforters, and stuffed animals are not allowed in the crib under any circumstances.

### Clothing

Each child must have a complete change of clothing (including socks) that should remain at the Center. These are used in the event of a toileting accident or if clothes become wet or soiled during play. All clothing should be clearly and permanently labeled with your child's name so that it can be easily found and identified. The Center does not take financial responsibility for lost items. In compliance with state health codes for public buildings, we cannot rinse soiled clothing in the toilets or sinks. Wet or soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and put in your child's locker. Please take this home daily. The Learning Center does have some extra clothing that will be provided to your child if needed; if used for your child, please launder and return as soon as possible. If your child is transferring to another room, the teachers will move their extra clothes supply to their new room. Check occasionally to be sure that your child's "extra clothes" still fit them and are appropriate for the season. Children should be dressed so they can play comfortably and without fear of soiling clothing. With the exception of the infant rooms, children's shoes are kept on at all times except during a few special projects or games. Shoes that children wear on the playgrounds or in the gyms should be skid-resistant, secure enough around their feet to not slip off and sturdy enough to protect feet if they step on objects that can injure the sole of the foot. If children have flip-flops, clogs or other footwear that are not as protective, they should have a second pair of shoes to wear for more active play. Your child should always be dressed for the weather. During the winter months, be sure your child has a labeled warm coat, hat, mittens (preferably attached to his/her coat), and boots. It is critical that these clothing items be labeled, as it makes it much easier to get a large group of children dressed. Our rooms tend to be very warm in the winter, so "layers" work well. If your child is sensitive to the sun, please send a hat and a lightweight, long-sleeved shirt.



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### Play Yards

Each classroom has scheduled play time in the morning and afternoon. In nice weather, rooms usually go outside rather than have inside play. Be sure a staff from your child's room knows that you are dropping off or picking up your child. It is important for us to keep our child checklists accurate; more than one classroom may be sharing indoor/outdoor space, and teachers as well as children from a couple of rooms may be in transition. Children are dressed appropriately for the weather when we go outside. We do not go outside in inclement weather – stormy or severe weather, such as any of the following: heavy rain, temperatures above 100 F, wind chills of 40 F or below for children age 2 and above, wind chills of 45 F or below for children under age 2. If your child is well enough to be here, we assume s/he is well enough to go outside. Additionally, staff-to-child ratios do not accommodate having individual children stay indoors. Outdoor play requires safe supervision, and being short an adult is unsafe. For your convenience you will want to check, as you arrive with your child, to see if children are outside before taking outerwear off of your child. Please do not assume that if there is a teacher in the classroom that your child can stay in. The teacher may be on their way out of the room or may be a Head Teacher trying to accomplish other tasks.

### Photographs

Classroom teachers take pictures of the children on a regular basis for documentation purposes or to record a special activity. These photographs may be of individual children or groups of children and may be displayed in the classroom, Center hallways or the lobby. We also take pictures of children for staff training purposes. Parents will be notified in advance of specific requests for other photographs of their child, and will be asked for permission for their child's participation. Please only take pictures of your own child while you're at the Center. We cannot authorize the taking of children's pictures (other than your own child), and there is no way for us to monitor this picture-taking.

### Toys from Home

At times your child may want to show his/her friends and teachers something from home. It is not considered "selfish" if a child does not wish others to use their personal belongings; however, any toy that is in the room must be shared by all children. Therefore, if sharing becomes a problem, your child will be asked to return his/her toy to their cubby or backpack for a while. Unless your child understands this, please limit bringing things in to special times for show only. An exception to this



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would be a beloved, stuffed toy that is brought to school as a security object. Other children seem to understand that this kind of item need not be shared. In older rooms, children sometimes bring toys in to gain acceptance or to increase status with others. This can create stress and promote competition in some cases. Also, do not send toy weapons or toys that promote aggression. If your infant or toddler-aged child brings a toy from home, it must be safe for children 3 years of age and younger (choking hazard). The Center cannot be financially responsible for lost toys. Tiny things are especially hard to keep track of, so please label everything! If your child wants to bring in a CD or book to share, please give it to a teacher so it can receive special care. If you are missing an item, check the office.

### Media in the Classroom

The use of media, such as television, films, and videotapes, is limited to developmentally appropriate programming that has been previewed by teachers prior to use; another option for activity is always available; no child is required to view the program.

### Behavior Guidance Techniques

Children are helped to understand the reasons for our rules and to develop inner controls. We believe that the best way to deal with inappropriate behavior at the Center is to prevent it. The staff attempt to prevent misbehavior by keeping the children busy and involved and by establishing consistent and clear guidelines regarding behavior. Children sometimes hit or push each other in the process of learning how to interact socially. Learning to share and take turns can be difficult. With infants and toddlers, a simple statement of fact, "I can't let you hurt Ruth" may be all that is necessary. Supplying children with words to use to express themselves in difficult situations is a common technique used. Recommended procedures for handling repeated misbehavior (i.e. hitting/biting) include:

1. Patiently explaining to the child that it hurts the other child.
2. Helping the child to recognize the feelings that cause certain reactions, e.g., "He's crying because that hurts."
3. Giving acknowledgement for cooperative, gentle and generous actions, e.g., "You and Danny are sharing nicely."
4. Diverting the child's attention when s/he is becoming frustrated, and is likely to respond aggressively. The child may be directed to an area where feelings of aggression can be acted out, e.g., pounding at the workbench.



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5. Asking the child to help remedy the situation. For example: If a child throws a box of puzzle pieces, he/she is asked to pick them up. If child hurts another child, he/she is asked to help comfort the other child.
6. Using “time away.” Time away is only used after the above methods have been tried. Time away refers to having a child sit away from others to help him/her to calm down. The child may be given a quiet activity to do. Time away lasts for only a couple of minutes and after the time away, the child is helped to become re-involved in the room’s activities.

*Biting* is of particular concern for parents and staff working with infants, toddlers and young preschoolers. Biting, although considered a more aggressive act, is not an unusual behavior for young children; in fact, it is very natural. Young children may bite to relieve the discomfort of teething. They may bite to help gain control over an environment that in their exploration is all new to them. They may become confused over hugging and kissing, may be trying to gain an adult’s attention or trying to obtain an object. They may have an illness, be imitating others, or confused because they want another child to play with them and yet do not have the language or social skills to gain that child’s attention in another way. The child may be biting as a coping mechanism to changes in their environment or in reaction to a stressful situation. When children have particular behavior problems such as biting, the staff’s first objective is to identify the following:

What is happening with the child exhibiting the behavior (both at school and at home)?

When and where did the bite occur? Who was bitten? How was it dealt with? What was the child’s response to the consequences? We then “track” this information and child (by “shadowing” them) to see if there is a pattern that helps us identify why this particular child is biting. Parents of the child who has bitten are told about the incident(s) and events so that together staff and parents can work with the child to help eliminate the behavior. If frequency dictates, a conference is held with that parent to share information from school and home that may be helpful in our working together on this problem. If biting continues over a period of time, the Director does their own observations and meets with the Head Teacher and parents. If no solutions can be found to eliminate the behavior, we need to ensure the safety of the group and ask that the child leave the Center. This step is only taken when it is felt that all other steps have been tried and the frequency of biting has not diminished. Sometimes in these cases what the child needs is not to be in a large group situation, but to have more one-on-one in a home care environment. Usually, with maturation





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of a few months, the child outgrows this behavior and is able to return to the Center.

### *Disruptive behavior:*

Children experience varying difficulties at different stages of their development. While this is quite typical, it is also important that problematic behaviors not be shrugged off as being “just a stage,” as this approach prolongs and reinforces behaviors that, if left unchecked, can create major difficulties for the child, the child’s parents, and for others. Generally, with cooperative efforts between home and school, behavioral difficulties become manageable. However, after reasonable efforts by the parents and teachers have been made, if no solution to the problem can be found, and a child’s behavior continues to be disruptive to the classroom in ways which require a disproportionate amount of one-to-one attention, parents will be counseled to find an alternative child care arrangement that may be able to meet their child’s needs. In these situations we need to ensure the safety of teachers and other children in the program. Communication between home and the Center is the key to the effectiveness of any discipline approach.

### Transitioning to a New Classroom

Although change can be new and exciting, it also takes time and sensitivity as children and their families leave the comfort and security of a familiar classroom environment and teachers that they know. (Parents also go through this adjustment, as they don’t know the new teachers yet.) Seeing your child grow up gives you a sense of pride as you observe their growth and reflect on the milestones they made during earlier stages of development, but it is also a little sad that the childhood years are going by so quickly! Children of all ages are aware of changes in the environment and the teachers whom they have grown attached to. Because of this, teachers from your child’s current classroom help children in their transition to a new room by visiting the teachers and the room they will be moving to. We invite families to visit the new room as well! If you would like to personally conference with the Head Teacher, you may need to set up an appointment so they can be sure they are available. We will take care of moving your child’s extra clothes and personal items to their new cubby. Some things to think about . . . For some children, too much talk can create anxiety. Shorter discussions and visits to the new room give them an opportunity to actually see the room. (The unknown of a new room becomes the known of concrete things they can look forward to.)

- Younger children need consistency in their lives. It is usually best to keep your family’s set rituals and routines during this time so that along with change there is consistency.



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- If time allows, plan to spend some time with your child in the new room on their first day. Children can sense how you are feeling about the change. If you are feeling comfortable, it will help your child feel more at ease also.

## VI. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of the children, families and staff are our top priority. Smoking, firearms and hazards that pose risks to children and adults are prohibited.

### Health Policies

As part of our licensing, each child is required to have on record at the Center a Health History that is given to each family as part of the enrollment process.

#### Health Examination and History – Children

Information required on physical exams:

- Immunization record – for diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis, polio, Hib, Hepatitis B, measles/mumps/rubella, and varicella (chicken box) vaccinations, with appropriate doses for the age of the child. If not permitted by child's doctor, this must be stated. Complete the immunization record and return it to the Learning Center prior to child's admission. Should the immunization record expire, it will be the parent's responsibility to update the record and provide the Center with a copy.

#### Physical Exams – Staff

Current physical exam forms for each staff must be on file in the Center (paid or volunteer student teachers).

Information required:

- Statement certifying that the individual is free from illness detrimental to children.
- Record of PPD skin test for tuberculosis, or chest x-ray.
- Statement that individual is physically able to work with young children.
- If individual has previous history of typhoid, paratyphoid, dysentery, or other diarrheal diseases, they must have a doctor's permission to work in the Center.

#### Exclusion for Illness

Children and staff members shall be excluded from the Center when ill.

If a child has a positive diagnosis of a communicable disease, parents must let us know. Families of exposed children shall be notified by the Center and those children shall be watched for symptoms of the disease. Children and staff who are sick with bacterioidiarrhea, infectious hepatitis, infectious mononucleosis, tuberculosis, or strep





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or staph infections must have a doctor's permission to return to the Center. If your child has a communicable disease (including but not limited to: German measles, infectious hepatitis, measles, mumps, polio myelitis, ringworm, scarlet fever, whooping cough, diphtheria, and meningitis), you are responsible for reporting it to the State Health Department. Children and staff who have pediculosis (head lice) must be free of infection (eggs, as well as live lice) before returning to the Center. Our policy is to require that child remain at home for at least 24 hours after a parent has been requested to take the child home and until they are symptom-free. This includes, but is not limited to: diarrhea, fever, and changes in the child's normal behavior (e.g., lethargy). The child may return to the Center after 24 hours, if the symptoms disappear and their behavior indicates that they are well enough to participate in regular classroom activities. Children sent home due to fever must be symptom-free without medication before returning. It is important that we enforce this policy for the safety and health of all the children in the Center. Please do not send your child to the Learning Center if s/he is ill. We do not have the facilities or personnel to adequately care for sick children. Keeping a sick child home will also help us keep the illness from spreading to other children and staff members, and prevent your child from becoming sicker because their immunity is low. Being in a group setting can be very stressful for a child who is not feeling well and can make it more difficult to recover. If your child has a pre-existing (but not contagious), or possible "developing" illness, please alert our staff to keep a closer eye on your child that day. If your child has a skin condition you know is not contagious, (i.e., eczema, prickly heat, hives, insect bites, etc.), please inform the teachers so they do not spend time needlessly trying to identify the nature of the condition. If your child becomes ill while at the Center, you will be contacted and asked to take him/her home. If you cannot be reached, we will contact an "emergency contact" person you listed on your application form. If a child has no fever or other symptoms of illness but displays significant behavior changes and is clearly uncomfortable and not able to participate in activities, they may be sent home. Conjunctivitis (pink eye): We will exclude children with conjunctivitis for 24 hours after treatment is begun or until there is no inflammation or drainage.

### Medications

All children with asthma must have "quick relief" medication at the Center at all times. Administering medications is a very serious responsibility. Whenever possible, parents should schedule the times that their child receives medication in such a way that they, the parent(s), are giving medication. Only in cases where it is impossible for



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a parent to give medications because of their schedule we will do so. Parents fill out a “Prescription Medication Form,” available in each room, which gives us their permission and instructions for administering any prescription medicine. (In the case of over-the-counter medications, parents fill out an “Over-the-Counter Medication Form, and a detailed label to attach to the medication.) Medication forms are placed in children’s files once they are done being used in the classroom. The Learning Center staff cannot administer any medication unless the following conditions are met:

- Prescription medication: Medication is in its original container, is labeled with the child’s first and last name, the date that the prescription was filled, the name of the licensed health care provider, the period of use of the medication, the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it.
- Non-topical over-the-counter medication (including homeopathic): Medication is in its original container, and a written & dated instruction from the child’s health care provider accompanies the medication (if dosing instructions are not printed on the container). The medication container must also list the expiration date of the medication, the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer’s instructions that details the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it.
- Topical ointment (sunscreen, diaper ointment, etc. – including homeopathic) require that an Over-the-Counter Medication Form be filled out by parents. A new form must be filled out at the start of each week. Our staff will make every effort to accommodate the parents in completing Medication Forms for items that require repetitive treatment.
- Vitamins will not be given without written instruction from your child’s health care provider. Instructions must state that the child receives vitamins at a certain time, and your child must be in attendance at that time. Medicines will be placed in medicine boxes in a secure location out of reach of children (or refrigerated as needed). Our medicine boxes can accommodate only a limited number of bottles of medicine at a time. Please be sure you take medicines home with you when they are no longer needed. We will dispose of expired medication that has not been removed from the center after reminding the parents. Please do not send any medication with your child or in their diaper bag or leave any medicine in their backpack or cubby. Be sure you give it directly to a staff person. This includes, but is not limited to, baby aspirin, diaper rash ointment, and sunscreen. Do not send cough drops, as children can easily choke on these.



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### Special Medical Procedure Care

To give your child the highest level of care, our teaching staff needs to fully understand your child's medical condition and be prepared for and competent in the care the child needs. If a child needs specific care for a medical condition (i.e. tube feeding), parents need to inform the Learning Center prior to the child being left in the Center's care. We need written information from the child's doctor in regards to the specific care your child needs, and to meet with the family. Please understand that we cannot always accommodate children that require special medical care, but will determine our Center's ability to care for the children prior to their admittance on a case by case basis.

### Accidents

In the event of a minor accident at the Center, first aid supplies are available at all times. In compliance with state law, no medications are used. Scrapes and cuts are washed well with soap and water and bandaged. Ice is applied to bumps. A comforting staff member is usually the best medicine! An Incident/Accident Report is filled out on any injury or illness occurring at the Center. It will explain how the accident happened and what first aid action was taken. This report will be kept in your child's file after you have read and signed it. Medical emergencies rarely happen at the Center, but we want to be prepared for them if they do occur. Therefore, it is extremely important that all emergency contact forms and parent schedules are complete and up to date. We must know where to find you quickly. If you should change your plans for even just one day (e.g. go out of town for a meeting, etc.), let us know. If ambulance transport is necessary, a staff member who is familiar with your child will accompany him/her. An accident report will also be filled out, if your child comes to the Center with a noticeable injury. This is done to assure clear communication between the Center and home, particularly if observation of the child is necessary in order to detect possible ongoing or worsening symptoms. If your child has had an accident outside of the Center, please inform staff when you arrive so they do not needlessly try to track down how a cut, burn, bruise, etc., may have occurred here when it did not.

### Insurance

Parents are expected to provide ample medical coverage for accidents and injuries or be financially responsible for coverage.

### Fire Drills/Tornado Procedures

Fire drills are practiced at least 12 times per year. All children and staff proceed to



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designated areas outside of the building. In an actual emergency we evacuate first to the Parking Lot directly in front of the building or second to the far side of the playground. Tornado drills are practiced regularly. During a tornado drill, children and staff go to designated areas in the center hallways of our building. If you happen to be in the building when an alarm rings, do not attempt to drop off or pick up your child. Proceed to the nearest exit (during a fire drill) or to the inner corridors of the building (during a tornado drill) with your child. Everyone must evacuate the building (or go to the hallways). Once you locate your child's classroom, and after an attendance check has been done, your child's teacher will let you know if you may sign your child in or out. When we are in a situation that is truly an emergency – not a drill – you will not be able to sign in and leave your child until the emergency is resolved; however, your child may be signed out after attendance checks have been completed.

### In An Emergency

The safety of the children and staff is of utmost importance. If an emergency situation were to arise during the course of the day at the Learning Center, our staff is prepared to handle it calmly and expeditiously. If the situation warrants staying indoors, we would keep children at the Center, with no use of the play yards. If necessary, our staff would react as we do in a tornado drill, with staff and children gathering in the inside hallways, away from windows and doors. If it is essential to evacuate the building, all children and staff would treat it as a fire drill, gathering outside to do name checks, and if necessary, proceeding to the far side of the playground. In order to prepare ourselves in the event of an emergency, we do practice monthly fire drills. We will continue to practice and follow emergency procedures that may be necessary.

### Pets

We do not keep pets (except fish or other aquatic animals) at the Center. No animals are to be brought into the Center for visits.

## VII. PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

### Parent Visits

Parent visits are encouraged and enjoyed by teachers and children. You may want to read a story to your child or group of children, get involved in an activity, or familiarize yourself with the toys and materials in the room. The staff may be too busy for a relaxed conversation with you, but you will get to know some of the children and adults with whom your child spends their time. If there is a special project you'd like to do with the children, talk to your Teacher in advance and they will be happy to plan for it.



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### Conferences

Because your children's needs and concerns change so rapidly, you will want to be communicating on a regular basis with teachers as you arrive and/or depart throughout the week. A request can be made at any time for a conference with your child's Teacher. S/he will be more than willing to answer any questions you may have concerning your child's adjustments, development, and activities while at the Center. The best time and means for such a conference depends on the Teacher and you. Your Teacher and you may want to set up an appointment to meet with the appropriate Director if more input is needed. It is our belief that parents' opinions are the barometer that indicates whether we are serving them and their children to the best of our abilities and the most reliable means of finding out how our services can be improved.

### Referrals

Teachers will encourage and support families who make the primary decision about additional services their child might need. The Teacher and/or Director will share with you any observations they have made which may warrant screening, as early detection is the most critical factor in alleviating or eliminating future difficulties. Information on vision, speech, hearing, and other developmental screening services available in the community can be obtained from your Teacher or Director. They will be happy to assist and guide you through the steps involved in obtaining such services. Please let us know if you have any particular concerns regarding your child's development.

### General Home/School Communications

Parent-specific communications are generally written in the comment section of your child's daily note which is generally left in your child's cubby or daily folder. Information meant for the classroom may be posted on the room's wall near the entrance. The classrooms also have parent bulletin boards where timely and/or topical articles are posted. The Center has a general bulletin board located in the foyer of the main lobby where general announcements may be posted. Please be aware that there are times when staff from other classrooms or Center "floaters" will be working in place of staff in the classroom because regular room staff are ill or have pre-arranged absences (doctor's appointments, etc.). If you have a specific question or concern, staff members who are working as floaters will probably need to direct you to a staff member who is routinely scheduled in your child's classroom.





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### Privacy and Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information about children and families will be maintained. Please share with us any information that will help us care for your child. The information you give us will only be shared with staff on a need-to-know basis. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the custodial parent(s)/guardian(s), Center staff, and the Department of Human Resources. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone else without written consent of the custodial parent(s)/ guardian(s). Families are asked to give consent on the child application to post general information about their child for staff in their child's classroom. Information posted includes child's name, birth date, parent/guardian name(s), name(s) of siblings, pictures of their child, and special food/care requests.

Child Records: Children's records are confidential to the public but are "open" to the custodial parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child. Primarily these records consist of a child's application, health and immunization records, accident/illness forms and medication logs.

### Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting/Support to Families

As child care providers, the staff of Cahaba Valley Learning Center, Inc. are considered mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect; they must report if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child seen in the course of their professional duties has been abused or neglected or if they have reason to believe that a child seen in the course of their professional duties has been threatened with abuse or neglect or that abuse or neglect of the child will occur. Mandatory reporters include most health care providers, social workers, teachers and child care workers. The Learning Center works to help increase parenting skills and support to families when needed. There are support services available throughout the community that can help families when intervention is needed. Please let us know if you would like contact information.

### Communication within the Center

If at any time you have a complaint or concern, it is important that you share this with the appropriate person(s) so that we can help to resolve the situation. Often clarification of a policy or procedure is quite helpful. Sometimes miscommunications, oversights, or errors occur and we very much want to address these. Sometimes a slight adjustment in policies or procedures may be warranted. If you have an operations-related concern (scheduling, billing, penalties, etc.), please seek the advice



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of the Owner or Director of Operations or the person who handles the particular area of concern you have. If you have a concern regarding classroom practices or your child's experience in the classroom, share these with your, Teacher. The Director is also available for consultation or for help in providing a solution. If you feel strongly about an issue about which you feel a satisfactory resolution has not occurred, a meeting can be arranged between the Director and/or the Center Owner, and the Parent(s) of the Child. At all times we want and need to hear comments and concerns. We are a large Center, and although we try to be aware of the individual needs of all, sometimes things get missed. Please do not let your needs go unspoken. We do care and are here to help you and your child!

Private Care Arrangements

Often parents ask if Center staff is available to provide evening or weekend child care in their home. The Center does not endorse or recommend staff to parents or parents to staff. Center staff who provide such child care are doing so outside the scope of their employment and, as such, Cahaba Valley Learning Center, Inc. is not liable for any conduct within a private arrangement of this nature. Arrangements of this sort should not be made while the staff is at the Center. In addition, please do not give out to other parents, without the staff's permission, the telephone numbers of staff who may provide private care for your child.

The undersigned parents of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby state that they have read and understand the Operating Policies and Procedures of Cahaba Valley Learning Center located on our website under "Enrollment" on the "Parent Handbook" tab. Furthermore, the undersigned states that they are aware of the payment policies and fees contained in the Operating Policies and Procedures and acknowledge that Cahaba Valley Learning Center will include a reasonable attorney's fee into all tuition accounts referred to a collection attorney.

Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_