

**These values are the foundation of  
Easterseals/The Friendship Academy  
and will guide our actions:**



**Integrity**

We conduct business ethically, and with a commitment to moral integrity. We expect people to hold a high moral standard. When faced with an ethical dilemma, we do what is right, regardless of the consequences.



**Respect**

We respect each other. We value the uniqueness and dignity of each individual, and appreciate the strength of diversity and inclusion.



**Shared Purpose**

We share a sense of purpose. We have an enthusiastic sense of mission. We believe that to better meet our mission, we must work as a unified organization.



**Excellence**

We value excellence. We value people who get involved and show a sense of urgency. We believe it takes excellent, confident and accountable people to create innovative solutions that are valued by the people we serve.



**Responsiveness**

We strive to continually understand and proactively respond to the increasing and changing needs of the people we serve as well as those who pay for the services.





## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**ATTENDANCE:** Prompt and regular attendance is important in allowing your child to get the most out of their educational program.

**ABSENCES:** Parents are to contact the school in the event that their child will be absent. State law requires that a written excuse be submitted to the teacher on the day of a child's return to school following any absence of three or more days. Excuses should be addressed to the teacher and include the dates and exact reason(s) for absence

**CLOTHING:** Your child should wear comfortable play clothing to school. For safety reasons, we strongly recommend that you send your child to school wearing closed-toe sturdy shoes or sneakers.

Please send a complete change of clothing for your child in case of a toileting mishap or messy activity. Bring or send them to school marked with your child's name.

Send replacement clothes whenever your child has had to use the original supply, when the seasons change, or when your child has outgrown the clothes. Children do have outside activities almost daily, so please apply sun screen at home before your child comes in to school during the summer.

Please make sure that every item of clothing you send, or that your child wears, has your child's name on it. This includes all outer clothing such as coats, scarves, mittens, boots and any equipment that your child uses.

**TOILETING NEEDS:** If your child is not independent with toileting, please send a periodic supply of disposable diapers to school. You will be notified by your child's teacher when additional diapers are needed. If your child is in the process of being toilet trained, let us know how it is being done so that we can support your efforts in the same way during the school day. During this learning period, it is helpful if you send your child to school in clothes that are loose and easily removed. Please try to avoid belts or one piece outfits. Please let us know of any special word or gesture your child uses to indicate his/her need to use the bathroom.

**LOST ARTICLES:** The Friendship Academy is not responsible for lost, misplaced, stolen or broken items, articles of clothing, and equipment belonging to visitors, clients, or staff. We will make every effort to ensure that personal items are properly handled on our property. It is best if your child does not wear expensive jewelry to school.

**LUNCH AND SNACK:** If your child is in a full-day class, they must bring their own lunch including a beverage. To ease the lunch process, please perform all necessary preparations at home. Please pack hot or cold foods in a thermos or insulated container. Remember to label the lunch box, thermos and food containers.

Please send nutritious food that your child likes to eat. Send only the amount your child will eat. There is no sharing of food unless it is a special occasion and the teacher has been notified in advance. Our staff encourage children to try each food, but recognize that they do not always eat everything. If your child is not permitted snacks and is on a special diet, make certain you send in a list of foods that are not allowed.

Some of our children do have serious food allergies. If there is a food restriction (e.g., no peanuts or peanut products) in your child's school building, you will be notified by the program. Most of our buildings are now nut-free zones.

**COMMUNICATION BOOKS:** Each child will have a communication book or folder that will go back and forth between home and school. Please be sure to check your child's book/folder every day for any school notices or memos from staff. Active use of this book is the best way to ensure timely communication between home and school.

**PHONE CALLS:** If there is an issue that requires immediate attention, please do not use the communication book; call the school's Program Director or Division Director.

**SCHOOL OBSERVATIONS:** We know how important it is for you to be able to trust us with your child's daily care and supervision. One of the ways we ensure this trust is to invite parents to observe the school program. If you choose to do so, it is best to call and check on the activities planned for the day to make the most of your visit.

**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL:** At the Media location, children remain under the supervision of their parents/guardians until 8:50 a.m. (morning session) and 12:25 p.m. (afternoon session), after which they are escorted back to their classrooms with staff. Staff accompany children to the front lobby for dismissal. Parents/guardians are to use the crosswalk when walking to and from the school building.

At the Marple location, arrival and departure is through the F door. Parents should park in the parking lot and walk their child to the door. Please remain with your child until an Easterseals staff person greets him/her. Children are escorted to/from the F door by classroom staff. At dismissal, parents should meet their child at the F door. If you drop off your child before 8:30 a.m. or pick up after 3:00 p.m., classroom staff will provide you with instructions on how to contact our staff, who will come to the door to accept/dismiss your child.

You will be billed \$5 for every five minutes you are late picking up your child. After two late pick-ups of more than 15 minutes, staff will meet with you to discuss your child's continued enrollment in the program.

All children are released to their parent or those authorized adults listed on the child's Transportation Release form. A parent can write a note or call to arrange alternate transportation not previously authorized. When staff are not familiar with an authorized person, a picture ID is required.

**SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN:** Teaching staff directly supervise all children by sight and hearing at all times, even when the children are in quiet areas. Staff regularly count children on a scheduled basis, at every transition, and whenever leaving one area and arriving at another, to confirm the safe whereabouts of every child at all times. Developmentally appropriate child:staff ratios shall be met during all hours of operation, including indoor and outdoor play and field trips, following precautions for specific areas and equipment.

**SCHOOL VISITORS:** Throughout the school year, we have visitors that come in to see the school program. Some visitors may be interested in making donations to support our programs and like to visit the school before doing so.

Additionally, as students make decisions about future careers, their high schools or colleges may often require them to spend time in various settings that provide services to

children and their families. Visiting students may either observe or participate in classroom activities under the direct supervision of our teachers. We try to accommodate visitors without disruption to our school program.

**WEATHER CLOSINGS:** The Friendship Academy uses a robocall notification system for school closings, late openings, and early dismissals. In addition, the school usually follows the decision announced for the school district where the school is located.

**HOLIDAY PARTIES:** Parties or special activities are often provided by community groups, parent groups, and/or staff. You will be informed in advance about these special events.

**BIRTHDAY PARTIES:** We would be happy to hold a small in-school celebration of your child's birthday. Please contact the teacher a few days prior to the date. Invitations to at-home parties may only be distributed in school if each member of your child's class receives an invitation. You may send in a healthy snack, but please check with your child's teacher regarding allergies.

**TUITION:** Timely payment of tuition as agreed to on your enrollment/agreement form is required. Tuition is due on or before the 1st of every month. Non-compliance with this payment agreement will result in the application of a \$10 late fee on all payments received after the 15th day. A fee of \$25 will be charged for each check returned by the bank. Non-payment of fees may result in immediate termination without notice.

### **THE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

**EDUCATION:** The Friendship Academy is an inclusive learning program for all children. Our curriculum is research based and developmentally appropriate to prepare children for kindergarten. Our classrooms are led by certified teachers who provide a wide range of learning experiences for all children.

**POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS:** Easterseals/The Friendship Academy is a member of the state's Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS) network. PBIS is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development of our students. The goal of implementing PBIS is to create an environment where every child feels good about coming to school. This is accomplished by designing classroom settings that promote engagement and by building positive relationships among students, families, and school staff. Through the process of PBIS, classroom staff will work together to ensure that children understand behavior expectations, receive instruction in social skills, and those with the most persistent challenging behavior receive individualized assistance. We will use positive approaches when addressing behaviors that interfere with learning. All staff will receive foundation training in PBIS and each of our Easterseals Divisions have established/will establish Core Leadership Teams to provide ongoing support to staff and families regarding PBIS.

Here are a few examples of what to look for in our programs implementing PBIS:

- Emphasis on building caring, responsive relationships with students and families.
- Behavior expectations and rules posted in common areas and classrooms. Behavior expectations and rules are developmentally appropriate and focus on teaching our students what to do (rather than what not to do).

- Safe classroom environments that are designed to promote positive social interactions.
- Positively stated directions and language are used by all program staff. We focus on teaching our children what do with language such as "walking feet," "quiet voice," and "hands to self."
- Visual aids to assist students are used throughout the day. These may include visual schedules, visual timers, and pictures to remind students of appropriate behavior.
- Emphasis on social emotional skills and development of social skills. Friendship building, emotional vocabulary, anger management, and coping/problem solving skills are incorporated in large and small group activities.

The Friendship Academy uses positive behavioral supports when addressing behaviors that interfere with learning. Positive strategies include proactive classroom management techniques such as clear rules and procedures, natural reinforcements and consequences, direct instruction of desired appropriate skill, and environmental or curriculum adaptations. Other strategies include social stories, cueing, redirection and family involvement.

**ASSESSMENTS AND SCHOOL CONFERENCES:** A research-based developmental screening tool is used within 45 days of enrollment to identify children who may need additional evaluation and/or intervention strategies. Families who are new to the program will have the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher within 45 days of enrollment. Authentic assessments of your child and conferences will be offered at least twice a year.

**ACCESS TO RECORDS:** The Friendship Academy recognizes the family's educational right to review, inspect and copy any educational records related to their child's program. The Friendship academy will comply with any written requests from parents within five working days.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** The Friendship Academy respects the privacy of each family we serve and adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines. These include regulations which govern the exchange of educational records (FERPA - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and those which deal with protected health information (HIPAA-Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).

**MANDATED REPORTING:** Under federal and state laws, The Friendship Academy is required to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect, and to report any incidents that involve client health and safety. If an investigation is required by State law, it will be conducted by a Certified Investigator.

For more information about mandated reporting, please check the Keep Kids Safe website at [www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/laws](http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/laws).

**EMERGENCY PLANS:** The Friendship Academy maintains an emergency plan for each site that addresses the use of the school as a shelter for children/staff in the event of a declared emergency. An off-site location is identified in the event the building needs to be evacuated. Penn State is the off-site location for the Media program and St Luke Church is the location for the Marple program. Parents will be notified via the robocall voice messaging system. Both sites also have posted emergency evacuation plans, and practice evacuation procedures on a regular basis. During monthly fire drills, staff continue to refine plans to move children quickly and safely out of the building.

The Friendship Academy practices regularly scheduled lock-down drills.

In addition, each site maintains its own daily security procedures, which include signing in and out of the building and wearing a visitor's badge while in the school. A list of designated people authorized to pick up your child in your absence will be required. You can revise this list at any time with a phone call to the program.

### **YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH**

**HEALTH REPORT/PHYSICAL:** For admission to school, each child needs a health report dated no more than 1 year prior to the first day of attendance. An updated health report is required every 12 months.

**IMMUNIZATIONS:** Pennsylvania schools maintain a record of immunization for each student. Failure to produce the proper evidence of immunization within 60 days of the start of school may result in exclusion from school until the records are up to date. A list of the updated immunization requirements, as per the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) Schedule for preschool group settings is as follows:

- For attendance in **preschool group settings:**
  - 3 doses of polio (4<sup>th</sup> dose on or after 4<sup>th</sup> birthday and at least 6 months after previous dose given)
  - 4 doses of tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis ( 5<sup>th</sup> dose to be administered between 4-6 years of age)
  - 1 dose of measles, mumps, rubella(preferably given as MMR; 2<sup>nd</sup> dose to be given between 4-6 years of age)
  - 3 doses of Hepatitis B
  - Rotavirus: 2 doses of RV1 or 3 doses of RV5
  - 1 doses of Varicella or chicken pox from vaccine or by history of disease (2<sup>nd</sup> dose to be given between 4-6 years of age)
  - 3-4 doses of Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib) dose requirement is dependent upon vaccine used in primary series
  - 4 doses of Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV13)
  - 2 doses of Hepatitis A (Hep A)

We strongly urge you to consult with your child's physician as soon as possible. If your child has already received these vaccinations, please submit a copy of the record from your doctor immediately. If your child has not received the required immunizations, please schedule an appointment and send in a copy of the documentation as soon as it is completed.

**MEDICAL UPDATES:** Please keep us updated on any new medical information, i.e., new allergy.

## **WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ILL**

**MEDICAL POLICY:** Sick children are to be kept out of school when they are unable to participate in school activities and need rest and care at home. Keeping children at home when they do not feel well also helps prevent the spread of illness among children and staff.

A child who is ill should not be brought to school until s/he has been well, and without diarrhea/vomiting and/or fever (free without aspirin or Tylenol), for 24 hours.

**AT HOME:** While your child may not have a fever in the morning before school, if s/he is lethargic, very cranky, or crying excessively, you should consider keeping your child at home. These symptoms may indicate that your child is developing an illness. If your child is not able to participate in school-day activities, s/he should be kept at home. A sick or ailing child will not benefit from being in class or receiving therapy and would not enjoy the day in our program.

If your child has any of the following symptoms and/or illnesses, please do not send your child to school.

- fever 100.4°F or more
- diarrhea or vomiting
- severe headaches
- sore throat and/or swollen glands
- lethargy or weakness, no appetite, or irritability
- untreated rash or skin infection
- contagious illnesses such as fungal infections, lice, chicken pox, measles, mumps, pinworm, impetigo, , ringworm, hand/foot/mouth disease.

Your child should be kept home until the symptoms are no longer present or your child's doctor has given permission for your child to attend school.

If a contagious illness is noted during the school day, the parent will be required to pick the child up from school as soon as possible in order to protect other children. Children who have had a contagious illness will also require a doctor's note for readmission to school. The Friendship Academy follows the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics regarding contagious illnesses.

For health and safety reasons, any child identified with lice will be excluded at the end of the day. Children may return only after treatment.

**AT SCHOOL:** Our teachers become quite familiar with your child's daily behavior. If they see behavior or symptoms that are atypical for your child, they will request that the school nurse monitor your child. If the nurse determines that your child is unable to participate, she will contact you.

If your child has been absent from school due to illness, please write a note or phone the school to inform his/her teacher as to the nature of your child's illness. It is helpful for the staff to know the reason your child was ill.

If anything on the preceding list of symptoms occurs while your child is in school, you will be asked to come and pick up your child. No medication can be given without written permission.

While we realize many of you are working, we do not always have the facilities to keep your child isolated. Therefore, we request that arrangements be made to pick your child up as soon as possible when symptoms occur in school.

If you cannot be reached, the emergency contact person(s) you have identified will be notified to pick up your child. It is important that emergency contact information be up to date and those persons listed are aware of their responsibility to come to the school to pick up a child who is ill when you cannot be reached.

If your child has been to the Emergency Room or hospitalized or has a significant change of medical condition, the school must have a note from the doctor stating the reason for the ER visit/hospitalization, and that your child may return to school. The school needs this note to ensure proper care for your child. We will be unable to allow your child to return to school without the note. Please share any discharge orders.

PLEASE REMEMBER ... if you send your child to school with any doubt about his/her health, please advise the teacher by way of your child's communication book or call her directly. If you will be somewhere other than home or work, give us the number of a person to call who could come to school for your child.

### **MEDICATION POLICY**

Your child may require medication or a special procedure during the school day. Sometimes your child may be well enough to attend school yet require medication to clear up an infection or medical problem. To give medication, or carry out a medical procedure, we need the following:

- A **MEDICAL RELEASE FORM** on file to enable staff to give medications or perform procedures without liability. A physician's authorization form is needed, as well as instructions and a demonstration in order to train our staff.
- A **MEDICATION INFORMATION FORM** stating the name of the medication, the dosage, the time intervals and the duration for giving the medication. All prescription medication **MUST** be in a pharmacy-labeled bottle (including the child's name, medication name, dosage strength, doctor's name and pharmacy name).

Medications and forms are to be sent directly to the teacher/nurse. No medication of any type (such as aspirin, cough drops, eardrops, vitamins) will be given without written instructions and written parental consent. Certain procedures may require physician's orders. All medication will be kept in a safe place inaccessible to children.

### **EMERGENCY TREATMENT**

Emergency situations do occur and we must be as prepared as possible. In case of an emergency, it is vital that we know where to reach parents and that we have at least two emergency numbers on file if we cannot reach you. Emergency contacts must have a working phone and be willing to pick up your child in the event of an emergency. If you do not have a working phone, you still must make arrangements so that we have a way of

contacting you in case of emergency (such as a neighbor's or relative's phone). It is the parent's responsibility to keep this information current.

None of us like to think that our children will become ill or injured while they are in school. However, we must make plans in the event that an illness or injury was to occur. The **EMERGENCY MEDICAL FORM** will provide us with your instructions as to how you wish emergency procedures to be handled for your child. You can choose to just sign the approval for emergency treatment, which would allow us to have your child treated at a neighboring hospital.

Several staff are trained in first aid. If further medical attention is necessary our standard procedure is to contact 911 for transport to the nearest hospital.

If your child is taken to the hospital, s/he will always be accompanied by at least one staff member. If you can be reached by phone, other staff will notify you immediately. However, if we cannot reach you, we will contact the person you name as your emergency contact. Parents are notified as soon as possible, which may or may not be before treatment has begun.

**It is not a safe situation to have children in school without the proper emergency medical forms. The Emergency Medical Form must be signed and turned in to the nurse/teacher by the first day of school, or your child cannot attend school.**

### **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are a vital part of what happens in The Friendship Academy programs. Parents are an integral part of the team. Effective communication between parents and staff is an important component of each child's program. Involvement with other parents provides a rich resource of information, ideas and skills.

**GIFTS FOR STAFF:** The Friendship Academy policy prohibits individual staff from accepting any gift of a personal nature or substantial value. Items of a minor nature, such as homemade gifts, flowers, etc., that can be shared by all staff are acceptable. The Friendship Academy gratefully accepts gifts/donations at any time of the year to support the work we do.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** Parents are encouraged to participate in special events and promotions that are held to benefit Easterseals/The Friendship Academy programs. These events are varied and are held in all five Divisions throughout the year. For further information about these events, contact the Public Relations/Communications Department at (215) 879-1000.

### **WHERE TO TURN...**

From time to time, you will have questions for the staff. Below is a guide to assist you in determining who is best suited to answer your questions.

Your child's program and educational goals	Teacher or Program Director/Coordinator
Your child's medical needs	Nurse
Family Issues/ Community Resources	Program Director or Family Engagement Coordinator
School Volunteer Involvement/Support	Program Director or Family Engagement Coordinator
General Administrative Policy	Division Director
Special Events Volunteer	Director of Development

To make a referral for Early Intervention, please call the **CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288**

**Please remove this page, sign, and return to school. Thank you!**

I have read and understand the policies and procedures of The Friendship as stated in the Parent Handbook for School Year 2018/2019.

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT NAME (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_