

The Learning Tree Child Care Center

Parent Handbook



The Learning Tree

Come grow with us.

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INTRODUCTION

The Learning Tree is a privately owned and operated child care facility dedicated to providing a quality program for children between the ages of six weeks and thirteen years. We strive to reflect the high standards set by NECPA (National Early Childhood Program Accreditation). Our goal is to provide care that parents can trust in an age appropriate and supportive environment. The Learning Tree staff and administration believe that each child is a unique individual. Our programs and curriculum are designed to meet the developmental level of each child, encouraging individuality and promoting self-confidence.

This program handbook is the property of The Learning Tree and is intended for the exclusive use by the parents of enrolled children. This handbook may not be copied or distributed to any third party without permission of the President and/or Regional Director.

RESERVATION OF RIGHT TO CHANGE POLICIES AND/OR PROCEDURES

The Learning Tree reserves the unilateral right to add, delete, modify, or amend the policies and procedures provided for in the program, or program handbook, upon a ten day written notice to the parents.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Learning Tree subscribes to a policy of nondiscrimination and will maintain and conduct all practices relating to recruitment and enrollment of children, discipline, and other terms, conditions, and benefits of the program in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.

STATE REQUIREMENT

The State of Michigan requires that all members of the child care community report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect. The staff and administration of The Learning Tree will file a report with Protective Services and the police any time abuse or neglect is suspected.

PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRAM

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage of human development. We are committed to supporting children's social, emotional, physical, and educational development, respecting individual differences, and helping children learn to live and play cooperatively. We strive to promote children's health, self-awareness, competence, self worth, and resiliency.

The number one goal of The Learning Tree is to provide the highest quality child care to every single family we serve. In an effort to achieve that goal, we will strive to:

- Make children and families our #1 priority at all times
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children
- Hire, train, and support the most qualified individuals
- Instill an attitude of pride and loyalty to the profession
- Serve as an advocate for children and their families
- Listen and respond to the needs of our children and families
- Maintain high standards of professional conduct
- Treat all employees, children, and families fairly, regardless of race, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, or any other legally protected classification
- Keep informed on current matters affecting our industry
- Abide by the letter and spirit of the laws and codes that govern our industry, community, state and federal government
- Honor the ideals and principles of the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation

SCREENING OF STAFF

In compliance with licensing rule 400.5102, dictated by the State of Michigan, The Learning Tree has in place a written screening policy which includes but is not limited to subjecting employees to: criminal background checks, abuse and neglect checks that are completed by the Department of Human Services, driving record checks, health appraisals, and reference checks. All Learning Tree staff sign a "Zero Tolerance Child Abuse and Neglect" statement. They are informed on child abuse and neglect policies. Learning Tree staff are mandated by law to report abuse and neglect.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The Learning Tree accepts children from ages 6 weeks to 13 years, on a full-time, part-time, hourly or weekly basis. Placement in classrooms is based on availability.

DAILY PROGRAM/ACTIVITIES

The Learning Tree daily program begins at 6:30 a.m. and runs until 6:00 p.m. Extended care is offered from 6:00 p.m. until 6:30 p.m.

Each day's routine promises activities that allow your child/ren time to grow, room to explore, experiment, discover, and play.

In our Infant Program, the daily routine is determined by the individual needs and developmental level of each child.

In compliance with licensing rule 400.5106, The Learning Tree provides a program of daily activities and relationships that offer opportunities for the developmental growth of each child in all of the following areas:

- Physical development, including fine and gross motor.
- Social development, including communication skills.
- Emotional development, including positive self-concept.
- Intellectual development.

Each Head Teacher creates his/her own weekly lesson plan based on the cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and developmental goals set by The Learning Tree and recommendations of The National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA).

DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

The hours of operation of The Learning Tree are Monday through Friday, from 6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.

The Center is closed for the following holidays on the day the holiday occurs:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving Day
Independence Day	Christmas Day

If a holiday occurs on a Saturday or Sunday, the Center will be closed on the proceeding Friday or following Monday. Advance notice in writing will be posted in each classroom.

Your tuition rate remains the same during holiday weeks. There are no refunds or make-up days given for holidays. For the convenience of parents, The Learning Tree remains open during inclement weather.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

To protect the rights of your child and your family, children's records are only available to the Center's administrators, authorized staff of The Learning Tree, authorized employees of the Department of Consumer and Industry/Child Day Care Licensing, and the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

Confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of The Learning Tree who have a "need to know" in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as The Learning Tree strives to protect everyone's right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and health related information of anyone associated with The Learning Tree.

You may observe children at our Center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy. Employees of The Learning Tree are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. Any parent who violates the Confidentiality Policy will not be permitted on agency property thereafter.

Information concerning the any child will not be released, whether written or orally, to any individual or agency without the approval of the parent, unless such disclosure is mandated by child care licensing rules, other statutes, or by a court of law.

CURRICULUM

The children at The Learning Tree enjoy a curriculum based on developmental appropriateness. This means:

- As your child grows and changes, we use curriculum guidelines for what activities are appropriate for each age and stage of development.
- Knowledge of typical development of children within each age span provides a framework from which our teachers prepare the learning environment and plan specific experiences.
- Children's play is a primary vehicle for and an indicator of their development. Therefore, child initiated, child directed, and teacher supported play is an essential component of our program.
- In the preschool and older programs, academics are presented in a relaxed and enriching manner. From math to language arts, wide ranges of subjects are presented.
- Multi-cultural/anti-bias awareness is also part of our curriculum.

The curriculum is guided by the recommendations of NECPA.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

ENROLLMENT/REGISTRATION FEES

At the time of enrollment, or reenrollment, and every September thereafter, a registration and activity fee per child is required. These fees are non-refundable and under no circumstances will the enrollment fees be used to pay for child care tuition.

CHILD INFORMATION CARDS

The Department of Consumer and Industry/Child Care Licensing mandates that each child have completed child care information cards on file. Two cards will be provided for you to complete and must be on file by the first day of attendance. Children in our school age program must have three information cards on file.

It is the parent's and/or guardian's responsibility to ensure that the information contained on the cards is up-to-date. It is crucial that The Learning Tree have the most recent work phone number, emergency contact, etc., in the event that there is an emergency and the parent/guardian needs to be reached. Parents are required to review and update all forms every September.

HEALTH APPRAISALS

The Department of Consumer and Industry/Child Care Licensing requires that The Learning Tree have a completed and current health appraisal, including immunization records for your child upon enrollment.

For all children, a health appraisal must be completed annually for children birth thru 2 ½ years of age and every two years for children 2 ½ through 5, as mandated by the local Health Department. You will be notified at least one month prior to the expiration date of the physical examination.

The Learning Tree cannot allow a child with an expired health appraisal or incomplete immunizations to attend the program. All health records are submitted to the local county Health Department.

Some parents may choose to waive certain or all vaccinations for their child for religious, philosophical or medical reasons. The local Health Department requires that if a parent or guardian chooses to waive vaccinations then a waiver will need to be completed by the parent or doctor (if it is a medical reason) and be kept on file at The Learning Tree. A copy of the waiver will also be submitted to the local Health Department. A waiver may be picked up from the office.

It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify the Office Administrator of any immunization updates your child may receive.

INFANT FOOD AGREEMENT

For all children enrolled in the infant program, an Infant Food Agreement must be signed and returned on the infant's first day. With this agreement you acknowledge that it is your responsibility to provide formula, breast milk or other liquids in a clean, sanitary, ready to feed assembled bottle that has been sterilized or is disposable. Each bottle is to be labeled with your child's full name and date. For breast milk the date should reflect the date of collection. In addition, sufficient formula, milk and food will be provided by you to meet the minimum needs of your child. At the end of the day, any formula or milk in an unopened ready to feed-bottle or perishable food shall be returned to me or discarded.

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY FORM

The Learning Tree asks that each child have a developmental history form on file. This provides the Center and teachers with information about your child that will help provide the best quality program for each individual child. Parents of infants under 12 months are required to submit a daily schedule of feeding and sleeping times for the infant.

Developmental history forms can be updated at any time, if parents request to do so.

LEARNING TREE – PARENT/GUARDIAN CHILD CARE AGREEMENT

The parent agreement form completes the enrollment process. Upon signing the agreement you acknowledge that you have read and agree to comply with the policies, rules, and responsibilities as outlined in both the handbook and the agreement form.

PROGRAM PRE-VISIT

Once a child is officially enrolled in our program, a pre-visit will be scheduled. Usually this visit takes place one to two weeks prior to your child/ren's first day with us. This orientation is designed to acquaint both you and your child with his/her new environment. While your child familiarizes themselves with new classmates and surroundings, we encourage you to spend time talking with the teachers about your feelings and your child's individual needs.

This is also the time to visit the office and turn in all the required paperwork. It is a perfect time to ask any other questions you may have.

Previsits are done Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. If this is not convenient for you, let us know so that arrangements can be made to accommodate your schedule.

PARENT VISITS AND COMMUNICATION

At The Learning Tree we are aware that communication between the parents and the staff are of the utmost importance. That is why we have instituted many ways that you can feel connected to your child's day. Outside each classroom is a Family Board. We encourage you to look at this board daily as it will have important information about your child's classroom. Lesson plans, menus and teacher information are just a few of the items displayed on this board.

We have an open door policy all the time. Parents are welcomed visitors at The Learning Tree. For the protection and security of your child and all the children attending The Learning Tree we ask that non-parental visitors report to the office for identification verification. Feel free to come and visit for lunch or your child's outside time on our state of the art playground. We also have many special family events throughout the year that you are invited to.

If your daytime schedule does not permit you to visit the center during class time, you can still share in your child's day. Each day, if you desire, an email will be sent to you giving you a brief description on what your child did at school~ what he did for art or what story she read. This information will be great conversation starters for around the dinner table. Of course, we are also just a phone call away. Feel free to give us a call anytime. Be sure to include your email on your child's Enrollment Application.

Our goal is to communicate with you on an ongoing basis about your child's development and the center as a whole. We love feedback and encourage you to let us know how we are doing. If you do have a concern we ask that you follow this Chain of Command to ensure that your problem is handled efficiently:

Head Teacher

- If you have a concern that involves your child's classroom we ask that you please first address it with your child's Head Teacher. We have hired capable and professional individuals who are here to serve you. Head Teachers know their classroom and are the best suited to answer questions about their room. Please give them the courtesy of speaking with them about your concerns.

Center Director and Assistant Director

- If you have concern about your child's classroom that the Head Teacher is unable to address or if your concern has not been handled by the Head Teacher in a way that you see fit, please speak with your directors.
- If you have a concern or question that is center related, such as a policy or procedure, please speak with one of your center directors.

Regional Director

- If you have concern about your child's classroom that needs the attention of the Regional Director, Karen Ballard, because the classroom Head Teacher and the Center Director did not handle it in a way that you see fit, please feel free to contact her at 248.890.2255 or ltnorth@sbcglobal.net.
- If you have a question or concern that is center related that the Center Director could not answer or answered in a way that you do not see fit, please feel free to contact Karen Ballard.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

The Learning Tree offers Parent/Teacher Conferences every October and May. However, we have found that this may not be convenient for some parents. Therefore, parents are encouraged to schedule a conference anytime during the year when they feel the need for a one-on-one discussion about their child.

The majority of parents feel that daily communication, child information charts, etc., are more than sufficient to meet their needs. Staff are not always available for phone conferences, but arrangements can be made to set a time that is best for both parties.

PARENT EVALUATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Maintaining a quality program requires constant reevaluation, and the input we receive from parents is a valuable resource for us.

Also available to parents is our suggestion box. This is located in the lobby. We receive the most input from our parents through this medium. The Learning Tree staff and administration are always looking for new ideas and suggestions, so please make use of this box.

The Learning Tree also sends comment cards to each family every other month via mail. These comment cards provide parents with the opportunity to critique us on health and safety, curriculum, customer service, communication, and teacher interaction. Families who participate in this survey will be eligible to receive a \$200 saving bond for their child.

LEARNING TREE NEWSLETTER

Once a month an informative and educational newsletter, *The Lantern*, is published to keep families abreast of all Learning Tree happenings, both in the Center and in the field of early childhood care and education.

The Lantern also lists articles on important topics dealing with children that are specifically written for parents. Copies of these articles are available in the lobby on a monthly basis for parents. Every month parents will also find a fun craft project listed in *The Lantern*. Special "Craft Kits" that have all the necessities to complete the craft project with your child are available in the lobby to take home.

This newsletter will be available in your child's room and in the lobby for you to pick up at your convenience.

TUITION AND FEE POLICIES

CHANGE IN FEES

The Learning Tree reserves the right to adjust all fees, including tuition and enrollment, with a thirty-day advance written notice to parents in the Center's newsletter, *The Lantern*.

ABSENCES, HOLIDAYS AND VACATIONS

Your tuition is determined by the number of days you have contracted for, regardless of holidays, absences or vacations. There are no refunds or make-up days.

BASIC RATES AND FEES

Your tuition is determined by the number of days you have contracted for and the program your child is enrolled in. Tuition shall cover up to 10 hours of care per day and is based on each child's individual schedule.

OVERTIME RATES

Children left in care over 10 hours will be charged \$5.00 per day, per child.

Children picked up after 6:30 p.m. will be charged an overtime rate of \$1.00 per minute per child.

Overtime rates will be added to your weekly tuition rate.

DUE DATE FOR CHILD CARE FEES

Tuition is due the first day of attendance (per contracted schedule) and every Wednesday by 6:00 p.m. thereafter. A \$20.00 late charge will be added if tuition is not paid by 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Two

weeks of nonpayment will result in your child/ren being dismissed from the program. Tuition that is paid consistently late will result in your child/ren being dismissed from the program.

ACCEPTABLE PAYMENT FORMS

The Learning Tree accepts payments by check or cash. All cash payments must be made in the office. Only Learning Tree Administrators can provide a receipt for cash payments.

Checks must be made payable to The Learning Tree. Please note the child's name in the memo section of your check.

A fee of \$20.00 is charged for any check returned for Not Sufficient Funds. If you fail to make cash payment for the returned check and returned check fee within 7 days, you will be liable for the amount of the dishonored check, a processing fee, civil damages, and costs.

The Learning Tree reserves the right to refuse payment by check for tuition payments after two checks have been returned by the bank.

BILLING PROCEDURES

Since you have a contracted tuition rate, bills are not sent out unless there have been additional charges added, or tuition is overdue.

Receipts for your company's deferred spending account can be arranged on an individual basis with an Administrator.

ATTENDANCE

CHILD CARE SCHEDULE

The doors of The Learning Tree open at 6:30 a.m. Please call the Center to inform the office if your child will be late so that we can inform the classroom and ensure proper meal count.

Breakfast is served from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. A healthy and nutritious lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. An afternoon snack is served between 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. The program ends at 6:00 p.m. Children remaining after 6:00 p.m. will have extended care. The Learning Tree closes at 6:30 p.m.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

Arrival at the Center: Staff is on hand to welcome families at 6:30 a.m. Children and parents cannot be admitted before that time. Parents must escort their child/ren directly into the classroom and sign them in. If you have two children enrolled, please take the older child to his/her classroom first. Rooms may be combined from 6:30-8:00 a.m. and 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Pick-up time: Parents must pick their child/ren up directly from the classroom, playground, etc. Parents must sign their child out in the classroom before leaving the building. If you have two children, we request that you pick-up the younger one first. To ensure safety, siblings cannot be brought into an infant classroom. We ask that anyone picking up children carry picture ID with them at all times.

Children cannot be released to meet their parents in the hallways or parking lots. Children are considered under the supervision of The Learning Tree staff only when the parent/guardian is not on-site. For the well being of your child/ren, never leave them unattended in the Center or parking lot.

The Learning Tree closes its doors at 6:30 p.m. At 6:40 p.m. staff will begin calling emergency numbers if you cannot be reached. It is imperative that you call the Center if you are running late. A substantial late fee has been established to discourage tardiness, which is considered unfair to your child and our staff. Habitual tardiness is grounds for dismissal from the program.

ADDITIONAL DAYS

Children attending The Learning Tree on a part-time basis may add a day if space in the classroom permits. You must stop in the office and put the request in writing to the administration. Once you have requested the additional day, you are responsible for payment.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

Any requests for a permanent schedule change must be made in writing with a two-week notice. Schedule changes are subject to availability and approval of The Learning Tree administration.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent from The Learning Tree, we would appreciate a call so that we can notify the classroom.

If your child is in our before and after school program, and will be absent, please call The Learning Tree before 8:00 a.m. by so that our van drivers can be notified.

There are no refunds or make-up days for absences.

VACATION POLICY

The Learning Tree offers families who are enrolled continuously with our program a two-week vacation at half tuition price per calendar year. The vacation days must be taken consecutively in five-day increments. You may not bank unused vacation weeks for the next year. A two weeks written notice is required for vacation.

MEDICAL POLICIES

The Learning Tree has devoted much time and research into developing illness policies that are in the best interest of the children and staff. We cannot guarantee that we are fully able to contain or prevent the spread of all illnesses.

When we establish guidelines, we understand that sick child care exclusion guidelines that are too stringent can be an enormous burden for working parents. On the other hand, lax standards can cause increased illnesses among children, staff and families. Because caring for sick children is ultimately the responsibility of the parent/guardians, please be prepared to make alternative care arrangements.

During certain outbreaks, it may be necessary for The Learning Tree to put into affect additional or more stringent policies and procedures for the well being of all children and families.

Parents will be notified if their child has any of the following conditions:

- Fever of 101.0 degrees or more
- Rash (undiagnosed)
- Diarrhea; increased number and water content of stools
- Vomiting one time

Children with solely these conditions will be permitted to stay at The Learning Tree. If the child worsens, becomes lethargic or other symptoms appear the parents will be notified to pick up their child.

Exclusion criteria must meet the needs and limitations of The Learning Tree. As adapted from the Academy of Pediatrician's report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, children with any of the conditions below must be excluded until the symptoms/conditions have been resolved and the child has been symptom free for at least 24 hours or have been on medication for 24 hours.

- Herpes gingivostomatitis, thrush, mouth sores, or ulcers
- Conjunctivitis
- Children with specific infections such as but not limited to: Pertussis, Whooping Cough, Strep Throat, head lice and scabies, Coxsackie disease, Hand, Foot and Mouth disease, Chicken Pox, impetigo, mumps, measles, Rubella, Hepatitis A

- Influenza
- Discolored eye, ear, or nose discharge
- Evidence of severe illness: lethargy, unusual sleepiness, irritability, prolonged crying, inconsolability, obvious discomfort, and labored, difficult or rapid breathing, extreme or uncontrollable coughing, wheezing, poor appetite

A child may be excluded from The Learning Tree when illness and/or symptoms prevent the child from participating in activities, when the illness/symptoms result in greater care than the child care staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, or when staff is not trained in specific methods of care.

Parents will be called to make arrangements to pick up a child too ill to remain in care. We ask that children be picked up within one hour. Children absent due to a contagious (or suspected contagious) disease may not return to The Learning Tree without a written clearance from a physician. Once a child returns to The Learning Tree after being absent from an illness, they must be well enough to be able to participate in all activities. Unfortunately due to staffing purposes, children can not be left inside during outdoor play.

In the case of a medical emergency, The Learning Tree has permission to administer first aid or obtain emergency medical treatment in child/ren's best interest.

MEDICATION POLICY

The Learning Tree staff will administer prescription medications to children when the following criteria have been met:

- A current written prescription from a doctor stating the exact dosage and frequency of the medication provided.
- The medication is in the original container and labeled with the child's name, current date and dosage, additional instructions, possible side effects and storage information. A medicine spoon must be provided for any oral medication.
- Medication parental permission forms are filled out completely on a weekly basis. Included on this form are the exact time(s) the medication is to be given and the parent/guardian's signature.

The Learning Tree staff will administer non-prescription medications to children when the following criteria have been met:

- Children under two years of age must have a doctor's note stating the exact dosage and frequency of the non-prescription medication provided.
- Children over two years of age can be administered non-prescription medication without a note from doctor as long as the medication is in the original container. Medication will be administered based on what the instructions to the medication state unless a parent requests a lesser dose.
- Medication parental permission forms are filled out completely for non-prescription medication. Included on this form are the exact time(s) the medication is to be given and the parent/guardian's signature.
- A medicine spoon must be provided for any oral medication.

The Learning Tree will not follow instructions from parents that contradict the instructions of the physician. Medication over one year old cannot be administered.

Due to possible contamination, a Learning Tree Administrator can only administer eye and eardrops as long as a physician has prescribed it. Genital ointment cannot be applied on children over 2 1/2 years of age. We suggest that parents apply or administer such medication at drop-off and pick-up times.

The Learning Tree is not responsible for any lost or damaged medication.

Medication is to be stored in a child proof locked cupboard away from children. If the medication needs to be refrigerated the medicine must be in a locked refrigerator.

INJURIES

When a child is injured, regardless of the nature of the injury, an accident report is filled out at the time of the incident. First-Aid is administered following specific guidelines:

- If the injury requires further evaluation and/or treatment, the parents will be notified immediately.
- Any time a child has a head injury, no matter how slight, a call is placed to the parent.
- In the event of serious injury your child information card gives The Learning Tree permission to call 911.
- Any costs or charges for 911 emergencies will be the sole responsibility of the parent.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The Learning Tree has established procedures for all emergencies, including fire, weather, building and medical. Evacuation routes and procedures are posted in each classroom. Emergency drills are practiced on a regular basis. Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are routinely checked.

Please do not call the Center during an evacuation emergency. The staff is busy quickly, calmly, and efficiently escorting the children to designated shelters or safe areas.

Staff members who are certified in CPR and first-aid are present at The Learning Tree at all times. In the event of a medical emergency, a staff member will make every effort to first notify parents/guardians before transporting a child in an ambulance.

Your signature on your child information card and parent agreement gives The Learning Tree staff members' permission to administer first aid or obtain emergency medical treatment in the best interest of the child.

DISCIPLINE

It is the philosophy of The Learning Tree that your child's experience should provide for the development of a strong, healthy self-concept and self-image. We believe in positive reinforcement and redirection.

Staff members are trained to provide positive discipline methods, which encourage self-control, self-direction, cooperation and self-discipline. Such methods include redirection, diversion from negative behavior, encouraging alternative activity, removal from the situation and communication.

Corporal punishment is never considered an acceptable method of discipline.

In the case of continued discipline problems, staff will notify the parents to discuss possible solutions and/or recommendations. Written confirmations of these discussions will be available to the parents and kept on file.

In a case where a child's behavior or actions have resulted in the destruction of Learning Tree's property, the parents/guardian will be responsible for the repair or replacement of the property.

On occasion it is in the best interest of the child and the program for the parents to seek alternative care. Aggressive behavior, biting, hitting, etc. that cause ongoing disruptions and/or confusion in a classroom may result in the child being dismissed from the program. Dismissal is always a final option and a rare occurrence at The Learning Tree.

BITING POLICY

The Learning Tree recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the infant through 3 year old classrooms. Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bit, or will bite another child. The staff understands that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember this is a

developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the staff is working to identify situations, which, provoke, or elicit this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The staff will not punish, or harshly discipline children for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior. If excessive biting incidents occur in one day or skin is broken during a bite, the biter's parent will be called to pick up their child to be excluded from The Learning Tree for the remainder of the day. Uncooperative parents will have their child's services terminated.

Children older than 3 years of age may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. For children in this age group who bite, the staff will use the discipline procedures outlined in the discipline section of this handbook, as well as observe the child to determine what provokes or elicits this inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to cooperate with staff to help their child control this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's service terminated. If a child bites who is over the age of 3, the biter's parent will be called to pick up their child to be excluded from The Learning Tree for the remainder of the day. Furthermore, children, in the older age groups, who bite 3 times in a school year, will have their services terminated. The safety of all the children in the program is of the utmost concern of The Learning Tree.

Parents will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the course of the day. The staff may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is considered to be confidential and can not be disclosed. The staff of The Learning Tree can not discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other party.

NUTRITION PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION OF FOOD PROGRAM

The Learning Tree prides itself on a nutritious and well-balanced food program. Food is both healthy and appealing to the child. A statement of our food plan is available to all parents in the office and is also posted in each classroom. Daily nutritional requirements are always met. Fresh or fresh frozen vegetables and fruits are used daily. Menus are posted in each classroom and available to parents. On occasion due to delivery problems, changes in the menu may occur. Such changes will be listed on the menus. Menus are continuously evaluated and revised.

Once your child is on table food, The Learning Tree provides breakfast from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and lunch at 11:30 a.m. An afternoon snack is given daily at 3:30 p.m.

FEES FOR FOOD

The total cost of the food and meals provided is included in your tuition. If, due to dietary or medical restrictions, parents must provide the meals, we cannot offer any cost adjustment or refunds.

SPECIAL DIET REQUESTS

If a child requires special food accommodations due to documented medical reasons, parents may be asked to provide the meals. We ask that parents please arrange to meet with a Learning Tree administrator to review the child's needs and determine whether an accommodation is possible. The Learning Tree cannot guarantee the ability to meet every special request.

For special occasions such as classroom parties, birthdays, etc. we ask that parents/guardians check with individual teachers before bringing in treats.

PEANUT FREE CENTER

Due to the extreme nature of allergic reactions to peanuts and products containing peanuts in some children, The Learning Tree prohibits peanuts and/or foods containing peanut products on Learning Tree property. Peanut allergies can be so severe that exposure to peanuts can result in an allergic reaction resulting in rashes or irritations to the skin, severe breathing impairment or vomiting. An allergic child can have a reaction from simply smelling peanuts on someone's breath, or touching peanut oil residue left on

a counter top, not only from consuming peanuts or peanut products. Before bringing any food into The Learning Tree building, it is the parent's responsibility to have the food approved by an administrator.

INFANT PROGRAM

FOOD AND FORMULA

Parents/guardians who have children in our infant program are asked to provide all food and formula until your child/ren is ready to enjoy our meal program. To get your baby off to a good start and make the transition easier, we ask that you give the first feeding at home. A spare container of ready to feed formula should be kept at the Center.

In accordance with licensing rule 400.5205, the following criteria must be adhered to:

- All food and plastic bottles must be labeled with the child's name and dated on a daily basis. Bottles must be premade at home by the parent. Items not properly labeled cannot be dispensed.
- Only unopened jars of food or boxes of cereal may be brought into the Center.
- All partially used formula and food will be disposed of daily.
- Each bottle and nipple supplied by the parent shall be used for a single feeding only and then returned to the parent.

When formula is discontinued, the following provisions shall apply:

- The Learning Tree shall provide and use whole homogenized vitamin D fortified cow's milk, unless otherwise directed by the parent or licensed physician.
- Milk shall be poured into clean cups. Excess milk left in cups shall be discarded.
- Solid foods shall be introduced to the individual child according to the parent's or licensed physician's instructions.

The Learning Tree shall maintain a continuing food intake record for children up to 12 months of age.

SAFE SLEEPING POSITION

In accordance with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, infants are placed to sleep on their backs. Infants who fall asleep in swings or bouncy seats will be moved to their crib and placed on their backs to sleep. Infants nap in their own assigned cribs according to their own individual schedules. If you request that your infant sleep in a different position other than their back, a physician's note that explains why your baby should not use a back sleeping method is required. Blankets and stuffed toys are not permitted in the crib with your infant.

DIAPERING AND TOILET TRAINING

Parents shall provide disposable diapers. If a child's health condition necessitates that disposable diapers cannot be used, then an alternative arrangement may be made according to the parent's or licensed physician's instructions. Parents are expected to provide enough diapers so that a child can be changed when soiled or wet.

Diapering shall be done in a designated area. The Learning Tree shall maintain a diapering area and all supplies and equipment in a safe and sanitary manner.

Toilet training is planned cooperatively between the child's teacher and parent so that the toilet routine is consistent between Center and home. Parents are expected to bring a minimum of 4 sets of extra clothes for a child who is toilet training and provide at least 6 pairs of training pants.

Pull-ups and disposable underwear cannot be used while a child is toilet training. Helpful hints and informational handouts are available to parents on toilet training in the office.

Staff shall thoroughly wash his or her hands after each diapering and after cleaning up bodily fluids, using soap and running water.

FIELD TRIPS

It is our philosophy to provide children with the opportunity to experience and learn about our community and the places around us.

IN-HOUSE FIELD TRIPS

At least once a month a special guest artist or program comes to The Learning Tree for the enjoyment of all enrolled children. Announcements of in-house field trips can be found on classroom calendars and in our monthly newsletter.

FIELD TRIPS AWAY FROM THE CENTER

Children in our Pre-K and school age programs are invited to participate in field trips away from the Center. There is no additional cost for your child to participate in the field trips. This is part of your yearly activity fee. Information about upcoming trips can be found on classroom calendars and in our monthly newsletter.

Transportation is provided in our buses, which are inspected regularly by a licensed mechanic. All buses contain emergency equipment including cell phones. Learning Tree drivers have valid chauffeur's licenses and comply with all safety regulations. The Learning Tree does regular driver record checks on all employees driving Learning Tree vehicles.

If space permits, parents are welcome to come along on any field trip. We regret however, that siblings cannot attend off-site field trips.

Your signature on your child information card and parent agreement permits your child to attend and participate in our field trips. If you choose not to have your child attend, The Learning Tree is not responsible for providing alternate care for your child during the time of the field trip. There is no tuition refund or adjustment if your child does not attend the field trip.

OUTDOOR PLAY

The Learning Tree is proud to boast large outdoor play space, including enclosed playgrounds that are age and developmentally appropriate. Outdoor play is an integral part of our curriculum. All children, including infants, go outside on a daily basis, weather permitting.

To ensure proper staff/child ratios at all times, we cannot keep a child indoors. If a documented medical reason stipulating restrictions is provided, we will try to accommodate the request.

Under certain weather conditions, if a child is dropped off and is not dressed appropriately for outdoor play, the parents/guardians will be contacted and asked to bring the appropriate articles of clothing.

REST PERIODS

For children at The Learning Tree attending full days, a peaceful rest period is essential.

- The Learning Tree shall provide each child under school age an opportunity to rest.
- Children under 12 months of age are permitted to sleep on demand.
- Children under the age of 12 months are provided with cribs especially designed for comfort and safety.
- Cots are provided for children under school age.
- Parents/guardians shall provide a small sheet and blanket. Pillows and sleeping bags are not allowed.
- Nap items are to be labeled and stored in a plastic zipper bag. Nap items are sent home each Friday to be laundered.
- Quiet activities are provided for children not asleep after ½ hour.
- For school aged children who choose to rest, mats are made available for them.

POSSESSIONS FROM HOME

Because The Learning Tree cannot be responsible for any lost or damaged items, it is in your child's best interest to leave toys and personal items at home, with the exception of naptime buddies and "show and tell" days.

In keeping with the curriculum and goals of our program, toys in the form of weapons, guns, warriors, action figures, etc. should be kept at home at all times.

We also ask that any electronic games, trading cards, videos and CD's not be sent with your children. Again we cannot be held responsible for anything that is lost or damaged.

CLOTHING

Parents are advised to dress your child/ren appropriately, in play clothing. Please do not send your child in "good" clothes, as they are apt to get soiled, stained or damaged.

Parents should send an extra set of clothing for their child. Please make sure all clothing items are labeled.

Parents of children in the infant/toddler or transitional preschool program are asked to supply an adequate number of disposable diapers. Each infant should have at least two extra sets of clothing at the Center at all times.

If your child is toilet training we ask that you send at least four sets of extra clothing and sufficient training pants (no pull-ups or plastic pants can be used) so that we can keep your child comfortable at all times.

Children are taken outside daily and should be dressed accordingly. Fall and spring require light jackets, hats, and rain gear. Winter dictates heavy jackets, boots, snow pants, gloves, and hats. In the summer we ask that you send a swimsuit, tee shirt, water shoes, and towel. Sunscreen is a must.

No sandals, flip flops, or jelly shoes; gym shoes will provide the most safety for your child.

SUPPLIES

Parents of children in our Infant/Toddler program are asked to provide an adequate supply of diapers and food (if applicable).

Extra clothing is to be provided to keep your child comfortable at all times.

If at any time your child is in need of a specific item as mentioned above, the parent will be contacted to bring it in.

RELEASE POLICY

CHILD RELEASE CARDS

It is mandatory that every child has a child information card on file, which identifies all persons who are authorized to pick up the child. The Learning Tree asks that you provide at least two individuals with whom The Learning Tree may release your child/ren to. Children will only be released to individuals listed on the card. The Learning Tree is not responsible for any injury or harm to a child who has been released to a person on the child information card or identified in the written exception request process (described below).

SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

Should a parent wish to have a one-time special exception, we request that you submit to the office a signed, dated, written note the morning of the release. Only under extreme conditions will The Learning Tree be allowed to change or add release names orally.

COURT ORDER RELEASES

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) The Learning Tree must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed.

In the absence of a court order on file with The Learning Tree administration, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. The Learning Tree cannot, without a court order, limit the access of a one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, The Learning Tree suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, The Learning Tree is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of The Learning Tree cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. The Learning Tree will report any violations of these orders to the court.

QUESTIONABLE RELEASES

Until custody has been established by a court order, a copy of which must be on file with The Learning Tree, neither parent may limit the other parent from visiting the child at the Center or from picking up the child.

The Learning Tree staff is not trained to make assessments relating to intoxication or impairment and therefore assume no responsibility to assess the competency or condition of any individual appearing to pick up the child.

The Learning Tree recommends that an alternative care program be sought if the parents/guardian feels the Center's release protocol places a child at risk.

RELEASE VERIFICATION

The Learning Tree reserves the right to ask anyone, parents/guardians included, who may be picking up a child for picture identification. Refusal to show proper identification will result in The Learning Tree refusing to release the child and possible dismissal from the program.

NO SOLICITING OF EMPLOYEES

PRIVATE DUTY BY EMPLOYEES

The Learning Tree does not refer or recommend any Learning Tree employee for private duty. If a parent contracts an employee for private duty, The Learning Tree assumes no responsibility for any injury or harm to the child who is being cared for by an employee on off-duty hours and/or off premises.

TRANSPORTING CHILDREN BEFORE AND AFTER CARE

Learning Tree employees will not, under any circumstances, be allowed to transport a child/ren before or after care on any given day.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

The Learning Tree provides before and after school care for children ages 5 through 13 years of age. This program includes transportation in a licensed, insured vehicle equipped with all mandatory safety features.

Your fee is based on the regular before and after school schedule contracted for. There are no refunds or make-up days for vacations or absences. Your weekly tuition does not cover care when your child/ren's school is not in session.

Additional care can be purchased for an additional semester charge. The first semester fee will cover any additional time from your child/ren's first day of school through December 31st. The second semester covers all additional time from January 1st through your child's last day of school.

Additional care payments are due the first day of each semester. Additional care may be purchased for one semester or both.

If your child has been suspended from their elementary school, they are not permitted to attend The Learning Tree anytime during their suspension.

SUMMER DAY CAMP

The Learning Tree offers a summer day camp for all school age children. This is a separate program and requires a separate registration fee and weekly charge. More information for our Summer Day Camp program is available every April. Children enrolled in our Summer Day Camp program have a separate handbook with more specific policies for field trips, appropriate behavior and discipline.

TERMINATION AND WITHDRAWAL

TERMINATION PROVISIONS

The Learning Tree and a parent/guardian have the right to terminate the child care agreement upon written (not verbal) notice to the other party.

NOTICE

The Learning Tree requires a 2-week written notice prior to termination. Full tuition is due for the notice period, whether your child attends or not. There are no refunds. Failure to provide proper notice and payment will result in legal action being taken by The Learning Tree.

EMERGENCY DISCHARGE SITUATIONS

The Learning Tree reserves the right to terminate services with no notice if any of the following circumstances have occurred:

- Tuition is over two-weeks past due.
- Habitual returned checks.
- Habitual late pick-up (after 6:30 p.m.)
- If your child's continued participation in the program creates a direct threat to other children, teachers, Administrators or to the child's safety (examples: excessive biting and aggressive behavior).
- If your child's behavior causes ongoing disruptions in the classroom. Dismissal under these circumstances would be a final option.
- If the services you require of the program and staff violate licensing or accreditation criteria.

TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL

On occasion, due to family, work, or medical circumstances, a parent/guardian may be forced to withdraw their child/ren on a temporary basis. Proper termination notice and procedure must be adhered to. Once a child is withdrawn, The Learning Tree cannot guarantee enrollment for the child in the program or the same classroom.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The Learning Tree requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect at all times. One of the goals of The Learning Tree is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of The Learning Tree but, is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the Center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on the property thereafter.

SWEARING AND CURSING

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on agency property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

THREATENING OF EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN, OTHER PARENTS OR ADULTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LEARNING TREE

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today's society The Learning Tree cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the agency will not assume the risk of a second chance. PARENTS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.

THE ADDRESSING OF OTHER CHILDREN AT THE LEARNING TREE

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner, or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Center Director.

Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or director will address the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the Center Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the Center.

SMOKING

For the health of all The Learning Tree employees, children and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on agency property. Parents are prohibited from smoking in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of The Learning Tree. Parents who are smoking in their vehicles must dispose of the cigarette prior to entering the parking lot.

CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES OR OTHER PARENTS OF THE LEARNING TREE

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of The Learning Tree or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

VIOLATIONS OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The Learning Tree takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the agency. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with The Learning Tree. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential, or pressures employees or other parents for information which is not necessary for them to know, will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

OTHER INFORMATION

GUIDELINES FOR BIRTHDAYS

Due to the number of children celebrating birthdays at The Learning Tree, the following guidelines are to be respected:

- Limit snacks to cake or cupcakes, cookies, brownies.
- Please remember that due to severe allergy reasons, The Learning Tree is a peanut free Center.
- Do not send goodie bags, hats, favors, etc.
- Do not send clowns or similarly costumed visitors as these characters frighten many children.
- You may bring in balloons, however, due to safety precautions, they must be Mylar balloons.
- The treat you send will generally be given after P.M. snack. We would love for you to join us.

We realize it is very difficult to invite the entire class to your child's off-site birthday party. To avoid breaking little hearts, invitations must be mailed, rather than left in cubbies or lockers. You may give stamped invitations to the office and we will address and mail them for you.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOS

While the Parent Agreement allows The Learning Tree to use photographs without restriction, it does not permit other parents or outside agencies to photograph children, staff or Center activities. Please respect this agreement by refraining from videotaping or photographing your child or staff while on Learning Tree property or attending Learning Tree functions.

Photographs taken by The Learning Tree are used for our monthly newsletter, public relations and staff training. Your signed parent agreement and acknowledgement of receiving this handbook, gives The Learning Tree permission to use such materials without compensation.

PETS

Please do not bring any personal pet into the Center without prior authorization from the administration. We also ask that you do not tie your dog up outside the building, as children may be on walks or at play nearby.

PARENT PARKING

Please obey the stop signs and drive slowly. The Learning Tree is not responsible for any damage to or items stolen from your car.