



PARENT HANDBOOK

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our program offers a warm, safe and secure classroom environment to children 18 months through 5 years old who are developing typically or who have developmental challenges. We believe that children with a range of functional abilities benefit when brought together in a single, comprehensive program. Children without special needs develop empathy and compassion for their peers with disabilities. Children with special needs have typical role models while receiving individually tailored support to insure active participation in all aspects of their educational program.

APC has a relationship-based, sensory oriented program that uses play as the medium for learning. We employ an emergent curriculum that follows the interests of the children, using the teacher as facilitator. A wide variety of toys and materials are available for the children, and the teachers act as guides and give support when needed to ensure all of the children can participate and develop.

GOALS:

1. Provide a warm, safe, respectful and nurturing environment for all children.
2. Help each child develop a positive self-image, emotional independence and self-confidence.
3. Help each child develop healthy and positive relationships with other children and significant adults.
4. Assist each child to develop innate creativity, self-help skills and problem solving skills.
5. Help each child develop cognitive and communication skills.
6. Help each child develop physical capacity and competence.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ADMISSIONS

Children ages 18 months through 5 years of age are considered for admission to APC. An intake interview with the parent is conducted to determine the most appropriate placement for each child. **During this intake meeting the staff must be informed in writing of all prior hospitalizations and serious medical issues such as a tendency to aspirate liquids or solids, asthma, or any other medical issues that require specific treatment directions from the family.** The procedures for submitting the necessary paperwork are explained and a copy of this handbook is provided to the parent.

All forms in the enrollment packet must be completed prior to your child's admittance. Immunizations must be current for diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, MMR, HIB, and Hepatitis B. By the New School Law (SB 277) effective January 1, 2016, parents are no longer allowed to submit a PBE (Personal Beliefs Exemptions). For further information visit www.ShotsforSchool.org

Atwater Park Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, economic, national or ethnic origin. Atwater Park Center promotes tolerance and diversity, and strives to include families from varied lifestyles to reflect the diversity of our surrounding community.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Atwater Park Center is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The following holidays are observed yearly:

- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and day after
- 2 week at Christmas through New Years
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Cesar Chavez Day
- Memorial Day

In addition to the above listed holidays, any day declared to be a national holiday by the President of the United States shall also be declared an authorized holiday. When any authorized holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the preceding or following business day respectively shall be considered as a holiday. A school calendar is given out each July giving the exact dates.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

Children may be enrolled in the Center's 3 day or 5 day programs based upon availability.

Schedule changes must be made with Program Director's approval.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

We do everything possible to make the transition from home to school a safe and happy one. However, this time of separation can be intense and challenging. We recommend that parents help the child adjust and become comfortable with the new environment by spending some time with the child instead of leaving him/her right away. It is best if you can plan to spend a few mornings with your child at school. This helps both you and your child build relationships with the teachers and staff prior to separation.

When you have to leave, it's best to say a calm goodbye, telling your child that you will be back. **Do not ask your child's permission to leave**, i.e. "is it all right for me to go now?" or leave without saying goodbye to your child. Our teachers will help crying and clinging children by holding them and comforting them. We understand the difficulty leaving your child when (s)he is crying, but we reassure you the crying usually stops in a short time when the child decides to proceed with "work" (the work of play!) This issue of separation is one that every child deals with at some point. If your child does experience extreme or unusual separation issues, our staff will notify you immediately so together everyone can work out a plan to alleviate your child's separation anxiety.

Families are required to bring a small backpack each day so that the Center can send home letters, artwork and clothing. Each child is assigned her/his own special cubby located in the child's classroom; each has a child's name and is used to keep spare clothing and schoolwork.

Be sure to bring your child's lunch and an extra change of clothes. Please also send diapers and wipes if child is not toilet trained. All items must be marked with your child's name.

Please remember to check your child's cubby daily for any **artwork** and/or soiled clothing. *(For rest/naptime, please send a beach towel or crib blanket (marked with child's name, a small pillow and a favorite stuffed animal/lovey). The center will provide sheets, which will also be marked with child's name. The cots are plastic, which is not a very comfortable material to lie on directly. The sheets will be washed every Friday afternoon or more often when necessary. Families are responsible for washing their child's blankets.*

DAILY ATTENDANCE

For your child to receive the most benefit from APC's curriculum, try to have him/her at school by 9:00 a.m. This gives your child a reasonable transition time before we begin our morning "Circle Time".

IT IS THE PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SIGN THE CHILD "IN" AND "OUT" EACH DAY. This is our primary record of attendance; it is also what we take with us in case of an emergency evacuation of the building.

PRINT your full name and time of arrival and departure next to your child's name. Your signature is a legal requirement to maintain the school's license. Please notify the school in writing, including your signature, or by phone/email if someone other than the parent or person(s) authorized on the Identification/Emergency form will be picking up the child. Without proper notification your child will not be released to others.

The school will provide a healthy morning and afternoon snack. It will consist of fruit or vegetable, along with something crunchy, such as pretzel or cracker. Parents are responsible for providing a healthy lunch. Please do not include food with added sugar such as sweetened fruit drinks and/or chips. Foods that need heating will be warmed in the microwave by the teaching staff.

If your child has food sensitivities, please alert the office and classroom teachers and provide alternative snacks for your child!

APC is a "nut free" zone due to the possibility of severe allergic reactions.

HEALTH POLICY

It is the parent's responsibility to keep a sick child home, seeking medical attention as appropriate. Symptoms, which are signs of possible impending infection or disease, include:

- Fever over 101° F
- Vomiting
- Earache
- Colds with cough, sore throat, etc.
- Diarrhea
- Inflammation of the eye(s) (conjunctivitis)
- Abscess or draining sores
- Rash, unless diagnosed by physician as non-contagious

Colds, viruses and childhood diseases are most contagious in the early stages before the most obvious symptoms appear, **therefore, a child should be kept at home four days after symptoms begin or at least 24 hours after all symptoms have completely disappeared.** If the illness is only a cold or minor illness, the infectious stage will be over within three days. If your child is diagnosed as having a contagious illness, please notify us so we can pass the information on to other parents.

If your child has a fever of 101° F or above, do not bring him/her to school until 24 hours after the temperature becomes normal, without medication.

If your child becomes ill while at school, the teacher has the authority to isolate your child from the group, and you will be called to pick up your child immediately. If we are unable to contact the parent, we will phone the person you have designated on the Identification/Emergency form.

Head Lice: Any child can get head lice. Infestation is not related to personal cleanliness or the level of hygiene at home or at school. Head lice are transmitted by head-to-head contact or by sharing personal items such as hats, combs, towels, etc. Head lice cannot survive without a human host. They cannot survive on family pets. Head lice look like tiny white eggs (nits) or small grayish-tan insects without wings. They are usually found on the back of the head or neck.

The incubation period is 6-10 days from laying to hatching of eggs. Lice can reproduce 2-3 weeks after hatching. The contagious period is until the lice are treated with a chemical that kills lice and viable eggs have been killed or removed.

Please keep your child home until all lice are killed and nits removed.

MEDICATION

Office personnel will administer only medication prescribed by a doctor during school hours. **A medication consent form must be filled out by the parent or authorized representative for all medications of any kind and given to office personnel.** Directions on the consent form must match the medication's label with the child's name and use directions. The directions from the parent or authorized representative shall not conflict with the product label directions on prescription medication only. When the child no longer needs the medication, all medications shall be returned to the child's parent or authorized representative or disposed of after an attempt to reach the parent.

INJURIES/INCIDENTS

If your child comes to school with a pre-existing injury, bruise, etc., the staff will fill out an OUCHIE REPORT, with a copy sent home with the child. If your child sustains minor injury at school, an INCIDENT REPORT describing the injury, how it occurred, how it was treated and who witnessed the incident will be filled out, with a copy going home with the child. If your child sustains an injury at school requiring medical attention, you will be notified immediately. If you or other(s) designated on the Emergency Release form cannot be reached, and the injury is serious, paramedics will be called. An INCIDENT REPORT will be filled out and placed in the child's file, as well as a copy given to the parent. Notification of all incidents will also be sent to Childcare Licensing authorities. If your child is a client of the regional center, a copy will also be sent to the child's Consumer Service Coordinator.

DISCIPLINE PLAN

NO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IS PERMITTED AT ATWATER PARK CENTER. PARENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO HIT THEIR OWN CHILDREN AT APC.

We approach discipline from the perspective that it is a learning opportunity for the child and a chance for the adult to encourage a desirable behavior. Children are never shamed in any way.

Preventative Actions and Redirection

By closely observing the children's activities, we have an opportunity to INTERVENE BEFORE an unwanted behavior occurs. By redirecting in a POSITIVE way, we can focus on problem-solving skills and affirm each child's feeling of self-worth. Teachers will redirect a child's attention, offering a different age-appropriate activity than the one they are struggling with, or having trouble cooperating with peers on. Children feel empowered when they make the right choices, and this encourages them to engage in prosocial interactions.

Positive Guidance

We don't use the phrase "time out", but will remove a child from the group if he/she is seriously disrupting the group. If a child has to be removed, a teacher will always sit with the child until he/she has calmed down and is ready to rejoin his/her friends. We are patient and give the child ample opportunity to get in control. By being patient, we allow time for a child to get "their bodies under control" and to identify and express their feelings by using WORDS, if possible. We also help other children to LISTEN. This approach is highly effective and reinforces the idea that problems can be solved in non-aggressive ways. This peaceful conflict resolution is one of the cores of APC's philosophy.

Toddlers are learning how to interact with others. They may hit another child or adult, for example, when they are excited, angry, or tired. The Center's policy is to prevent hitting whenever possible. However, if a child swats at another, the child is gently stopped and encouraged to use a gentle touch. Toddlers gradually learn to use a gentle touch with others.

When a child bites another child, notwithstanding intensive preventive measures, the child is immediately removed from the situation. Both the child who has been bitten and the child who has bit are comforted. The child who has bitten is reminded how much biting hurts. The teacher helps the child become aware of the feelings of the child who has been bitten. The child who has been bitten is comforted and treated with ice and antibiotic ointment. Both families are notified in writing of the incident. Confidentiality is maintained for both children.

Communication Policies

Parents will be notified immediately in case of major or reoccurring behavioral challenges. Teachers will provide a detailed account of any incidents to the parents in writing and in person if possible. The director will be aware of any ongoing issues.

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