

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT CHICAGO

UIC Children's Center (MC 525)  
1919 West Taylor Street, Room 116  
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7248

Dear Parent,

All of us at the Children's Center are pleased that you have enrolled your child in our program. We want you to feel welcome and a part of the Center. Our hope is that this handbook will serve as a resource. Hardcopies of the handbook are available in each classroom to reference as well as on the Center's website. If you would like a hard copy of your own, please talk with the assistant director.

You may find our policies and procedures similar to those you've experienced in other early childhood education programs, and there may also be some differences. Our primary goal is to provide quality early childhood education services to UIC families. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the information provided in the handbook, please do not hesitate to talk with your child's teachers, the assistant director, or myself.

We look forward to getting to know your family and working together.

Sincerely,

*Kim*

Kim Kull, M.Ed.  
Director

*Samantha*

Samantha Jones, MS  
Assistant Director

UIC CHILDREN'S CENTER  
PARENT HANDBOOK

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## ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**Campus Address:** Applied Health Sciences Building (AHSB), Room 128, MC 525

**Street/US Mail:** 1919 W. Taylor Street, Room 116  
Chicago, IL 60612-7248

**Telephones:**

Director	312-413-5328
Assistant Director	312-413-5326
Classrooms	312-413-5327

**Fax:** 312-413-5329

**Email:** [uicchildcenter@uic.edu](mailto:uicchildcenter@uic.edu)

**Website:** [childrenscenter.uic.edu](http://childrenscenter.uic.edu)

All three of the classrooms are equipped with telephones. When calling the classrooms please identify yourself and ask for your child's teachers and your call will be transferred. There is voicemail on the office telephones. When you need to speak to someone immediately, please call the classroom number.

All staff may also be contacted via email. Email addresses are located on the Center's website. While administrative staff will reply to email as quickly as possible, please allow 24 hours for classroom teachers to respond.

## **MISSION, VISION, & VALUES**

The mission of the Children's Center is to:

1. Provide high quality early childhood education and care to the preschool children of UIC students, faculty, and staff in an on campus location.
2. Provide opportunities for observation, practicum, and internship experiences for students in early childhood education and other related professions that support young children and their families.
3. Serve as a resource for faculty & students who wish to conduct research with and for the benefit of young children and their families.

The UIC Children's Center strives to promote each child's intellectual, emotional, academic, and physical growth in an atmosphere that is filled with discovery, exploration, excitement, and hands-on learning. Staff members implement early childhood learning experiences that build a solid foundation and enthusiasm for life-long learning. The Children's Center provides a setting in which every child can learn in a climate where all feel supported, respected, appreciated, and safe.

The Children's Center is committed to:

- Quality early childhood education and care
- Communication and teamwork
- On-going evaluation and program improvement
- Staff development
- Diversity

## **HISTORY OF THE CHILDREN'S CENTER**

Our original program was opened on January 16, 1972, on the east side of campus, through the combined efforts of the members of a student organization (Circle Women's Liberation Union) and interested faculty and staff who wanted low-cost, on-campus childcare for students, faculty, and staff.

In 1974, the University assumed full responsibility for Circle Children's Center (the original name) following the awarding of an honorary degree to Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. The Center was assigned to the College of Education, and the University provided space, as well as an operating subsidy, so that the Center could continue its sliding fee scale based on family income and other financial resources. In 1981, the Center was transferred to Campus Auxiliary Services.

In 1984, through the efforts of the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Women, the Center expanded its services to the west side of campus. Our second site was opened on September 17.

In 2012, financial and operational challenges made it necessary to consolidate the two sites. Today the Children's Center operates out of the west site location.

UIC Children's Center is under the immediate supervision of Campus Auxiliary Services, a division of Student Affairs. UIC Children's Center is sponsored by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois and is under the immediate supervision of the Director of Campus Auxiliary Services and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

## **UIC CHILDREN'S CENTER**

The Children's Center is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services(DCFS). DCFS is responsible for licensing day care centers. When a day care center is licensed, it means that a DCFS licensing representative has inspected the facility and the facility was found to meet the minimum licensing requirements. Licensed day care facilities are inspected annually by DCFS licensing staff. The Children's Center current license is posted on the hallway bulletin board.

At enrollment, all families will receive a copy of the Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers, and are required to sign-off that they have received the standards. This brief summary does not include all of the licensing standards for day care centers. State licensing standards are minimum standards, while some municipalities may impose stricter standards on day care centers operating within their jurisdictions. If you observe a violation of any of these standards, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with a member of the Center's administrative team. In most cases, parents and administrators are able to resolve the parents' concerns and issues. If you believe the administration is not responding to your concerns, and may not be meeting state licensing standards, you may make a complaint to the local DCFS Licensing Office or by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 and stating that you want to make a licensing complaint. A DCFS licensing representative will investigate your complaint and report the results back to you.

The Children's Center is also accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC accreditation is awarded to programs that exhibit high-quality early learning and care for young children birth through age 8. The Children's Center was first accredited in 1989 and has maintained accreditation ever since. NAEYC accreditation is valid for five-year terms.

The Children's Center is also recognized as a GOLD Circle of Quality Center by ExceleRate Illinois, the statewide early childhood quality rating and improvement system. This system has been designed to rate the quality of early learning programs and to set research-based standards for early learning and development providers. The Center reapplies yearly to maintain the GOLD Circle distinction.

## **THE CHILDREN'S CENTER STAFF**

The Children's Center staff is made up of 8 teachers, 3 teaching assistants, and 2 administrators who all have a minimum of a bachelor's degree with specialized training in early childhood education or child development. All staff are credentialed by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Bureau of Child Care and Development. Both members of the administrative team hold Illinois Director Credentials awarded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Bureau of Child Care and Development.

The Center director administers the program, creates Children's Center policies and procedures, hires the professional staff, and is responsible for the financial operations. The Center director approves and monitors all research activities. The Center director reports to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Director of Campus Auxiliary Services.

The assistant director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program, including supervision of the teaching staff, enrollment of children, hiring student employees, and scheduling classroom observers and practicum students. The assistant director reports to the Center director.

Each classroom has two co-teachers. Together they maintain the classroom environment, plan curriculum, design the daily schedule and work with children individually and as a group. Teachers meet periodically with parents as a group and individually and are the primary source of information about classroom activities and events.

Each classroom is assigned a teaching assistant. Teaching assistants are current graduate students from the UIC College of Education pursuing their Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Teaching assistants support classroom co-teachers in all areas of curriculum and care of children and are qualified to substitute in a teacher's absence.

Additionally, each classroom is assigned a teacher's aide who offers additional classroom support throughout the afternoon. This position is filled by UIC students who are interested in working with young children. Aides are supervised and mentored by the classroom teachers in the rooms to which they are assigned.

The teaching staff also includes 2 full-time float teachers. Float teachers work in all three classrooms on a rotating basis as either additional teaching staff or substituting for absent teachers as necessary. Float teachers also perform the initial & annual assessments with children throughout the Center.

The Children's Center employs a food service aide who serves family-style lunches to each classroom, removes the serving dishes and utensils after lunch, and cleans the kitchen. The food service aide does not interact with children unsupervised.

Occasionally the Children's Center has practicum students from UIC and local colleges and universities, as well as volunteers seeking classroom experience working with young children. All practicum students and volunteers must complete role specific onboarding prior to interacting with children and are always supervised by a member of the Center's teaching staff. Parents are notified when there are practicum students and volunteers assigned to their child's classroom.

All adults interacting with children in classrooms must first complete a background check prior to working in the classrooms. Administrative and teaching staff all hold current Pediatric CPR and First Aid certification and have been trained as mandated reporters.

## **SITE HOURS & STAFF SCHEDULES**

The Children's Center is located in the Applied Health Sciences Building, 1919 W. Taylor Street, the hours are from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Generally, the Center director, assistant director, or both are on-site between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. In the event that both directors are off-site, a teacher will be designated to assume decision-making responsibilities, and their name is posted on the hallway bulletin board and notated as being director qualified per DCFS licensing regulations.

The classrooms are open from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm. Parents who need child care before the regular classroom hours must register at the end of each semester to use the early morning room. The number of children in each classroom is carefully monitored to ensure proper staffing and teacher-child ratios. While teachers try to accommodate emergencies, advance planning is necessary for most requests. Teachers work on the following schedule:

Opening float teacher	7:00 am to 3:00 pm
Three classroom teachers	8:00 am to 4:00 pm
Three classroom teachers	9:30 am to 5:30 pm
Three teaching assistants	9:00am to 1:00pm
Closing float Teacher	9:30 am to 5:30 pm



## DAILY SCHEDULE

The schedule below is posted in each classroom and is a combination of child initiated and teacher-led activities. Exact meal, rest, and outdoor times vary by classroom.

7:30 Center opens. All children meet in Orange Room supervised by the opening float teacher.

8:00 1<sup>st</sup> classroom teacher arrives. Children engage in center-based activities of their choice.

9:00 Teaching Assistant arrives and joins classroom activities. Morning snack is served ( 9:15-9:45)

9:30 2<sup>nd</sup> classroom teacher arrives. Children continue center-based choices.

**\*\*ALL CHILDREN MUST ARRIVE NO LATER THAN 9:30\*\***

9:50 Teacher leads a small-group activity and child initiated center-based choices continue.

10:40 Children clean up and are encouraged to use the bathroom.

10:50 Group Time begins. The teachers and children meet together for calendar, songs, whole group read-aloud, and discussions about topics relevant to the classroom community.

11:00 Outdoor Play

11:30 Family-Style Lunch

12:30 Children are encouraged to use the bathroom. Group read aloud.

1:00 Naptime begins. Teacher's Assistants leave

1:30 Teacher's Aides arrive. Teachers leave the classrooms to plan, prepare classroom activities, participate in weekly supervision meetings, & professional development training.

2:30 Naptime ends. Teachers return to the classroom. Afternoon snack is served. Children engage in center-based activities of their choice.

4:00 Children are encouraged to use the bathroom. Weather permitting, outdoor play begins. 1<sup>st</sup> teacher goes home.

4:45 Children return from the playground. Group read-aloud.

5:15 Late afternoon snack is served to remaining children.

5:30 Center closes

**All children are expected to arrive at the Center by 9:30 am.** We ask that when at all possible, medical appointments are schedule so that children do not arrive in the middle of the morning. Because activities are scheduled, play groups are formed, and the morning is generally a busy time, we appreciate a telephone call if parents anticipate

arriving after 9:30. While we can accommodate occasional late arrivals, they are disruptive to the classroom and difficult for the late child. **Children will not be accepted into the classroom if they arrive later than 9:30 on a continual basis.** When such a pattern develops, teachers will give parents a verbal warning, after which the child will not be accepted into the classroom for that day.

Outdoor play is scheduled everyday throughout the school year. Exceptions to daily outdoor play are made only when local health officials are reporting dangerous wind chills or heat indexes. The Children's Center has a private playground that includes climbing equipment, swings, a sandbox, path for bike riding, and a large open space for running. All 3 classrooms enjoy the playground together, and children are free to independently explore the area and equipment.

Winter activities may include sledding down one of our hills or other weather appropriate activities. During the winter months we ask that you send children with weather-appropriate clothing, including snow pants, boots, hats, and gloves. While we do have a limited supply of extra clothing, children prefer to wear their own. Please plan to keep boots at school until late Spring as our playgroud can get muddy.

In the summer months, staff add water activities such as sprinklers, water-tables, art activities, as well as quiet activities in a shady area. The Children's Center also plants a garden, and has been nurturing Illinois prairie plants in our butterfly garden. Children enjoy picnic lunch outside twice a week in the summer months.

When the weather is too extreme to go outside teachers plan additional movement activities indoors. Special equipment such as tumbling mats, scooters, and obstacle course materials are set up in the classroom or the hallway.

Based on our staffing plan, all children must go outside daily with their class. Parents who do not want their child to participate in outdoor activities must make other arrangements for their child during this time.

## **OUR CURRICULUM**

The Children's Center curriculum practices are historically rooted to the teachings of Jean Piaget and Constructivist principles. Integral to this philosophy is the idea that young children think differently than older children and adults. Teachers encourage children to think and solve problems in their own way, rather than to memorize specific information and solve problems in an adult manner. A constructivist approach not only trusts but encourages children to be active participants in their own learning.

The Center's emphasis is on children's learning through play rather than relying solely on teacher-directed, specific academic activities. As an integral component of any developmental curriculum, play is essential for children to learn. Through play, children

have the opportunity to explore the world around them and pursue their own ideas. Teachers carefully plan the classroom environment, choose materials, and develop activities based on their formal educational training and in conjunction with observations of children's interests, current abilities, and individual cultural influences.

Play is also a valuable tool for social and emotional development. We stress the development of each child's curiosity, confidence, independence, and resourcefulness both in and out of the classroom. Through play, children have opportunities to work collaboratively with others, share their ideas, and begin to develop self-esteem, self-regulation, and empathy towards others; all skills necessary to become productive members of society.

Our goal is to create learning environments where children have the opportunity to use language, literacy, and mathematics in meaningful, authentic ways. Teachers develop a daily schedule that is predictable yet flexible and responsive to the individual needs of the children. The classroom is set up with interest areas that include: the writing center, library, big/small blocks, dramatic play, science center, art center, and an area for games & manipulatives. Curriculum includes both indoor and outdoor experiences, and activities are planned for large & small groups as well as one-on-one interactions between children and adults. Activities that incorporate art, cooking, work with graphs and calendars, journal writing, and solving simple arithmetic problems that occur in the environment, are just a few of the activities children engage in on a daily basis that help them develop the fundamental building blocks necessary for further school success.

Teachers develop daily lesson plans that incorporate the preschool learning benchmarks identified in the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS). The learning standards and accompanying performance descriptors support curriculum development across all cognitive and intellectual domains. A link to the IELDS can be found on the parent resource page of the Center's website. Lesson plans are created using Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment System, and are posted in each classroom. Data derived from all forms of assessment are used to determine future classroom curriculum and supports both individual and group goals.

## **ASSESSMENT METHODS AND MATERIALS**

The Children's Center assessment plan integrates the three influences on our curriculum: developmentally appropriate practice, a constructivist approach, and the Illinois State Board of Education's Early Learning and Development Standards.

Assessment is a cycle that involves collecting information, organizing, and interpreting that information, and making decisions based on the information collected. The purpose of assessments is to provide consistent documentation of each child's growth and development across all learning domains, as well as the progress made toward

achieving the Benchmarks of the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Assessment informs teachers' decisions related to the classroom environment, learning materials, and activities throughout the day. Data resulting from child assessments is also used to create targeted professional development for our teaching staff, helping to improve teaching practices and enhance curriculum.

### **Assessment Tools:**

Within the first 45 days of enrollment, and yearly thereafter, the UIC Children's Center assess all children using the Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE). Results (and further actions if necessary) will be discussed with parents no later than the first parent-teacher conference.

The **Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R)** is a brief, developmental screening tool used to evaluate language, cognitive, gross motor, and fine motor development. The ESI-R is a component of the assessment process that helps identify if a child is meeting age-appropriate milestones.

The Children's Center has two teaching staff members that have been specifically trained to administer and score the ESI-R. These teachers screen all enrolled children, one-on-one in the Center's conference room. Typically, the assessment lasts around 15 minutes.

Families are asked to participate in the assessment process by completing the **Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE)**. By completing the ASQ:SE families will be providing their unique perspective & important information focusing on a child's social-emotional development.

The information gained from both screening tools along with observations by classroom teachers are used to identify children who may benefit from a more extensive developmental evaluation and help staff identify other supports that may benefit a child and their family.

### **Throughout the school year assessment data will be gathered in the following ways:**

#### **Observation Notes/Child Portfolios**

- ✓ Observation notes and artifacts are collected to create individual electronic portfolios using Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment System.
- ✓ Observations are systematic recordings of each child's actions, words, or behaviors; and are aligned with specific domain benchmarks
- ✓ Artifacts may include (but not limited to) writing samples, drawings, artwork, photos

- ✓ Artifacts emphasize what a child CAN do and provide a more holistic, comprehensive view of a child
- ✓ Considering what has been observed, teachers plan what they will do to foster each child's individual growth

#### **Formalized Assessment**

- ✓ Online assessment checkpoints are completed three times annually using the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment System.

#### **Communicating Assessment Information with Families**

- ✓ Teachers meet with parents for a minimum of two conferences each year.
- ✓ Portfolio data will be reviewed with parents during conferences and at a parents request.
- ✓ Parents and teachers will jointly set and revisit goals for children during conferences using the Children's Center Conference Form. This form will be signed by teachers and parents, shared with parents, and become part of the child's Children's Center file. (Minimum of 2 per school year).
- ✓ Parents have access to information about their own child only.

In addition to assessment of individual children, classrooms are evaluated yearly using the **Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)**. Collected assessment data is used to inform planning for overall program improvements.

### **INCLUSION OF DIVERSE LEARNERS**

The Center supports the inclusion of children with Special Needs (a generally recognized and persistent physical, cognitive, or emotional disability) whenever feasible for the child and the Center. In such cases, an appropriate statement (IFSP or IEP) from the child's physician or professional referring agency must be submitted prior to the time of enrollment. Center staff may obtain the assistance of qualified consultants prior to enrollment to determine our ability to provide the services required for the child.

Parents are expected to make arrangements for children who require specialized staff or consultants to help them fully participate in the program. All arrangements need to be discussed with staff and approved by the director. Parents are financially responsible for any additional services. Any support staff who enter the program will be expected to work cooperatively with the Children's Center staff.

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) all children will receive a developmental screening within the first 45 days of enrollment and yearly there after (**See Assessment Methods and Materials Pg. 11**). Vision and Hearing Screening will also be offered during the school year. Should a child score in the refer range, Center staff have developmental concerns, or a vision/hearing issue detected,

staff will provide the parent/legal guardian with information on how to obtain a diagnostic evaluation from the child's local school district.

Diagnostic information will be required for continued enrollment in the program. The Center may also obtain the assistance of a qualified consultant to help develop appropriate program plans, to assess the feasibility of continued care at the Center, and to coordinate services with other agencies. In the event that the Center's program and staff can no longer adequately meet the individual needs of the child, as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the director will set a date for termination of Center services and will offer the parent(s) information about alternative resources.

## **ATTENDANCE AND REPORTING ABSENCES**

### *Signing Children In and Out*

Each day parents are asked to sign their child in and out on the classroom attendance sheet located in each classroom. In the morning, please write your child's name and the time of arrival. At the end of the day, please indicate the time and the name of the person who picked up the child. Information on the attendance sheets is needed for Center records and for reports to the Illinois State Board of Education regarding our food service program.

### *Release of Children*

If you plan for someone else to pick up your child, for your child's protection, the Center must have this information from you in writing. Upon enrollment, parents are asked to provide the Center with a list of persons who has approval to pick up their child. This authorizes the Center to release the child to any person listed. Parents are asked to notify center staff when someone other than a legal guardian will pick up their child.

In an emergency, should parents want someone other than a listed person to pick up their child, the parent must provide written authorization in the form of a signed note or email. Notification includes the child's name, the date requested for pick-up, and the name of the person whom we are requested to release the child. No verbal authorizations will be accepted. The person picking-up must be prepared to show a driver's license or other picture identification to the teacher or administrator before we may release the child.

Under the laws of the state of Illinois, both legal guardians have the right to pick up their child unless a court document restricts that right. The enrolling parent/guardian who chooses not to include the child's other parent/guardian on the authorized pick-up list must provide an official court document (e.g., current restraining order, sole custody decree, or divorce decree stating sole custody). Absent that document, Center staff

may release the child to either parent/guardian, provided that parent/guardian documents guardianship of the child.

To assure the safety of our staff and children, Center staff members will not become involved in or referee custody and visitation difficulties between parents of any child left in our care. Should a dispute arise on Center premises, a staff member will call the UIC Police to intervene. Staff members will make every attempt to work with both the guardians and the child(ren) to ensure a smooth transition between home and school. However, if the situation becomes administratively disruptive to the Center, the child will be withdrawn from the program.

It is always helpful for you to introduce your child's teachers and/or the administrators to other persons who may occasionally pick up your child. We also ask that you talk with your child about any different arrangements made for pick up in order to prepare your child for a change in the daily routine and to ease the departure from the Center.

### *Reporting Absences and Changes in Your Child's Schedule*

Because consistency in daily routines is so important to young children, parents/guardians and teachers need to communicate openly and frequently about the schedule that works best for them, the child, and the classroom.

All parents are expected to adhere to the daily schedule agreed upon at the time of enrollment. We ask parents to inform teachers of changes in their child's normal routine, particularly if it affects their day at the Center. This may include planned or unexpected absences and earlier or later arrival or pick-up times. A brief call to the teachers, or an email to an administrator, will help us prepare your child for the change, make adequate staffing plans, and/or inform other children that your child will be absent. It is especially important that you let us know if your child will have a longer day at the Center. A child anticipates his/her parent's arrival and can become worried or anxious if not picked up at the usual time.

## **SEPARATION**

Learning to be away from a parent or other caregiver for short periods of time is a major developmental task for three- to five-year-old children. Each child's methods and ability to cope with brief separations are different. At the Children's Center, teachers make every effort to help each child become a part of the classroom, but the parent is the key person in the transition from home to school.

Parents of newly enrolled children (or other persons with a close relationship to the child) are asked to remain at the Center on the first day. Some children may need a family member for a couple of mornings; others need a longer time before they are able to stay without a family member present. Parents and teachers will make a progress

plan for each day during the period of initial separation and adjustment to the classroom.

Some children seem to handle the beginning of their school experience with ease and later have difficulty in entering the classroom and letting their parents leave. By working closely together, parents and teachers can develop strategies for helping children separate and feel confident in themselves and their teachers.

Naptime is another time when young children experience feelings of separation. As they rest quietly on their cots, children are away from their family, their class friends, and their teachers for a short time. During this quiet time, children often think about their parents and home, and separation feelings may resurface.

Young children also experience separation as they leave their classroom and the Center each day. Some children say goodbye cheerfully, while others need help with ending their day and preparing to leave. Children often need time to finish what they are doing. A child may also need their parent to wait, just as the child has waited for the parent's return. Please talk with your child's teachers should you or your child feel uncomfortable with your reunion at the end of the day. Together you can make plans that, hopefully, will ease the transition.

Please don't feel embarrassed if your child seems unhappy at times of separation or reunion. Families are encouraged to talk with their child's teachers about separation experiences and issues, including their own feelings of being away from their child. These discussions often lead to good classroom adjustments and experiences for both children and adults.

## **DAILY CONTACT**

Families and teachers have brief daily contacts as children are brought to and picked up from the classrooms each day. These are important times, as valuable information is exchanged about the day's events.

We strongly believe in maintaining open lines of communication, and your child's teachers want to hear from you. Please inform us of any events in your child's life that may affect his or her behavior, such as serious illness or death in the family (including pets), an expected new baby, separation of parents, visiting grandparents, travel plans, etc. We may be able to help your child during such times, as well as understand what s/he may be going through.

Unfortunately, arrival and departure times may not be adequate for lengthy and/or private conversations with your child's teachers. Parents/guardians who wish to speak with their child's teachers during the day should keep in mind that teachers are in their



classrooms with the children most of the day. The optimal time to reach the teachers by telephone is between 1:30 and 2:30, during the children's nap/rest time. Teachers are able to speak briefly by telephone at other times. Parents may communicate with teaching staff via email, please allow 24 hours for classroom teachers to respond.

Staff may also phone or email parents to let them know about happenings throughout your child's day. Parents and teachers who work together create a community in which children feel valued and significant.

## **COMMUNICATION OF GENERAL INFORMATION**

While we like to speak to parents directly about most issues, at times it is quicker and simpler to send out a general notice. Please check the following resources regularly:

**Friday Emails** – Each Friday afternoon, teachers email families with highlights from the current week and share the lesson plan for the upcoming week. Also included are information & pictures pertaining to the current topic the group is studying, suggestions to support a home/school connection, classroom community events, & relevant reminders.

**Classroom Bulletin Board-** Each classroom has a bulletin board where they post the classroom's schedule, weekly lesson plan, & current menu. In addition, you can also find a copy of the Center Parent Handbook for your reference. Please ask your child's teachers to point out the parent bulletin board in the classroom.

**Classroom Doors-** Teachers use the classroom door to post highlights from the day, special events, classroom newsletters, & sign-up sheets for events like parent meetings and parent teacher conferences.

**Monthly Newsletters-** Each month parents will receive an electronic newsletter. The Center newsletter, written by the assistant director, includes center wide events, dates to remember, and timely parent resources. Also included are information & pictures pertaining to the current topic the group is studying, suggestions to support a home/school connection, classroom community events, & relevant reminders.

**Hallway Bulletin Board-** Posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway are: the current menu & CACFP required program information, licensing information, information on campus assistance to parents, and other resources available to you (community events, parenting tips, articles, books, etc.). If you would like to post something on the hallway board, please ask the assistant director.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time twice during each school year. Conferences are typically scheduled between 1:30 and 3:00. For off-campus parents who wish to participate and cannot make it we are happy to include them virtually via Zoom. Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of either parents or teachers. During conferences, parents and teachers have more time and privacy for relaying information and concerns. By working together, parents and teachers can help children cope better with both developmental tasks and life's events.

Conferences offer an opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange information. Often parents want to know what their child is like in the classroom, and teachers get a more complete picture of each child from the parents' observations and experiences. During conferences, teachers will attempt to make your child's experiences and discoveries visible through photographs and work samples. Parents and teachers will also jointly set and revisit goals for their child. Goal setting & conference summary materials will be signed by teachers and parents, shared with parents, and will become part of a child's Children's Center file.

## **TRANSITIONING BETWEEN CLASSROOMS**

A child is transitioned from one of our younger classrooms to our older classroom when there is an opening in the older classroom **and** a child who has reached the minimum age demonstrates physical, social-emotional, and cognitive abilities to be successful with the change. Typically, this transition happens at the beginning of the school year or semester. Before a move is made, families are consulted for feedback. When both families and staff agree to the move, a transition plan will be established and shared with parents/guardians. The plan will include a schedule for the child to visit the new classroom prior to moving, an introduction of new teaching staff to the family, and a designated first day.

## **FOOD SERVICE AT THE CHILDREN'S CENTER**

The Children's Center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program administered by the Illinois State Board of Education. As a participant in the CACFP we are required to plan menus that follow the USDA nutritional guidelines for children ages 3-5 years old.

Each day children are provided with a daily lunch, a morning and afternoon snack, and a light late afternoon snack. All food is catered by the UIC contracted dining provider and delivered daily. Weekly menus are posted on the hallway bulletin board, in each classroom, and on the Center's website; substitutions are sometimes made.

Morning snack is offered beginning at 9:15 am and afternoon snack is offered beginning at 2:45 pm. Examples of morning snack include cereal & milk, and bagel and cream cheese. Cottage cheese and fruit is an example of afternoon snack. While juice is occasionally part of our snack menu, filtered water is always available and offered to children. A light afternoon snack of fruit and crackers is offered after 5:00pm as well.

Lunch, served between 11:30-12:00, includes a protein-rich entree, a serving of both a fruit and a vegetable, a source of whole grain, and 1% milk. A daily non-animal protein substitution is also listed on the menu. Additionally, we try to plan a few lunches per week without animal protein (e.g., grilled cheese, bean burritos). All non-dairy milk substitutes must be nutritionally equivalent to milk and provided by the parent. Please talk with the assistant director for more details.

Lunches are served family-style; meaning children serve themselves and select the amount of food they want to eat. Teachers eat with the children, assisting them as needed and encouraging them to taste new foods. Mealtimes are both for nutrition and conversation, with the goal of having a relaxed enjoyable eating experience. Children are not required to eat more than they want. Food is never used as a reward or punishment at the Center.

The Children's Center serves a variety of foods with the **EXCLUSION** of: pork, preserved meats (such as hot dogs), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, or foods with high sugar content. Each classroom has a pitcher with fresh filtered water so that children can get a drink at any time. Families may also bring personal water bottles for water. See Things to Keep at School pg. 38.

Please discuss any food allergies or other food restrictions your child may have with the assistant director and classroom teachers. Food substitutions for personal reasons (vegetarian diet) must be documented in writing. Food substitutions related to medical conditions must be documented and signed by a doctor using a *Medical (or other) Exception Statement for Food Substitution* form available from the assistant director. If you have any concerns about your child's eating habits, please share them with the teachers.

To protect children with food allergies from contact with the problem food, we ask parents to give consent to post information about the child's food allergy and possible allergic reactions as a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the day. For a child with special feeding needs, (medically documented allergy, health concern or medical condition) teaching staff will document the foods & quantity the child consumes and share the information with their family each day.

As a CACFP participant, no child will be discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any United States Department of Agriculture-related activity should write immediately to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

Parents are welcome to join their child's class for lunch. Please let your child's teachers know in advance when you would like to have lunch with the group.

## **COOKING ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL SNACKS**

The Children's Center strives to provide nutritious meals and snacks to the children, including classroom cooking activities. Teachers provide a variety of recipes for the children to use in preparing food for their classmates to enjoy. These recipes contain no added sugar or reduced amounts of sugar. It is important for young children to learn that special treats can be good tasting, good for them, and fun to prepare!

Parents who wish to bring a special snack for the class should keep in mind that the food should contain no added sugar. Examples of nutritious snacks include fresh fruit and vegetables or dried fruit (such as raisins). Foods which reflect the family's culture are particularly appreciated and help us learn more about one another's cultures.

## **GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) require that all licensed schools have a written guidance and discipline policy. Staff members and parents/guardians are required to read the policy and sign a document stating that they have done so.

The goal of discipline at the Children's Center is to support children as they learn to function in a social setting, while developing positive self-concept, self-control, and also learning to take responsibility for their own behavior. Discipline is not punishment, but rather guidance strategies that are responsive to a child's behavior and encourages their active participation in the process of resolving the situation. Our guidance strategies support children as they learn to appropriately express their feelings, to consider the feelings/needs of others, and to negotiate their own conflicts, differences, and ultimately come to resolutions.

This approach depends upon cooperation, negotiation, and requires that adults maintain a non-punitive attitude. As a DCFS licensed program that adheres to NAEYC standards, the following actions are strictly prohibited at the Children's Center:

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching, and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear
- Any form of emotional abuse including shaming, name calling, rejecting, terrorizing, humiliation, or isolating/seclusion of a child
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest or use of the bathroom
- Abusive and profane language
- Any form of public or private humiliation including threats of physical punishment

-Section 407.270 IL. Dept. of Children and Family Services Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers

The director will directly address any adult engaging in the prohibited practices while at the Center and such action is subject to possible DCFS involvement. Should any paid staff member engage in any of the above-mentioned prohibited practices the director will work directly with University HR and UIC Police to determine appropriate actions that protect both the rights of the child in the program and the accused staff person.

### **Teacher's Role**

Staff members are responsible for handling discipline for the children under their care. The UIC Children's Center environment, schedules, routines, and activities are all designed to foster positive behavior management. Additionally, staff create appropriate expectations based on age, developmental stage, and cultural preferences of the individual children in their care.

Examples of positive guidance strategies used by Children's Center staff include:

- Calmly setting clear, simple, consistent rules, limits, and consequences
- Adapting the environment to meet individual needs and needs of the group
- Providing the children with words to identify both positive & negative emotions and encouraging children to express their emotions appropriately.
- Guiding children as they learn to problem-solve including describing problems, considering the perspectives of others, and verbalizing alternative solutions.
- Supporting children as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions.
- Modeling appropriate behaviors and language

The Children's Center does not use "time-out" as a guidance strategy. A child who has lost control of their behavior will be given the opportunity to regain control in a quiet place in the room, with a teacher nearby. At times the teacher and the child may leave the room together to take a walk in the hallway or get a drink of water. The goal is to help the child calm down and self-regulate. Children will not be away from their group longer than one minute per year of age of the child.

### **Parents'/Guardians' Role**

UIC Children's Center encourages open communication between families and staff. It is our intention that families and teachers have face to face conversations each day. In addition to formal conferences, teachers will inform parents if problem behaviors arise, and patterns emerge. Collaboration amongst Center staff and families is essential to developing a more comprehensive view of a child and their behavior. We welcome parental input as to what works best for their child, so that the most consistent approach can be established to help a child develop the skills needed to be successful in the classroom.

If a child's behavior results in an injury to another child or staff member, the child's parent/guardian will be notified as soon as possible and written documentation in the form of an incident report will be provided to the parents and a copy will be placed in the child's file.

### **Steps for Addressing Challenging Behaviors**

Challenging behaviors can be defined as any behavior that interferes with children's learning, development, and success in the classroom, is harmful to the child, or others, or puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2007)

When a child's behavior is negatively impacting their health/safety or the health/safety of the classroom community the following strategies will be used to ensure successful inclusion: observation/documentation, collaboration, creation of an Individual Support Plan (ISP), and seeking support services if needed.

**Observation/documentation**-Observation is an essential tool when seeking to understand what a child's behavior is trying to communicate, as well as to identify any other factors which might trigger a specific behavior. Teaching staff will document their observations, strategies tried, and child's response to those strategies.

**Collaboration & Creation of ISP**-When a child exhibits a challenging behavior on a continual basis that is not resolved through appropriate behavior management strategies, the teachers will share their concerns with the assistant director, discuss the observed behavior, and create a plan to further include the child's parents/guardians.

The teaching team will request a meeting with the child's parents/guardian. The goal of this meeting is to share classroom observations & collaboratively develop an Individual Support Plan. The ISP will document individualized classroom strategies to address the challenging behaviors as well as establish an agreed upon follow-up plan (email, phone conversations, or in-person meetings) including a timeframe to keep parents informed of their child's progress. The ISP will be shared with the parent and

the Center's administrative team. A copy will be kept in the child's file.

**Additional Support Services-** In some cases, with parental permission, an outside community resource may be consulted. The Children's Center partners with Illinois Action for Children Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants to provide support to classroom teaching teams. In some situations, parents may be asked to seek a professional evaluation and/or seek additional services from their school district. All interventions will be recorded as part of the ISP.

If the results of an outside evaluation suggest the need for accommodations, the UIC Children's Center will provide these, or other appropriate accommodations as long as they do not place an undue hardship on the UIC Children's Center as outlined in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). See Inclusion of Diverse Learners page 13.

UIC Children's Center is committed to exhausting all means within its disposal to keep a child in our program. If a child responds to the interventions established and the UIC Children's Center feels that the child can continue in the program in a manner that is safe for the entire classroom community, the child will continue their enrollment. If the child does not respond to interventions, the Director will work with the family to transition the child to a more appropriate setting for the child.

### **Discharge and Transition Policy**

If a child is having an unusual amount of difficulty assimilating into the group setting, the UIC Children's Center will work collaboratively with the child's family as outlined above. If interventions are unsuccessful, the Director will work with the family to find a more appropriate placement for their child, based on the following Department of Children and Family Services regulation:

*"Infants, toddlers, and preschool age children who, after documented attempts have been made to meet the children's individual needs, demonstrate an inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be transitioned to an alternative program.*

*For Infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children, in all instances when a facility decides that it is in the best interest of the child to transition to a different program, the child's and parents' needs shall be considered by planning with the parents to identify the new program and working with the parents and pending program on a transition plan designed to ensure continuity of services to meet the child's needs."*

DCFS Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers 407.250

The final determination regarding a child's enrollment status will be made by the director. As a center the concern is the welfare of all children enrolled in our program. There is a range of behavior for children of all ages that although not acceptable (biting, hitting, use of profanity, ect.) may be developmental and manageable within

our setting. Other children's parents will not be a part of any decision-making process on the issue of another child's enrollment, nor will other parent's requests for termination of enrollment for other children impact any child's enrollment status.

## **CHILDREN WHO ARE ILL**

The Children's Center strives to provide a healthy environment for enrolled children, parents, staff, and visitors. Children and staff (including volunteers) must present a current medical report upon joining the Center and every two years thereafter.

Medical documentation must be provided on an Illinois Department of Children and Family Services form given at the time of enrollment. The form must be signed and dated by a medical doctor/ advanced practice nurse and show that the child has had an exam within six months of enrollment. If a child is in a high-risk group, as determined by the examining physician, the results of a tuberculin skin test must be included on the medical form. Children under the age of six must also show documentation, on the medical form, that they have been screened for lead poisoning or that a lead risk assessment has been completed.

As per DCFS licensing regulations, the medical report must also document that a child has received all age-appropriate immunizations as required by the Illinois Department of Public Health. When a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's beliefs, the appropriate documentation (see director) must be attached to the child's medical form. In accordance to DCFS licensing Standard 407.310-9 the UIC Children's Center will maintain a list of all children enrolled who are under-immunized & the number of under-immunized children on the list shall be available to parents who request it.

Due to staffing limitations, the Center is unable to care for a child who is ill or has a fever and is, therefore, unable to participate in the daily program. When a child becomes ill while at the Center, the parent(s) or person designated by the parent will be contacted and requested to pick up the child. **Parents should not bring an ill child to the Center as staff will be unable to accept him/her that day.** Should a child become ill while at school staff will provide a space (classroom or administrator's office), supervision (teacher or administrator), and comfort until a parent/guardian arrives.

Many childhood diseases are contagious and easily spread in group care. When someone at the Center has a contagious disease (other than a cold), a notice will be emailed and posted to advise parents of the occurrence of the disease and its usual symptoms. Parents should bring written authorization from a health care provider upon the child's return to the Center following a contagious disease or extended illness.



Children's Center teaching and administrative staff maintain current CPR and Pediatric First Aide training, and are trained in administering common medications, including EpiPens. Staff may administer medication prescribed by a doctor for that child, with written authorization from the parent/guardian. This is done by means of a form (available from the teachers or assistant director) that calls for specific information and instructions on how and when the medication is to be given. The prescription label must be affixed to the original container for the medication.

Children's Center staff may not give a child non-prescription drugs. This includes topical over-the-counter medications such as sunscreen, bug spray, hand lotion, and lip balm. In these cases, authorization must come from a health care provider on an official prescription pad or stationery and products should be clearly labeled with the child's name. Notes may be faxed to the Center and are valid for the entirety of the child's enrollment unless the family informs the administration differently.

All medications, non-prescription as well as prescription, should be given to the teacher for appropriate storage. **Please do not leave medication of any type in your child's backpack or cubby.** Prescription medications will be kept in a labeled container locked in the Storage Room. Medications that must be readily accessible, such as an EpiPen, asthma inhaler, or topical over-the-counter medications will be placed in a container in the classroom and put out of reach of children.

Parents are encouraged to discuss specific health concerns or problems with their child's teachers or a member of the administrative team. When consulting with their health care provider for advice on a particular illness or disease, it is important for parents to inform their provider that the child is enrolled in group care.

The best way to reduce the transmission of infectious disease is to practice proper hand washing procedures. Children are taught hand washing techniques and are monitored and/or assisted by the teachers. All children and adults are asked to wash their hands upon arrival into the classroom each day, before/after eating, after using the toilet, after handling bodily fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, touching any mucus, blood, or vomit), before and after water table play, before preparing and/or serving food, before/after administering medication, and after cleaning and/or handling garbage.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

Children's Center staff members take care to ensure each child's safety and well-being while at the Center, but children may become ill or injured. In the event of a medical emergency, Children's Center staff will follow these procedures:

1. Assess the immediate situation and determine if the child is ill or injured, the extent of the injury, and whether first aid is needed to assure breathing, control bleeding, and limit further injury.
2. Determine a course of action, including notifying the parent and contacting University Police for paramedic services (if needed) to transport the child (accompanied by a parent or teacher) to the University of Illinois Hospital emergency room. All parents are required to provide insurance information and sign an emergency medical authorization allowing staff to obtain emergency medical treatment in the parent's absence.
3. Staff may use the following procedures with a child:
  - a. Wash a minor cut, scrape, or puncture with soap and water and apply a bandage.
  - b. Apply ice to a bump to reduce swelling and bruising.
  - c. Ask a child to sit or lie quietly until the parent arrives. An adult will remain with the child until the parent arrives.
  - d. Use first aid, such as the Heimlich maneuver, mouth-to-mouth breathing, and application of pressure at the point of bleeding. Disposable gloves will be used if a child is bleeding; a microshield will be used for mouth-to-mouth breathing.
  - e. Administer prescription medication when authorized in writing by the parent; for example, for an asthma attack.

Parents will always be informed by teachers immediately (by telephone) if the illness or injury is serious, or at the end of the day for a minor injury. Parents are expected to come to the Center without delay if requested by staff. Emergency contacts may also be called when a parent cannot be located.

Parents are required to carry health care insurance for their child(ren). The Center is not responsible for medical costs due to illness or injuries that occur at the Center. The administrative staff has available information regarding State of Illinois health care assistance for families. Children without medical insurance must be withdrawn from the Center.

## **TUITION**

The Center's operating budget is based upon fees paid by the parents of enrolled children, a University subsidy, participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and other grants and contracts.

Weekly tuition is based on 5 full days and is determined by enrollment, not the number of days or hours attended. The Children's Center does not offer a part-time tuition rate. Tuition is charged for 48 weeks unless early withdrawal is requested (**See Withdrawing from the Program Pg. 28**). Weekly tuition is determined at enrollment and reviewed prior to the fall semester each year. Parents are required to sign an annual tuition agreement which states the weekly fee to be paid, the agreed upon payment schedule (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or semester), and withdrawal policies.

Tuition rates are assessed on a sliding scaled based upon a family's gross income before taxes including other financial resources. In order to verify household income and determine a family's tuition all families must submit one of the following:

- Most recent 1040/W-2 for each household member
- 2 current paystubs issued within previous 30 days
- Additional proof of income will be accepted with the director's approval

Tuition may also be re-evaluated at any time there is a change in the family's income and financial resources. Any deviation from the Center's tuition scale requires the Center director's approval.

All tuition and fee payments are made to the University of Illinois via the link located on the Children's Center website <https://childrenscenter.uic.edu/> . Tuition must be paid using a major credit card. Following payment, the system will generate a reference number and email which serves as a receipt of payment. The director keeps the Center's fee records and will give updated tuition payment information to parents as requested.

Parents who are unable to pay their tuition on the plan agreed upon in the service agreement should speak to the director to establish a temporary plan for payment. Children will not be allowed to continue in the program into the next semester or summer session if tuition is in arrears. Space in the program will not be held for a child whose parent(s) have not paid past-due tuition. Parents who are behind in their payments will receive an email reminder. Those who fail to respond will be given a two-week notice that their child will be withdrawn from the program for failure to pay tuition. Because tuition is an obligation to the University of Illinois, payroll deductions and financial aid funds can be secured by the Bursar's Office. An encumbrance will be placed on the academic records of those parents who are or have been UIC students.

### **Additional Service Fees**

Upon the initial decision to enroll a child (and by the end of each spring semester thereafter), parents are asked to pay a deposit of the annual registration fee and the first week's tuition. This **non-refundable** deposit reserves a child's place in the program. Space will not be held for a child without this deposit. Please discuss your questions about the deposit with either the director or assistant director.

Each school year a one-time Material Fee will be charged. The Material Fee will be prorated based on when the child is enrolled. The Material fee is due within 14 days of enrollment.

### **Child Care Assistance Program**

The Children's Center accepts families participating in the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Parents are responsible for the initial application, change of provider, and redetermination process, as well as submitting any required documents to *Action for Children*. 50% of the assigned weekly tuition will be collected until the subsidy is approved **in writing**. Upon approval parents will be responsible to pay their monthly co-payment according to the procedures outlined above. There is a minimum amount that the Children's Center must collect each month based on a family's assessed weekly tuition. Any shortfall must be made up by the parent out-of-pocket. If at any point a parent is dropped from the CCAP program, s/he will be responsible for fees based upon the Children's Center assessed tuition amount. Information regarding the CCAP program can be found on the Children's Center website on the Family Resources page.

### **Flexible Spending Account/Dependent Care Assistance Plan**

Families that have enrolled in the FSA program should notify the director when they need a receipt for previously paid child care services. Please specify the time period to be covered, and allow one business day to receive your receipt. UIC employees can find more information related to Flexible Spending Accounts at <https://www.hr.uillinois.edu/benefits/fsa>

### **WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM**

Withdrawal from the UIC Children's Center prior to the end of the service agreement must be submitted in writing with 2 weeks ( 10 business days) advance notice. This notice can be given in the form of an email to a member of the administrative team or by completing the *Notice of Intent to Withdraw* form. Completed forms should be turned into a member of the administrative team.

**Parents who do not provide the Center with the minimum notice must pay fees for a two-week period after notice is given, even if the child no longer attends.**

### **CHILDREN'S CENTER POLICY STATEMENTS**

The Center has established a number of policies concerning program and classroom practices. The Center director has developed these policies, in keeping with university and state licensing regulations and best practice as determined by NAEYC accreditation criteria.

### **Late Child Pick-up**

Children are expected to be picked up each day at the time agreed upon with the assistant director and never later than 5:30 pm. If the designated person hasn't arrived by 5:30 pm, staff will attempt to first contact the legal guardians and then the Emergency Contact individuals the parent/guardian listed on the child's Release Authorization Form. Those individuals authorized for a child's release, will be asked to come to the Center to assume responsibility and physical custody of the child. After **ONE HOUR** if no one on the emergency list is reached or a custodial parent(s) hasn't arrived to pick up a child, University Police and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will be contacted. **Parents who develop a pattern of arriving at the Center after the 5:30 closing time will be given a verbal warning and ultimately written notice of withdrawal from the program.**

### **Toileting Policies**

In order to be enrolled at UIC Children's Center, children must be toilet trained. A child is considered fully toilet trained when they are dry and wearing underwear at all awake times. The child is verbally able to let an adult know when they need to use the bathroom. The child is also self-sufficient while in the bathroom, including pulling pants up and down, wiping, flushing and washing hands. Teachers will provide assistance and offer instructional support when needed.

Each child is expected to use the children's restroom for their classroom, with doors remaining open at all times. Children should not use the adult bathroom. Children may use the toilet as needed but are reminded by their teachers to do so at times throughout the days including before/after playground time, lunch, and nap/rest time.

Children may go unescorted to the bathroom. While staff primarily supervise children by sight, they may use the bathroom independently with a teacher checking in within 5 minutes. A teacher will supervise when several children are waiting, or when an adult is otherwise needed.

Children are expected to lower their own clothing to use the toilet. The teacher will assist when necessary, especially with buttons, snaps, zippers, belts, etc. Likewise, children are expected to clean themselves afterwards and to wash their hands before returning to the classroom.

Parents are asked to dress their children in clothing which is easy for a young child to manage unassisted and to keep a complete change of clothing at the Center in case of toileting "accidents" or other soiling occurrences. In those instances, children are expected to change their own clothing in the children's restroom, with the teacher providing assistance only when needed and with the child's permission.

When a child requests to use the toilet during playground time, a teacher will accompany them to the children's restroom and wait for the child before returning to the playground.

Teachers will assist a child who has specific toileting problems, such as diarrhea, by first encouraging the child to clean his/her own body as much as possible and then asking the child if he/she needs the teacher's help. This is in order to give the child as much control as possible over the cleaning procedure. If the situation requires contact of a personal nature, the teacher will ask the assistant director or another staff member to be present. The teacher will inform the child's parent without delay that such assistance has been provided. When it is necessary for a teacher to assist a child in any unusual circumstance, the teacher will follow up by calling a parent and completing an accident/incident report and submitting it to the assistant director. Center staff will discuss particular toileting problems with the assistant director and the child's parent. **A child who is not toilet trained may not remain in the program.**

All adults (including parents, staff, and visitors) must use the adult bathroom and not those assigned to children. Additional adult bathrooms are located just outside of the Children's Center in the main building; staff will be happy to show you where.

### **Observing Birthdays and Holidays**

Each child's birthday is recognized by Children's Center staff as a special day for that youngster. Each classroom has developed community traditions such as child-made birthday crowns and/or individualized birthday tablecloths.

Parents are asked to contribute a birthday treat. All birthday treats must be store bought in the packaging with the ingredient label affixed. Acceptable birthday treats include: a small cake, cupcakes, or a healthy treat such as a fruit cup. We ask that families **NOT** bring additional party favors such as balloons, decorations, or gifts for classmates. If you would like to donate a favorite children's book to the classroom library in honor of your child's birthday, please see a member of the administrative team.

Parents are invited to join the class for afternoon snack when your child's birthday is observed. Please talk with your child's teachers about the number of children in the classroom, and the best day to celebrate.

The same low-key, child-centered approach is also taken during observances of holidays. The cultural and ethnic aspects of holidays, rather than the religious, are emphasized as Center staff plan activities for the classrooms. We welcome families to share their holiday traditions. Please talk with the classroom teachers in advance so that a plan can be made. We also welcome recommendations for books and music associated with your holiday traditions.

While gifts to the Center are not solicited from parents, those who wish to make a monetary or material donation to the Children's Center should discuss their interest with the Center director, who is responsible for determining if the contribution can be accepted on behalf of the Center. All contributions accepted will be acknowledged and processed according to the University's gift-reporting procedures.

### **Policies related to photos, videos, technology, and interactive media use**

Throughout the year, the UIC Children's Center staff will photograph or video your child participating in Center activities. Photographs and video recordings are used in classrooms to document participation in learning experiences, preparation of child portfolios, observational processes, developmental assessment strategies, and similar purposes. Additionally, photographs may be printed or appear in promotional materials such as brochures, our website, or display boards. Photographs may also be shared in publications such as a Center newsletter and occasionally other UIC related publications. Children's names will not be used publicly without specific written permission from a parent or legal guardian. Upon enrollment parents will be asked to specify permission as to where/how the Children's Center may use photographs and video images of their child.

Recordings made in classrooms are also used as a professional development tool. By reviewing specifically recorded portions of the day, teachers and their supervisors can reflect on teaching styles/strategies, and in turn improve teaching practices. Additionally, early childhood practicum students may need to record their interactions with children to complete coursework. Parents will be asked to give separate written permission for such recordings.

We ask that parents **not** take photographs or record while in the classroom. While we understand that some parents enjoy recording their child at school, other parents specifically request that their child **not** be recorded or photographed by anyone other than a staff member. If you would like to take a picture of a special occasion (such as your child's birthday celebration), please discuss it beforehand with a teacher. With the teacher's permission, a parent may take a picture of the child with his/her teacher(s) and/or parent(s), as long as no other children are in the photograph.

When used intentionally and appropriately, technology & its related applications can be effective tools to support learning and development. When considering the use of technology in the classroom, the Children's Center follows the guidelines presented in the position statement: Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs, written jointly by the National Association for the Education of Young Children & the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's media. At no time does our curriculum support children passively watching commercial television or movies. Teachers will use classroom I-pads to support research on a given classroom topic, and children in the oldest classroom work in pairs to take turns on the classroom

desktop. CD players and digital cameras are also classroom tools that allow children to experience interacting with technology. The full position statement can be found at [http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/PS\\_technology\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/PS_technology_WEB.pdf)

### **Addressing Family Concerns**

If a family has an issue or concern that is unresolved after talking with their child's teaching team, the family should contact a member of the administrative team.

A variety of actions could follow including:

- A meeting with an administrator to discuss concerns and clarify issues.
- A meeting that includes the family, teachers, and administrators to problem-solve and create a plan to address the concern.
- A follow-up meeting (if needed) to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and modify the plan if necessary.

Should the above actions not lead to a favorable conclusion, it may become necessary to involve the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs/Director, Campus Auxiliary Services.

### **DISMISSAL POLICY-TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT**

The UIC Children's Center reserves the right to discontinue enrollment at any time for any child if:

- Failure of a parent/guardian to return required documents, including but not limited to: physical forms, immunization records, birth certificate, or any other paperwork necessary for continued enrollment.
- Parent/guardian fails to cooperate reasonably with the program in the provision of educational services to their child, in the payment of established tuition fees, or in picking up their child promptly.
- The child exhibits challenging behaviors, as outlined in the Center's Guidance and discipline policy, and interventions practices, as outlined in the Center's Guidance and Discipline policy, have been unsuccessful. See Discharge and Transition Policy for details-**See Page 32**
- The Director and the Associate VC of Student Affairs/Director Campus Auxiliary Services believe family participation or behavior is determinantal to the operation, routines, goals of the program, or policies and procedures are not being followed. The Center reserves the right to take measures to maintain a harmonious and safe center environment. Campus police, DCFS, and Legal Council will be contacted as necessary in such instances.

If termination becomes necessary, the parent/guardian will receive written notification including a specified date when services will no longer be provided.



## **RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT ENROLLED CHILDREN**

All information regarding children and families of the Children's Center is regarded as confidential and the property of the Center and the families involved. Students, researchers, or other visitors who conduct observations or studies at the Children's Center are not provided with personal information about children or families. Staff of the Children's Center will provide information about a child enrolled in the program only to that child's parent or legal guardian. Parents who anticipate needing information released to schools, physicians, social-service agencies, etc., should notify the assistant director well in advance, when possible. Written authorization from the parent or legal guardian is required before the Center will release any information to third parties.

Under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), records related to children and their families are to be shared with other staff or University officials only if that person has a legitimate educational interest (i.e., on a "need to know" basis only). Requests from third parties, including outside agencies, must be evaluated by the Center director. If necessary and appropriate, University counsel will be consulted before any disclosure is made. Information will not be released over the telephone to a child's relative or a parent whom we have not met. In most cases, information cannot be disclosed to any third party without the written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian.

As required by the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, teachers and directors must report suspected child abuse or neglect and provide information to representatives of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services if they suspect that a child is being abused or neglected or if contacted during an investigation of such a report. These reports are always handled confidentially within the Children's Center program.

As a way to support friendships outside of the Children's Center, a yearly Family Roster is created and shared with families of the children participating in our program. Parents/guardians are asked for permission to participate and what specific contact information (cell phone number and/or email) they would like included in the directory. Participation is voluntary.

## **RESEARCH GUIDELINES**

UIC Children's Center recognizes the value of and supports ethical research with and for the benefit of young children and their families. The Center has served and continues to serve as a research site. The following guidelines are to be adhered to in considering research proposals and in monitoring research carried out at the Center.

Research at UIC Children's Center may be done not only by UIC faculty and students, but also by researchers from other recognized institutions. Research affiliated with UIC is given priority.

Research carried out at the Center must meet the Research Guidelines of UIC Children's Center and those of the UIC Institutional Review Board--Protection of Human Subjects. The Center is a small one and may be unable to accommodate simultaneous multiple research. Preference will be given to research which directly benefits the Center.

Parents of children at the Center will be advised of all research done at the Center. Public notice of research focused on the total classroom will be given by means of an email sent to families prior to the start of the research project. Individual notices and signed parental permission forms are required when individual children are to be interviewed and/or tested. No exceptions will be made regarding the need for individual written permission for participation in the aforementioned research activities. Parental authorization in writing is required for the use of video recording or a child's picture, including still photographs, and video recordings.

The child must be willing to participate in the individual interview, observation, and/or test. No coercion, directly or indirectly, shall be applied to the child, and he/she may withdraw from the research activity at any time.

Research activities must not disrupt the classroom schedule or activities. During the research there must be no activity or attitude that could be harmful to the child, physically or emotionally, as in his/her sense of well-being and self-esteem. The Center director ultimately is responsible for monitoring all research in progress at the Center and for determining whether the research activity or the researcher's attitude toward the child is considered harmful.

Identifying information, such as the child's name, may not be used by the researcher. Research data shall be coded or names otherwise disguised. No individual test scores and/or results are to be given to the Center's staff, but summarized results of the findings, without identifying information, are expected upon completion of the research activities at the Center.

The Center's records are not open to the researcher. All information about the child and/or the family must be obtained from his/her parent(s). Necessary information may be obtained by questionnaires and/or interviews with the child's parent(s).

UIC Children's Center is to receive a citation or other appropriate acknowledgment for published research findings from research activities completed at the Center.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Parents and extended family members are welcome to visit at any time their child is at the Center. Sometimes, however, unexpected visits can be difficult for a child or the group of children. We encourage parents to let teachers know when they would like to spend time in their child's classroom to observe, to have lunch or snack, or to volunteer by reading stories, carrying out an activity with the children, or helping on a field trip.

Several times throughout the school year, you will be invited to attend special events.

Some may be Center-wide, such as potluck dinners or picnics, and others may be classroom-related, such as curriculum meetings, sing-a-longs, children's art shows, or story dramatizations. Occasionally we offer parent support and/or education groups to address common parental concerns such as discipline, nutrition, or health issues. We want families to participate as often as they are able or interested, but we also understand that the lives of working and/or studying parents are busy and complex! Our goal is to include parents in whatever ways work best for each family.

At the end of each school year, or upon withdrawal from the program, all parents are asked to assist us in evaluating and assessing our program by completing a comprehensive questionnaire. Your fulfillment of this request not only gives you a voice in expressing your level of satisfaction with your child's school, but it also enables us to maintain our accreditation and strive for continuous improvement. Goals for the following school year are established based on data received from the questionnaire. We appreciate your serious consideration in evaluating the service we have provided you over the course of the year.

## **FIELDTRIPS**

As the weather warms up in the spring, classrooms begin to plan short morning fieldtrips. Trips are planned utilizing the rich opportunities here on campus (e.g., UIC Police Station, cafeteria) and in the surrounding neighborhood (e.g., parks, libraries). The Children's Center does not take trips that require us to travel a great distance from campus and all trips are walking field trips. In addition, children always enjoy visiting their parent's workplace. If you are interested in having your child's class come for a visit, talk with your child's teacher, who will help to plan the trip with you.

As part of the enrollment paperwork, parents are asked to give permission for their child to participate in walking fieldtrips. Parents are notified in advance of fieldtrips and are always welcome to join the class on trips.

## CENTER FORMS

Enrollment Forms (signed by parent/guardian and kept in child's file):

- **Certificate of Child Health Examination-** form used for a child's initial physical required for enrollment in the program. It will be returned every two years for an updated physical exam.
- **Child Information Form-**form completed by a family to help Center staff learn more about a child development and family's expectations.
- **Emergency Medical Care-**form used to authorize emergency medical treatment in the absence of a parent/guardian.
- **Child Release Authorization-** List of authorize individuals that may pick-up a child in addition to a parent/guardian. Emergency contact information is also provided.
- **Consent Form-**Parental consent regarding receipt of parent handbook, walking field-trips, participation in the family roster, & photo/video consent.
- **Consent for Developmental Screenings-**guidelines related to yearly developmental screenings used at the Children's Center.
- **Discipline Policy-**outlines the purpose, guidelines, strictly prohibited behaviors, and procedures related to addressing challenging behaviors at the Children's Center. Parents are asked to sign this form indicating that they have read, understood, and agree to follow the Center's policy. (See **Guidance and Discipline Policy, page 20**).
- **Service Agreement-**outlines terms related to tuition, fees, & withdrawal policies. Signed at initial enrollment and at the beginning of the fall semester thereafter. A copy of the service agreement is given to parents upon completion.

Other regularly used forms:

- **Authorization to Administer Prescribed Medication-** must be completed by the parent when a child is to be given prescribed medicine while at the Center. Parent is asked complete each time their child needs a new medication or needs a new series of a previous medication. Teachers may not administer any medication unless a physician prescribes it and this form is completed. **This includes over-the-counter medications, lotions, bug spray, lip balm, etc.** This form is also used to record the dates and times the medication was given to your child. Teachers have the form available in the classroom.

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program Parent Application-** must be given to all parents of enrolled children. The Assistant Director will give you the CACFP parent application and letter at enrollment and annually each July. You will also be asked to update your application at any time there is a change in your household income.
- **Extended Care Registration Form-** Each semester parents whose work/school schedule necessitate that their child attend the Early Morning Room (7:00am-8:15) are asked to register. Accurate registration is necessary to ensure proper child: teacher ratios.
- **Notice of Intent to Withdraw-**This form is used to notify the Center of disenrollment prior to the end of the service agreement. **See Withdrawing from the Program on page 28**

## **THINGS TO KEEP (and not to keep) AT THE CENTER**

### **Extra Set of Clothes**

To help your child feel more comfortable while at the Center, we ask you to bring a few things to keep in his/her cubby. Each child will need a full change of clothes, including a shirt, pants or shorts, underwear, and socks. Children get wet through water play, painting, spills, or bathroom accidents, and they often feel better when they can change into their own dry clothes. Younger children, or those newly enrolling, may need two sets of clothing. We encourage you to mark each item with your child's name. Please check your child's extra set of clothing periodically to assure that the clothing still fits and is appropriate for the current season.

### **Soft Toy for Sleeping**

While we provide a cot, cot sheet, and small blanket for your child's use at nap/rest time, many children like to have a soft toy, like a stuffed animal, to rest with on their cots. For reasons of sanitation and storage, we ask that your child NOT bring his or her own blanket or pillow.

### **Toys from Home**

Because things from home can be a source of comfort and reassurance to children, they may also bring other toys to play with at the Center. However, you will want to help your child think about the kinds of things he/she may bring. Toy guns, weapons, or toys containing weapons of any kind should not be brought to the Center. Because toys can easily be broken or lost, your child should not bring a treasured or expensive toy, game, or book. The Children's Center cannot be responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items. We ask that you also help your child regulate how many items from home they have at school. We recommend only one "home toy" at a time.

While children are not required to share their things from home, it is often difficult for classmates who may want to play with those items. Therefore, the teachers may ask your child to keep the toy in his/her cubby if the use of the toy causes conflicts with other children. Some children use toys as a means of entering into a playgroup or getting attention. Books are especially easy for children to allow others to look at and enjoy. Please feel free to talk to your child's teachers when you are unsure about toys or other possessions that your child may wish to bring to the Center.

### **Water bottles**

The Children's Center provides children with fresh filtered drinking water throughout the day. Some families prefer to bring their child a water bottle with water from home. If you choose to provide a water bottle for your child, please make sure it's labeled with their name and you take it home each night. Center staff will not be responsible for cleaning out water bottles.

### **Restricted Items**

We ask that you **not** allow your child to bring the following items to the Center: candy, gum, soft drinks, money, medications, or weapons (real or toy). Because we encourage children to create their own artwork and problems to be solved, we ask that coloring books, workbooks, etc., not be brought to the Center.

## **PARENT RESOURCE LIBRARY**

The Children's Center has also developed a Parent Resource Library located directly outside of the assistant director's office. The library contains books on a variety of child-development topics, as well as family-related issues. Parents are welcome to check out books by following the checkout procedures posted in the library. Our Parent Resource Library also contains a variety of pamphlets and articles that you are welcome to take. If you are looking for a specific topic and do not see it, talk with the assistant director or your child's teachers. We will do our best to help get you the information.

## **CELL PHONE FREE ENVIRONMENT**

Our classrooms are a cell phone-free environment for all adults, including staff, students, and parents. We ask parents not to use cell phones at arrival or departure times in order to maximize opportunities for parent-child and staff-parent communication. This allows Staff to share critical daily information about children without the distraction or interruption of cell phones. You are welcome to use your cell phone in conference room. Please do not use your cell phone in the hallways or classrooms. Your cooperation with our cell-phone free policy is GREATLY appreciated by staff and your child.

## **BABYSITTING**

Our teachers are experienced professionals who provide high quality confidential services to families. Standards of ethics in Early Childhood Education suggest that teachers should refrain from privately providing childcare or “babysitting” for families currently enrolled. We ask that you not seek out paid staff members for the purpose of providing childcare in your home or on campus.

## **INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT**

UIC Children’s Center has a contract agreement with an outside pest management service to provide a monthly integrated pest management program that adheres to the principles of IPM as defined by the Illinois Department of Public Health. A binder containing documents related to service, MSDS sheets, and IPM recommendations can be found in the assistant director’s office. All extermination and routine maintenance services are done before or after Center hours of operation and not in the presence of children.

## **CLEANING SUPPLIES**

Every effort is made to use fragrance-free and least toxic cleaning products off the EPA’s Safer Choice product list. Supplies **will** be kept in locked areas of classrooms, the kitchen and storeroom. Chemicals will not be used when children are present, with the exception of a bleach-water solution for sanitizing purposes. The phone number of the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) will be posted by all classroom.

## **BUILDING SECURITY AND ACCESS**

The UIC Children’s Center is located within the UIC Applied Health Sciences building. Each of the main entrance/exit points has an intercom which allows Center staff to both see and hear who is requesting entrance. Entrance will only be granted to authorized individuals (staff, families, university personnel with appropriate ID, expected visitors).

In addition, each of the administrative offices, the adult bathroom, and the playground are equipped with Startel call buttons that allow individuals to talk directly with the UIC Police in case of an emergency.

## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS**

UIC Children’s Center staff are trained annually in emergency response plans related to fire emergencies, weather emergencies, power outages, and sever injury. In the event that it becomes necessary for children and staff to evacuate the building the UIC police will be notified immediately. Anytime staff leaves the Center with a group of children

they will take their classroom specific emergency backpack which includes basic first aide supplies, emergency forms for each child enrolled, and contact information for each family enrolled. If it is necessary to remain out of the Center for a prolonged period of time the UIC Police will obtain a campus bus for children and staff. Staff will begin contacting parents as soon as possible to inform them of our condition, location, and to make arrangements for children to be picked up.

## **TOBACCO & CANNABIS FREE ENVIRONMENT**

The University of Illinois at Chicago is a tobacco & cannabis-free campus. The presence of tobacco or cannabis products at UIC poses a health risk for everyone on campus. UIC prohibits smoking indoors and near building entryways. This includes inside the UIC Children's Center, the playground, and on the Center's driveway. The Tobacco & Cannabis -Free Campus Policy applies to all forms of tobacco & cannabis ( medical & recreational) products. Staff and faculty violators will be reported to UIC Human Resources and/or Faculty Affairs for disciplinary action. Students in violation of the policy will be reported directly to the Dean of Student Affairs for disciplinary action. Non-UIC affiliated violators will be reported to the UIC Police Department.

## **FIREARMS PROHIBITED**

Illinois enacted the Firearm Concealed Carry Act (430 ILCS 66/) to comply with federal court rulings. Under the Act, university property is a Prohibited Area. Therefore, firearms and other weapons are prohibited in all UIC buildings and grounds, including the UIC Children's Center and associated grounds (driveway & playground). University policy generally prohibits anyone — even a firearm owner with a concealed carry permit — from carrying or storing a firearm or weapon on any university property, unless required by that individual's job as determined by the Chief of UIC Police, in consultation with the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services.

## **PARKING**

The designated place for parents to park is in our driveway at the west end of the building. **Our driveway is only accessible when you are driving NORTH on Damen.** The driveway is for drop-off and pick-up only. Parents are not authorized to park for longer periods of time and those who do so risk a parking ticket from the UIC Police or Parking Enforcement staff.

For safety and environmental stewardship we ask that you not leave your vehicle idling when parked on our driveway.



If you chose to park in the circular drive in the front of the building on Taylor Street, please be advised that this is **NOT** our designated drop-off area and you are at risk of receiving a parking ticket from the City of Chicago Police.

## **NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

University of Illinois  
Official Notice  
**NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

The commitment of the University of Illinois System to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity requires that decisions involving students and employees be based on individual merit and be free from invidious discrimination in all its forms.

The University of Illinois System will not engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, order of protection status, genetic information, disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation including gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran and will comply with all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action laws, orders and regulations. This nondiscrimination policy applies to admissions, employment, access to and treatment in the programs and activities of the University of Illinois System.

Complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and students with the means for the resolution of complaints that allege a violation of this Statement. Members of the public should direct their inquiries or complaints to the appropriate equal opportunity office.

Detailed information related to University Nondiscrimination Statements can be found at <https://policies.uic.edu/uic-policy-library/access-and-equity/nondiscrimination-policy-statement/>

Detailed information related to University Grievance Procedures can be found at <https://oae.uic.edu/resources/grievance-procedures/>

For additional information or assistance with the equal opportunity, affirmative action and harassment policies and procedures of the University of Illinois at Chicago please contact:

Office for Access & Equity  
809 South Marshfield Ave  
Chicago II, 60612  
312-996-8670  
oae@uic.edu

*Parent Handbook, revised December 2015, March 2017, August 2018, May 2022*