

The Jewish Community Center of Houston

JCC EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

The Future Starts Here!



Parent Handbook

*Childhood has ways of seeing - hearing - thinking
and feeling peculiar to itself.
Nothing can be more foolish than to substitute our ways for them.*

Jean Jacques Rousseau

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Our School

The JCC Early Childhood Centers offers a warm, creative environment in a Jewish atmosphere where each child's own unique style of living and learning is valued and nurtured. The foundation of personality, self-image and the motivation to learn are all firmly established in the first five years of a child's life. Our Schools give the tools and space and the support for the kinds of experiences needed.

Our Schools encourage each child to explore the world, to learn to be part of a group and work effectively with one's peers, and to relate to different adults who help him or her handle frustration and solve problems in constructive ways. Activity centers provide endless possibilities for creativity, exploration and discovery. Learning is self-rewarding, joyous and non-competitive.

Our Schools have a rich and meaningful program of Jewish content offered at the child's level. The child

will attain a positive identification with our culture and people, during beautiful Shabbat and fun-filled holiday celebrations through music, art, and storytelling.

Our Schools are a place where parents and families are an integral part of the education process. Through classroom participation, education, holiday celebrations, written communication, class meetings and individual conferences, parents and teachers work together through commitment, caring and cooperation. The family becomes a significant part of the larger and very special community – The Jewish Community Center.

The JCC Early Childhood Centers have a faculty of staff who are dedicated professionals with years of experience. Their proven skills and talents are appropriate and sensitive to the needs of the young child and the family.

Mission Statement

The Early Childhood Centers of The Jewish Community Center of Houston are institutions of learning influenced by the Jewish heritage and dedicated to principles of social justice, respect for diversity and valuing the uniqueness of each person. The primary focus is placed upon all needs of young children and their families and all those who touch their lives each day.

It is our belief that by meeting the need for "neighbor" within our community, we are responding to a basic need in all human beings, parent and child alike.

The JCC Early Childhood Centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Goals and Objectives

To Promote the Physical Development of Each Child

The Nest, Transition, Child's Day Out, Toddler, Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten programs have excellent play and work spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Besides excellent equipment to stimulate the use of large and small muscles, there is a physical education program directed by specialists using modern equipment.

The entire physical facility is specially designed to meet the needs of the young child.

To Promote the Intellectual Development of Each Child

Children need a routine to gain maximum learning potential and to function securely. They have periods of freedom and periods devoted to routine tasks. This change of pace is necessary for children to learn by "doing" as well as by seeing and by hearing. Children are stimulated to solve problems for themselves, such as discovering where a puzzle piece fits, or conceptualizing a new idea at story-time. All types of learning situations are presented to each child.

To Promote the Social Development of Each Child

Play is a child's work and a natural group learning tool. It is through play that the child learns to get along with others and to discover, understand and interpret the world of reality. At the JCC Early Childhood Centers, each child participates in physical, dramatic, manipulative, group and individual play. The teacher provides guidance and offers support to encourage the child to solve problems independently and in a group.

To Promote the Emotional Development of Each Child

Children need to develop and assert their own personalities in positive ways. Teachers help them understand and utilize socially acceptable channels. The primary goal of the JCC Early Childhood

Centers is to help each child develop, use self-discipline, and to provide adult support until the child gains self-control while maintaining self-esteem.

To Instill Within Each Child a Pride in and Knowledge of Jewish Heritage

Through daily routines, weekly Shabbat and holiday celebrations, children share common Jewish experiences and develop positive feelings about being Jewish. Stories, songs, cooking and games of Jewish content all help make Judaism a part of the living experience of each child. In addition, children learn the blessings and begin to understand the meaning of mitzvot and tzedakah.

To Safeguard the Health of Each Child

Every child is required to have a Health Card completed by the child's physician on file before admission to the JCC Early Childhood Centers. One of Houston's leading pediatricians is a consultant to the Educational Center. His advice and suggestions are followed in all matters of health.

To Provide the Best Teaching Staff Available

The teaching staff is vital to the operation of the JCC Early Childhood Centers. All staff are well-trained, experienced professionals with warm, outgoing personalities and they are sensitive to the needs of young children. To the teacher, each child is an individual with a distinct personality and learning style. Each child's capabilities, needs, safety and happiness are of the utmost importance to each and every staff member at the JCC Early Childhood Centers.

Preschool Adjustment

Preschool is a new situation for your child and your family. There are several things you and your child can do to make the adjustment easier for everyone:

1. The school day really begins the night before. A relaxed bedtime at a reasonable hour really helps your child function well in school.
2. Talk to your child about the coming school day reminding him/her of some of the special scheduled activities. You can review the JCC Early Childhood Center's weekly "What's Happening" sheets and share specific points with your child.
3. In the morning, young bodies need good nutrition, and a well-balanced diet always includes breakfast. There are numerous websites that offer healthy, easy and delicious breakfast ideas.

To make your child's adjustment to the new setting easier and more lasting, we urge you to be available for the first few days that your child comes to preschool. During this time, your child may not be ready to stay for the entire morning period. Your availability can be helpful in making your child's preschool experience enjoyable, for going to preschool is your child's first "big step" away from complete dependence on you. They may need your help to adjust. Your child may feel uneasy in a new place with new people, worried about threatened separation from mother, and confused by the number of other children and the noise. Some symptoms of tension in a new situation that will disappear as your child gets used to the children, teachers and the school are:

- being shy and clinging to you
- crying easily or catching a cold
- being aggressive and not sharing
- wetting often and not eating his/her lunch

Here are some ways to help ease this transition:

1. Try not to be disturbed during the first days if your child exhibits some of these symptoms.
2. You may "act out" or role play the experience of going to school with your child at home and discuss some things he/she may expect.
3. Read children's books that mirror the experience.
4. When your child arrives at school, let him/her stand and watch because some children learn while watching. Being attentive to your child's learning habits helps make the adjustment easier.
5. Be prepared to spend some time at the school for

as long as your child needs you, but try to remain in the background as much as possible.

6. Upon arrival, the teacher will help transition your child into an activity and your presence will be less vital. Your child will let you go when he is ready which makes for a more lasting adjustment.
7. Trust the teachers. They have extensive experience with separation anxiety between children and their parents. Please, listen to the teacher and leave if the teacher asks you to. Many times a child will be more likely to be involved with other children when parents are not present.
8. When your child is settled and secure in his surroundings, we encourage you to come and visit.

Separations

Remember, young children often do not see themselves as separate from their parents. We offer these suggestions to ease your child's adjustment:

- Talk positively to your child about the school and classroom. We have found a strong correlation between the parents' positive feelings and trust and the child's ability to separate. Ask questions about the teachers, classmates and daily activities to promote excitement and positive feelings towards a new environment.
- Be consistent with arrival/pick-up times and the route that you take to your child's classroom.
- Send familiar items with your child to school, if possible. Also, if you must purchase new items for school, do it with your child to encourage involvement in their experience and education.
- Give your child time and space to adjust to their new routine and surroundings. Be available to stay for a few minutes if your child is experiencing some separation anxiety the first few times. Be understanding if the teacher asks you to leave as it may make the separation more difficult for your child. Remember, the teachers have experience with this issue and will work with you and your child to relieve the separation anxiety.
- Refrain from saying "bye-bye" which can prompt crying. Instead, tell your child that you are leaving and will be back later. "See you later" is a phrase that helps the child understand the concept that the parent will return.

Procedures

Membership

Membership in the Jewish Community Center of Houston is a prerequisite for enrollment in the JCC Early Childhood Centers and must be maintained throughout the entire school year. Membership is open to all, regardless of race, religion, sex or national origin. Your support of The Jewish Community Center of Houston enables us to provide quality programs for you and your children.

Emergency Procedures

In case of predicted flooding or other inclement weather, the Bertha Alyce Early Childhood Center will be closed when HISD is closed and the Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Center will be closed when SBISD is closed. This information is announced on local radio, television channels and online at www.Jcchouston.org.

Routine fire drills are conducted and building evacuation plans are posted by the door in each classroom. Relatives, friends and emergency contacts listed on your child's registration information form need to be informed that they may be contacted in the event we are unable to reach you. Please make sure you notify the records office if any of the emergency contact information for your child changes.

Morning Arrival Procedures

All children arriving between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. must be accompanied to their classroom by the adult who brings them to school. Parents must park their car in the parking lot and walk the child to their classroom.

For the safety and well-being of your child, as well as all Jewish Community Center members and guests, please park your car in a marked parking space when arriving at the JCC Early Childhood Center. Please, do not block the driveway, park in handicapped spaces without a permit, park in the fire lane or exit illegally.

Please note that it is imperative that all adults enter the building through the front lobby with your child. Children are not permitted to roam the campus unattended. For security reasons, admittance to the preschool is not allowed through the playgrounds, side doors or back doors.

All parents must sign-in their child upon arrival in the classroom. Please, do not bring your child earlier than

his/her registered arrival time. Teachers are present based on registered enrollment and early arrivals affects the safety for all of the children.

Staffing

Classrooms are staffed appropriately and in accordance with the teacher to child ratio as required by the State of Texas and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). However, it may be necessary to have a substitute teacher in case of a teacher's absence due to illness or scheduled time-off. Furthermore, it may be necessary to change staffing assignments based on the needs of the program, a specific classroom or the children's needs.

Tuition/Payments

Enrollment is for a complete academic school year, based on nine months, unless special arrangements are made, in advance, with the Director. Tuition refunds will not be granted for holidays, vacations or brief illnesses.

The Jewish Community Center accepts payment by Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT), on a monthly basis. Payment in full for the entire school year can be made by check or credit card by August 1.

Withdrawal

Parents must notify the JCC Early Childhood Center's Director immediately to inform the school of intent to withdraw. This notification must be written and given at least 30 days prior to the withdrawal date in order to receive a refund. In addition, we will help you and your family with the transition. Our teachers are highly skilled in assisting a child and their classmates with the upcoming separation. This transition time is important for the child's development.

Refund Schedule

No refunds of tuition if withdrawing after March 1. If withdrawing during Trimester 1 or Trimester 2:

1. During the 1st month of a trimester – 2 months of tuition will be returned.
2. During the 2nd month of a trimester -
Before 15th of the month - 1 month of tuition will be returned.
After 15th of the month - no refund.
3. During the 3rd month of a trimester - no refund.

Classroom Ratios

Classroom ratios are strictly enforced and applied as follows:

The Nest

6 wks – 12 mos.
Ratio 1:4
Not to exceed 8

Transition

10 – 15 mos.
Ratio 1:4
Not to exceed 12

CDO

15-24 mos.
Ratio 1:4
Not to exceed 12

Toddlers

24-36 mos.
Ratio 1:6
Not to exceed 12

Threes

3 year olds
Ratio 1:9
Not to exceed 18

Pre-Kindergarten

4 year olds
Ratio 1:10
Not to exceed 20

Intake Interview*

All new students of the JCC Early Childhood Centers must schedule an Intake Interview with a consultant from Jewish Family Services. A questionnaire will be sent to you in advance and must be completed and brought to the interview at Jewish Family Services. We require the child and his/her mother and father to attend the interview. Information obtained at the time of the interview will be shared with the Director and proves to be helpful when determining classroom placement and teacher assignment to meet the individual needs of the child and the group.

Screening*

Screenings for preschool and pre-kindergarten programs are conducted in the fall by trained specialists. This evaluation screening is included in your registration fee. The information is compiled and distributed to you as soon as possible. When a follow-up is indicated, a meeting can be scheduled between the specialists, preschool staff and parents to review findings and discuss appropriate action. The screening results merely indicate that an area of development is on age-appropriate skill level, requires future monitoring and/or a more thorough evaluation. For the children who require professional guidance in reaching the age-appropriate skill level, we will provide space for specialists to meet with your child. Should professional guidance be required, the child's parents are financial responsible for the additional services and should contract directly with the specialist. Very often, the preschool staff can work directly with the specific child during ongoing activities (i.e. Physical Education teachers often reinforce a specific skill a child may need to strengthen a physical skill).

Forms

Several forms have been included in your child's registration packet. These forms are most important and are required by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, our licensing organization. If information changes during the year, such as parent work phone numbers or names of emergency contacts who are no longer able to pick-up the child, it is imperative that we be notified in writing as soon as possible. No child will be admitted to class unless all forms have been submitted by the first day of school.

The JCC Early Childhood Center staff has the responsibility to place children, to change class assignments, or to remove children from classes based on their professional judgment in order to achieve and maintain the best educational environment for all of the students. The final decision on placement rests with the Director.

Programs

The Nest: 6 weeks - 12 months

5 days:

7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. • 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Transition: 12 months - 23 months

5 days (Monday - Friday):

7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. • 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Child's Day Out (CDO): 15 months - 23 months

2, 3, or 5 days:

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. • 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Toddlers: 2 years - 2 years, 11 months

2-day (Tuesday, Thursday)

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon • 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

3-day (Monday, Wednesday, Friday):

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon • 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

5-day (Monday - Friday):

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon • 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Preschool Program: 3 years - 3 years, 11 months

3-day (Monday, Wednesday, Friday):

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon • 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

5-day (Monday - Friday):

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon • 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Lunch Bunch option available every day

Pre-Kindergarten: 4-years - 4 years, 11 months

5-day (Monday - Friday):

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon • 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Lunch Bunch option available every day

Vacation Programs

For children who attend the JCC Early Childhood Centers, special holiday programs are available for an additional fee. Full-day children will be accommodated first and when space permits, half-day children may enroll.

Activities & Special Events

Clothing

School is fun and when children play, their clothing should be appropriate play clothes. Children become more independent with clothes they can manage themselves (i.e., elastic pants, T-shirts, etc.). All clothing should be labeled, particularly sweaters and jackets. Parents and children get upset when their things are misplaced and lost. Please send a change of clothes and underwear in a clearly marked bag, in case of an accident. Although closed-toe shoes may be worn, tennis shoes are recommended. For safety reasons, thongs, flip-flops, sandals, jellies or cowboy boots of any kind should not be worn to school. It is also a good idea to send a smock or old shirt to school for messy projects to help keep clothes clean. In addition, please label bottles, sippy cups, blankets, bibs, lunch boxes, diapers and wipes as well.

Show and Tell

Each classroom may have a special day for Show and Tell. Children may bring appropriate items, clearly labeled, that they can carry themselves. We do not permit toy guns or pretend violent weapons at any time. Teachers will notify you of the individual class procedures. Children are welcome to bring books at any time.

Nap Time

In order to comply with the minimum standards as set by the Texas Department of Human Services, all Transition, CDO, Toddler and Preschool children enrolled in the Full-Day program are required to have comfortable cots for rest. We request that a nap mat, properly marked, be sent to school and left during the week. The school office has nap mats for sale at a reasonable price. Also, it is a good idea to send an item that helps your child relax at bedtime (special teddy bear, a blanket, etc.) which should also be clearly labeled. If your child is not accustomed to a noontime nap, your child will be encouraged to rest on his cot quietly during this time. In the interest of sanitation, please take the blankets home each Friday to be washed, and return them on Monday with your child.

Shabbat Celebration

Every weekly Shabbat is special and unique in each classroom. Children feel extra special when it is their turn to bring the challah and they are the class Ema or Aba. A list is compiled in the beginning of the year by the teacher indicating which child is the Ema or Aba for that week. A parent is requested to bring or purchase a kosher, sliced challah to school on their designated Friday to share with the class. Parents are invited to come to celebrate Shabbat at any time. All-school Shabbat is announced in advance, and parents, grandparents and special friends are invited to share in the festivities. The tzedakah box is an important part of our Shabbat celebration. Every Friday we will collect tzedakah money from your child. As the money in our tzedakah box grows, a special feeling will grow within your child, with the knowledge that they have helped others less fortunate. Please send a few pennies so that your child can participate in this important tradition.

Birthdays

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays at school. Each teacher welcomes you to bring kosher cupcakes, cookies or treats* on your child's birthday. For children with summer birthdays, check with your child's teacher to select the best date for the celebration. Options include the last week of school or celebrating the child's 1/2 birthday (when he/she turns 3 1/2, for example). Please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. Invitations to off-campus birthday parties should not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited.

**Please refer to the Foods section where a list of establishments that prepare kosher foods is provided.*

Meals & Such

Breakfast Policy

Children who arrive between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. may bring breakfast. Please label it with your child's full name and send proper utensils. Because the emphasis is on nutrition, please do not send candy, cookies, or chips for breakfast. If you are sending syrup or other condiments, please send them in a closed container because they can be messy. This is a kosher facility and we do not allow pork products of any kind, such as bacon, ham or sausage, on the premises.

Lunch

The lunch program has both learning and social components and is an integral part of the day. We will inform you if your child needs more or less food for lunch. All children staying past 12:00 Noon, as well as children in the Nest, Bridge, Transition, and CDO, will need a lunch and a drink. The lunch, drink and eating utensils should be placed in a lunch sack or lunchbox that is clearly labeled with your child's full name. You should also label all containers in the lunchbox. For safety reasons, please do not send glass containers of any kind. The emphasis is on nutrition and good eating habits to reinforce what we teach in the school curriculum. Therefore, please keep candy, cookies, chips, etc. to a minimum. Also, you should include a drink in your child's lunchbox which should be milk, yogurt drinks, vegetable juice or fruit juice.

An important purpose of our program is to expose our children to a variety of Jewish traditions. One of our traditions is the observance of Jewish Dietary Laws. As a Jewish institution, we are requesting that you be respectful of this tradition. We request your sensitivity to Kashruth and we do not allow pork or shellfish products of any kind. In addition, please do not mix milk and meat products such as cheeseburgers, turkey and cheese sandwiches, etc.. We have included a A list of suggested items to include in your child's lunch (see "Lunch Tips").

Snacks

A nutritional kosher morning and afternoon snack will be provided by the JCC Early Childhood Centers. If your child has a food allergy, please note this on the Health Card form which we will use to alert the teacher. You should also inform your child's teacher of

all food allergies or sensitivities. We also incorporate special cooking projects into the curriculum and they will appear on the weekly "What's Happening" sheets.

Foods

All foods served to the children at the JCC Early Childhood Centers must be kosher and designated as such. If you bring food for Shabbat, birthday celebrations or other special events, it must be kosher. Many grocery stores have a section designated specifically for kosher products. Store bought items must include a kosher symbol on the label (i.e. "K" or a "circle U").

Challah, cookies, cakes, etc. may be purchased and brought to school as long as the item is kosher. Some of the establishments supervised by The Houston Kashruth Association (HKA):

- Noshers at the JCC
- Three Brothers Bakery
- Randall's - Memorial at Dairy Ashford
- Randall's - West Bellfort at S. Post Oak
- Kroger - S. Post Oak at West Bellfort

More information is available at www.kosherhouston.org.

Lunch Tips

It can be difficult to decide what would make a nutritious, fun and easy-to-consume lunch that you can send to school. When packing your child's lunch, remember that we do not refrigerate or warm lunches. Therefore, we suggest you include cold packs and thermos bottles when necessary. Also include plastic utensils, if needed, for your child. From the experience of our teaches, these are some popular lunch items:

- Pizza
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Cooked vegetables
- Raisins (no candy)
- Pickles
- Low sugar cereal (dry)
- Sandwiches and finger foods
- Leftovers from dinner in small plastic containers
- Cut-up chicken, beef or fish (no pork or shellfish)
- Soup in a thermos and a small plastic bowl
- Cream cheese (with/without jelly) sandwiches
- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Small containers of applesauce
- Milk, juice, and water
- Cheese cubes or slices
- Macaroni and cheese
- Cold cuts (no ham)
- Yogurt (w/an ice pack)
- Pretzels
- Crackers

Policies & Guidelines

Medications

As required by the State of Texas, we require the parent or guardian to complete a medication form. The medication form and all medications (over-the-counter or prescription) should be placed in a Ziploc plastic bag with your child's name clearly written in marker on the outside of the bag. The original label for all prescription drugs must be on the medication's container with the physician's instructions and the physician's name. Please do not put any medication, including vitamins, in your child's lunchbox or backpacks. Medication will not be administered without a medication form completed and signed by the parent or guardian. All non-prescription medication (such as Desitin, powder, suntan lotion, etc.) must be labeled with the child's name and dated. Since medication must be administered from the original, labeled bottle, we recommend that you remove a portion of the prescription for your use at home in case you forget to take the bottle home each day. Please help us comply with these standards by sending medications in the appropriate container if your child requires medication. The pharmacist will give you an extra bottle and label if you ask so you can have one for home and one for school. Preschool staff is required to sign and date the completed medication form each time medication is dispensed to your child.

Guidelines for Returning to School After an Illness

1. The child can return to school if he/she is able to participate in all indoor and outdoor play without requiring special attention from the teachers. It is imperative that the teacher is able to meet the safety and needs of your child as well as the safety and needs of other students.
2. The child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications. Fever-free is defined as below 100 degrees under the arm, below 101 degrees rectally, and below 100 degrees orally.
3. The child's appetite, sleep pattern, color, energy level and general appearance is normal.
4. The child has been free of diarrhea (any bowel movement less solid than normal for your child) and has had no vomiting for at least 24 hours.
5. The child has been on antibiotics for 24 - 48 hours,

according to the doctor's instructions. A child returning before 24 hours and receiving antibiotics will need a note from the doctor indicating:

- a. A non-contagious situation
- b. Diagnosis
- c. Potential side-effects (for teacher observation)
- d. Date to re-enter program

Health and Illness

The health and safety of your child is the first consideration of each teacher. In the interest of safety for your child and the other children, please do not send your child if he or she is not feeling well or is unable to participate in regular activities. If your child becomes ill at school, he or she will be isolated from the rest of the group and you will be notified immediately. It is our policy for that once you are notified, you must pick up your sick child without delay. All parents in the classroom, or the school when necessary, are notified when there is a case of communicable disease at school. Please be prompt in letting the staff know that your child is ill and the nature of your child's illness. For example, we believe that you would like to know if one of your child's classmates has the chicken pox.

Prior to the start of each school year, you are required to submit a Health Card, completed by your child's doctor, to the JCC Early Childhood Centers. No child will be admitted to attend either JCC Early Childhood Center campus without a Health Card. It is also helpful for the teachers and staff to be aware of any anxieties, fears or change in your home routine such as a parent is away on business, loss of a loved one, out-of-town visitors, a divorce or separation or a new baby. If informed, the teachers and staff can provide extra TLC and sensitivity.

For the protection, safety and well-being of everyone, children with colds, runny noses and coughs are best kept at home for two to three days which is the most contagious time. It is the policy of the JCC Early Childhood Centers that your child cannot return to school until he/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours. A doctor's note may be required when a child has a frequent runny nose due to allergies or when a child returns to school after a contagious illness.

Reasons for exclusion from school activities should include:

- diarrhea (3 times in one day)
- temperature over 100.4
- strep throat
- conjunctivitis / pink eye
- other contagious diseases (i.e., head lice)
- vomiting
- chicken pox
- impetigo

The director has the final decision as to whether a child will be excluded from school activities.

Injuries

If your child is injured during the day while attending the JCC Early Childhood Centers, we will notify you at home or work so that you will be informed of the incident. An accident report will also be completed by your child's teacher staff. If your child has been injured at home, please notify your child's teacher.

Emergency Contacts

You are required to provide us with the names and contact information for at least two individuals who are in the vicinity and are available in the event that an emergency arises. If your child is sick or hurt while attending the JCC Early Childhood Centers, we will notify you immediately. If we are unable to make contact with you within a reasonable amount of time, we will contact those persons listed as emergency contacts so that your child can be picked up. It is imperative that you keep emergency names and phone numbers up-to-date. In addition, please make sure that your emergency contacts are aware of this responsibility.

Positive Guidance Policy

JCC Early Childhood Center teachers and staff use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, anticipation or elimination of potential problems, positive reinforcement, and encouragement rather than competition, comparison or criticism. We abstain from corporal punishment and other humiliating or frightening discipline techniques. Consistent, clear rules are explained to children in an age-appropriate manner. Some examples of positive guidance techniques used are modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity and setting clear limits.

Biting Policy

We deal with each situation on an individual basis.

Late Fees

Late fees are assessed at the rate of \$1 per minute and payable in cash to the staff member who remains with your child. It's important to remember that children expect to be picked up on time. Parental lateness is upsetting to children.

Parent-Teacher Conference*

The JCC Early Childhood Centers will schedule a minimum of two conferences with parents during the course of the school year to discuss your child's progress. Parents will also be informed of any special problems or occurrences at school at this time. Parent-teacher conferences are not arranged for children in the Nest, the Bridge, Transition or CDO because "conferences" are on-going. The staff welcomes your comments so please feel free to contact the Director or your child's teacher at any time. Because the teacher's first concern is to your child and class, it is not always possible to come to the phone or respond to your call immediately. The teacher or Director will return your call as promptly as possible

Communication

Communication between the home and school provides a better understanding of each child's needs, and development, and ensures success for every child.

We will keep our lines of communication open by:

1. Inviting you and your child to an Open House before school begins to meet the teachers and staff and to see the classroom.
2. Scheduling two Parent-Teacher Conferences during the school year to discuss your child's progress.*
3. Calling to inform you of any unusual behaviors or specific incidents concerning your child.
4. Sending newsletters home and other notices that keep you abreast of what is happening at school.
5. Offering parents' programs that give insight to our programming and your children's development.

We hope you will keep your lines of communication open with us by:

1. Notifying us of any event or changes at home that might affect your child at school.

2. Notifying us as soon as your child is afflicted with a communicable disease or illness.
3. Becoming actively involved in our Parent-Volunteer Program.
4. Advising us of any special event in Houston or resource people for preschool children.

*Not applicable to the Nest, the Bridge, Transition and/or CDO.

What to Expect

Parent Participation

In the best interests of the children that attend the JCC Early Childhood Centers, we encourage parents to participate in their child's education. You can participate in a number of ways, such as:

1. Attending meetings, Open House, visiting day, school events, etc., so that we can share knowledge and goals about early childhood, individual children, classes and the curriculum.
2. Participating in Parent-Teacher Conferences. These meetings provide opportunities to understand the uniqueness of your child and to get an in-depth view of your child as a part of a group and his or her accomplishments. It is an essential experience which helps everyone participate in and contribute to your child's education.
3. Sharing the holidays and Shabbat celebrations. One of the joys of our tradition is the opportunity to cultivate experiences and learning by celebrating with school friends and families. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend holiday and Shabbat celebrations at any time.
4. Supporting school and JCC activities. This is a opportunity for you and your family to meet your child's friends, make new friends and to actively participate in your child's school community.
5. Volunteering to help at the JCC Early Childhood Centers and at the JCC. There are many events, special projects, cooking, holiday parties, fundraising projects, etc. that need your help and involvement to be successful. Each time your child sees their parent at school, their world is brought together and they feel special.
6. Attending classes and special events at the JCC.
7. Sharing your talents, hobbies or interests.
8. Becoming involved in one or more of the following:
 - A. Room Parent – Coordinate parent volunteers

for your child's class; a parent liaison to the teacher. Help further communication between the Early Childhood Development Committee and parents in your child's class.

- B. Telephone Parent – To contact parents in your child's class by telephone (recruiting volunteers, notifying parents of special events, reminding parents of special days, etc.).
- C. Special Events Volunteer – To assist your child's teacher in special preparations for events such as (a Chanukah party, the Passover Seder, end-of-year parties, etc.) and to volunteer for special projects and fundraising events.
- D. Teacher Helper – To assist in the classroom (not necessarily your own child's classroom) when special help is needed or teacher is absent.

Parent Observation

Parents are always welcome to visit their child in the classroom and observe. We also encourage parents to observe other classes to become familiar with the different programs and activities. Since we have frequent visitors, we request that you make arrangements in advance so that we can accommodate visitors appropriately.

"What's Happening Sheets"

Each Friday your child will bring home a "What's Happening Sheet" highlighting the activities for the next week. The sheet tells you and your child about the upcoming programs, activities and supplies needed, if any, to bring from home. Please check in your child's cubby for the "What's Happening Sheet" as well as letters, announcements and flyers. If you do not receive a "What's Happening Sheet" please call the office.

You Should Know

Early Childhood Development Committee

The Early Childhood Committee (“ECC”) and all subcommittees are composed of lay people who may or may not have a child attending the JCC Early Childhood Centers. The Early Childhood Development Committee (“ECDC”) strives to enhance the educational experiences of the children by providing a vital link between the community and the administration. The ECDC is held accountable to the JCC Board of Directors, offers input to the Preschool Director, conducts fundraising activities for school needs, organizes volunteers for vari-

ous functions, develops new programs and monitors existing programs.

Consultants

In addition to the teaching staff, several consultants provide expertise and consultation to the administrative staff. A social worker from Jewish Family Services is appointed to the JCC Early Childhood Centers. She meets weekly at the JCC Early Childhood Centers to observe children and classes. She assists teachers in developing various plans to better meet the needs of a specific child or group.

Enrichment Programs

Physical Education

Under the direction of specialists trained in the physical development needs of young children, the Physical Education Program is an integral part of the curriculum. Through the use of stimulating exercises and age-appropriate gym equipment, the program aims to develop body awareness and gross and small motor coordination. CDO, Transition, Toddlers, Preschoolers and Pre-Kindergarten children all participate in physical education and creative movement.

Music

Music is integrated into the daily routine in rhythmic fun, dance and song. A music specialist joins each class weekly to introduce movement and musical

instruments. Children look forward to classroom sing-alongs and Shabbat celebrations. Music programs are planned throughout the year for the children to share with family and friends.

Holiday Celebrations

Through the celebration of Shabbat and Jewish holidays, our children begin to learn the beauty, joy and dignity of their Jewish heritage. A joyous approach to holiday appreciation through music, arts and crafts and cooking fosters positive identification with our Jewish heritage. Weekly Shabbat preparation and programs add to our historic traditions.

The Jewish Holidays

The JCC is a place for the Jewish community to gather and celebrate Jewish festivals and holidays. An elementary introduction to the history of the holidays and their traditional rituals will be explored in the JCC Early Childhood Centers. Concern for Jewish culture will be an ongoing part of our education program.

Shabbat

Although the Sabbath lasts from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, we celebrate the Sabbath at school every Friday. All classes join together for a Shabbat sing-along. The teacher lights the candles and the children recite the traditional blessings to welcome Shabbat, over the wine and the challah.

*“Baruch Atah Adonoi, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olom,
Asher Kid’shonu B’mitsvo-tov V’tzivonu
L’hadlik Ner Shel Shabbat.”*

“Blessed Art Thou, O Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights.”

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech
Ha-Olam ha-motzi lechem mim ha-aretz.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech
Ha-Olam boray p’ri ha-gafen.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the vine.

Rosh Hashana

The Jewish year begins with Rosh Hashana, which usually falls in September, on the first day of Tishri in the Jewish calendar. The children enjoy learning and celebrating the New Year incorporating traditions such as raisin challah, apples and honey which are symbolic of hope for a sweet year.

Yom Kippur

This is the most solemn holiday of the year — the day of Atonement. At this time, we discuss the nice things we can do for others during the New Year and how it’s good to be good, but better to be better.

Sukkot

The “Feast of Tabernacles” recalls the journey of the Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land when they lived in tents and booths, or Sukkoth. The harvest season is symbolized by the Lulav (palm branch) and Etrog (citron). The last day of the eight-day holiday, Simchat Torah, “Rejoicing in the Torah,” emphasizes the importance of learning in Jewish life. During this week at school, we decorate our Sukkah with fruit and greenery and enjoy our snacks outdoors.

Shemini Atzeret

This holiday occurs on the eighth day of Sukkot and is considered a holiday in itself. It is a solemn day with special prayers for rain (geshem). This is the beginning of the season which determines the fertility of the land in the year to come.

Simchat Torah

This holiday is associated with Sukkot, but is actually an independent holiday, falling on the day after Shemini Atzeret. Throughout the year, passages of the Torah are read aloud at Synagogue. On Simchat Torah, the reading is complete as the last two chapters of Deuteronomy are read. Then we immediately begin to read the Torah again starting with Genesis. This symbolizes the fact that the study of the Torah has no beginning and no end. Children are given the honor of being called to read the Torah alongside the adults. Children also join adults in carrying Israeli flags and specially decorated flags in a series of seven processions, or Hakfat, around the synagogue. The seven processions are in honor of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David.

Chanukah

“The Festival of Lights” celebrates the Maccabean victory when brave Judah Maccabee and his small band of followers saved the Jewish nation from the Syrians. For eight days each year, the Chanukah Menorah, or eight-branched candelabrum, is lighted to recall their rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and to give thanks for the great miracle of the survival of the Jewish people.

Tu B'shvat (Israeli Arbor Day)

On Tu B'Shevat is the day that marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees". This is the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle. We celebrate Tu B'Shevat by eating fruit and planting new trees. We also remember that trees are a symbol of the Jewish people.

Yom HaShoah

"Holocaust (and Heroism) Remembrance Day" is held in the early spring. Yom HaShoah is a day set aside for remembering the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. In Israel, it is a national memorial day.

Yom Haatzmaut (Israel Independence Day)

This day commemorates the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948. We celebrate the declaration of the State of Israel by David Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948.

Purim

Purim is the jolliest of all holidays, commemorating how Queen Esther and her uncle, Mordecai, saved the Jews of Persia from a plot by the Prime Minister, Haman, to destroy them. This day we eat Hamantashen, which the children enjoy making at school. The children are encouraged to come to school in costume for this joyous holiday and to participate in school-wide Purim celebrations.

Passover (Pesach)

Passover commemorates the Exodus and freedom of the Israelites as the Jews were freed from being slaves of Pharaoh in ancient Egypt. The Seder is a special family occasion and the children will also enjoy their classroom Seders with parent participation. Prayers and songs from the Haggadah are read and certain foods, especially matzah, are eaten.

Lag Ba'Omer

Lag Ba'Omer is on the 33rd day of the counting of the Omer. The Omer count begins on the second

day of Passover until the holiday of Shavuot. To celebrate Lag Ba'Omer, families go on picnics and outings to the fields and play. In Israel, Jews gather to celebrate Yahrzeit, or the anniversary of the death, of Tanna, the great scholar who lived in the immediate aftermath of the Second Temple. With torches, song and feasting, the Yahrzeit is celebrated.

Shavuot

Shavuot, a thanksgiving and harvest feast, also commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Known as the "Feast of Weeks," Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks after Passover. It is a customary to decorate the house with plants, fruit and flowers which recalls the green mountain of Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Celebrating Holidays

Please keep in mind that we will celebrate all Jewish and national holidays. We do not celebrate the following holidays: Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter. Please refrain from celebrations, gift-giving or other acknowledgements of these days. You will receive more detailed information through various holiday newsletters during the year. Please contact the office, Director or your teacher if you have any questions about this policy.

Jewish Holiday Childcare Package

As approved by the Board of Directors, the JCC Early Childhood Centers will provide childcare on certain Jewish Festival Holidays. The service is provided for families who are pre-registered and have pre-paid for these days at the time of registration. Special holiday programming will be implemented to uphold the integrity of the holiday. Childcare will be available on the following weekdays:

Sukkot (First two days)

Shemini Atzeret

Simchat Torah

Passover (First two and last two days)

Shavuot (First Two Days)

Blessings Over Foods

Breads

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech
Ha-Olam ha-motzi lechem mim ha-aretz.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

Crackers, Cake, Cookies, Snacks, etc.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech
Ha-Olam boray minay mizonot.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
creator of various kinds of foods.

Foods of the Tree

Apples, Pears, Oranges, Etc.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech
Ha-Olam boray p'ri ha-aytz.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
creator of fruit of the tree.

Foods from the Ground Potatoes, Carrots, etc.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech
Ha-Olam boray p'ri ha-adama.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
creator of fruit of the earth.

Grapes, Wine & Grape Juice

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech
Ha-Olam boray p'ri ha-gafen.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who creates fruit of the vine.

Meat, Eggs, Poultry, Dairy and Fish

*Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech
Ha-Olam sheh hakol ni-he-yeh bidvaroh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
by whose word all things come into being.

Hebrew Vocabulary

Counting: 1 to 10

1 - Achát	6 - Shesh
2 - Shtáyim	7 - Shéva
3 - Shalosh	8 - Shmoneh
4 - Arba	9 - Téshe
5 - Chamesh	10 - Éser

Greetings

Bóker Tov	- Good morning
Érev Tov	- Good evening
Láyla Tov	- Good night
Toda raba	- Thank you
Shalom	- Hello; good-bye; peace

Family Members

yélad	- boy
yalda	- girl
Éma	- Mother
Ába	- Father
sába	- grandfather
sávta	- grandmother
ach	- brother
achot	- sister
mishpacha	- family

Colors

Lavan	- white
Shachor	- black
Yarok	- green
Tzahov	- yellow
Varod	- pink
Choom	- brown
Katom	- orange
Segol	- purple
Kachol	- blue

The Future Starts Here!

The Jewish Community Center of Houston is home to innovative programs that meet the challenging needs of our growing community.

For 71 years, the JCC has provided social, recreational and education programs for people of all ages.

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