



Employee Handbook

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I. WELCOME

Welcome to Middle Earth Child Development Center! We are pleased to have you join us and hope that you will enjoy working at our Center. We want you to read this handbook carefully and refer to it whenever necessary. It explains Middle Earth's current policies, benefits, and procedures. This handbook is a general guide to our policies. The Center, from time to time, reviews its policies, procedures, and benefits and will make revisions accordingly. Thus, all policy, procedures, and benefits outlined in this handbook may be amended.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to speak with one of the Directors, either the Executive Director or the Director of Programs.

A. MISSION STATEMENT

The most important goal of MECDC is to provide high quality-childcare. By providing a positive atmosphere for children, we believe they will in turn develop positive self concepts. Daily lesson plans incorporate the skills essential to a healthy self image: active learning, cognitive development, creativity, coping, language skills, social interaction, respect for self and others, physical development and appreciation for the arts.

B. VISION

Children have a right to grow up with a positive self-image, a love of learning, and a respect for all.

Parents have the right to earn a living or further their education, secure in the knowledge that quality child development services are available.

C. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE & PHILOSOPHY

Children need a happy, comfortable place to spend their time away from home. The children who attend a day care center look to the staff for the same affection, love, support, guidance, and discipline that they receive at home. The staff becomes substitute family members to the children during the day, but parents remain the most important people in a young child's life. Staff members strive to supplement the family and encourage family involvement in the program, so the child can feel a close bond between home and center. The physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of the children are considered the first priority of the program. The children's needs always come first and are considered before the needs or conveniences of the parents or the staff.

Each child is unique, and all children are respected for their differences. The same performance or behavior is not expected from any two children. All children are encouraged to develop their own personality; to hold their own thoughts, opinions, and ambitions; and to express these ideas comfortably and freely. The integrity of the individual child is always respected; this means expecting and accepting differences. If we want children to maintain their uniqueness

and their differences, then we must provide an environment that will assist them to this end. Every child, regardless of sex, race, or religion, will have the same advantages and opportunities as every other child. If children are to maintain pride in who and what they are and what they want to become, then they must never be faced with stereotyped sex, race, or religious roles or attitudes that will inhibit their choices.

Children have the right to develop to their maximum social, emotional, and intellectual abilities. It is the adult's responsibility to provide opportunities for this development to occur. Each child is allowed to progress at his or her own pace according to his or her own needs. All children have a right to grow with good self-image—a good feeling of personal worth. It is the responsibility of the staff and the parents to assist children to think well of themselves and to provide experiences that foster feelings of confidence, success, value, and pride. Children should never have to prove themselves to gain acceptance or attention from adults. All adults working with children have the responsibility to create an atmosphere of acceptance and cooperation among the children rather than a climate of competition.

All children need opportunities to interact socially with their peers and are guided in respecting the rights and feelings of others. An atmosphere of gentleness, respect, and humanitarianism is a prerequisite for children to learn to care and be concerned for others and to settle differences in a peaceful way. Children are allowed to disagree with other children and adults, but they are not allowed to hurt one another or to be destructive. Likewise, all children need opportunities to be alone and are to be guided in becoming independent, self-sufficient individuals. To foster independence, children are given as much responsibility for their own lives as they can comfortably handle. The amount and kind of responsibility given to any particular child is determined by his or her ability to assume the responsibility. One of the major areas of responsibility that the children are encouraged to develop is an attitude of construction and cooperation where their environment is concerned. An appreciation for life, nature, and man's creative efforts is encouraged.

Independence is encouraged by giving children freedom to make choices and decisions for their activities during the day. Children have a propensity to make sense out of the world. They actively seek answers to some degree of resolution of the problems they perceive. When given an interesting, challenging environment, children will make wise choices for their learning activities and will learn those things they are interested in and capable of learning. This is not to say that children in need of assistance in a particular area of development shall not receive encouragement to participate in activities that will strengthen their deficiencies.

It is the responsibility of the staff to thoughtfully and consciously plan activities and experiences that meet the developmental needs of all the children. A program with many planned options available has more potential for children than a program that forces all children to do the same thing at the same time or a program that allows children to encounter activities and experiences randomly or fortuitously. Children are not forced to participate in activities, nor are they punished for not participating. It is recognized that in the best of situations with the most thoughtfully planned program, all children are not going to behave in an acceptable manner all of the time. However, physical punishment of children for misbehavior is unacceptable. Children are never physically, verbally, or mentally abused, and food is never withheld as a punishment nor offered as a reward. Children need to be assisted in understanding why their behavior is not acceptable, and their actions should be redirected in

a positive way. We are critical of a child's behavior, but we are never critical of the child. Children are loved and accepted at all times regardless of their behavior.

This program can be offered simultaneously with good physical care of children that includes safe and sanitary facilities, a nutritious food program, and careful supervision. With sufficient parental involvement and support, high-quality childcare can be offered at reasonable cost to families.

D. GOALS FOR THE CHILDREN OF MIDDLE EARTH

By acknowledging and observing the philosophies of Middle Earth, we should help each child who attends our Center achieve the following goals:

- Develop a positive self-image
- Become an active learner, developing intellectually
- Develop creativity and imagination
- Cultivate an ability to cope with home situations and function in social group interactions
- Become physically active and improve fitness levels
- Develop a knowledge and appreciation of the arts
- Develop respect for self and others
- Show an interest in the protection of the environment

II. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

A. STAFF ORIENTATION

It is important that you realize the value of your position. **You must love children!** Your kindness, caring, and considerate manner as a role model should be reflected throughout all areas of your employment. In the classroom, your personality, attitude, and behavior create the atmosphere and environment the children will reflect. You must be friendly to both the child and the parent. **REMEMBER TO SMILE AT BOTH!** Never become so busy with routine and group activities that you forget the individual child. It is a privilege to be a childcare giver. You are forming and molding life-long attitudes in the children in your care.

You will be given a tour of the facility and a job description that explains your duties and responsibilities. You will also read the Parent Handbook, a copy of which is in every classroom. There will be a performance evaluation at the conclusion of a two week probationary period, and at the conclusion of a six month probationary period. After these probationary periods, performance evaluations are done annually. You may expect to have a 'mentor' who will work with you until you are familiar with the duties. During this period you will also be observed while performing your duties by a Director and/or Lead teacher. You then will be given written or oral feedback outlining your strengths as well as areas that need improvement. At the conclusion of your orientation you will be asked for feedback on how our orientation process prepared you for your current position.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKING AT MIDDLE EARTH

A person hired for a position by a licensed child care center is required by Child Care Licensing to have an OSBI criminal background check. The cost of this will be reimbursed to you after three months of continuous employment.

We will need two forms of identification for your I-9 form and a copy of your high school diploma, college degree, transcripts, or special certificates appropriate to child care.

You will be required to sign up for ELCCT training offered online within the first 90 days of your employment. This course covers all areas of childcare including observation and assessment. The cost of acquiring this certification will be reimbursed by Middle Earth.

Each year after the initial courses, you will be required to have a minimum of 20 hours of in-service training to keep up your certification.

You are required to take First Aid and Infant/Child CPR and provide documentation showing the current status of certification.

You may be asked to take part in one of the many programs available to attain a Child Development Associates (CDA) or its equivalency.

Another certification you may be asked to obtain is a Food Handler's Permit. People who hold this certification are licensed to be food handlers. The cost of acquiring this certification will be reimbursed by Middle Earth.

Commented [1]: Is everything in this section still accurate?

Commented [2]: Does this have to be done in a matter of a time period? Perhaps set in motion before the 1st day of employment? We had a person who was working here that did NOT have a background check, and I think that was one of the hits from DHS. How do we prevent that from happening again?

Upon employment, you will receive a Contract of Confidentiality and Professional Conduct, Serving and Measuring of Food contract, as well as an Employee Basics Form. Once you read and sign these, they will remain in your file and you may refer to them as needed.

C. NEPOTISM

No person shall be hired if that employment would represent a conflict of interest of which would be considered nepotistic. No person shall hold a job while he/she or a member of his/her family serves on a Board or committee if that Board or committee has authority to order personnel actions affecting his/her job. No person shall hold a job over which a member of his/her immediate family exercises supervisory authority.

D. PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS IN CHILDCARE

General requirements for all positions are as follows:

- Hear the conversational voice with or without a hearing aid
- See and read newsprint with or without corrective lenses
- Speak and be understood under normal circumstances
- Lift and carry children and other items weighing up to 50 pounds
- Use arms, hands, legs, and feet with or without corrective devices to accomplish the job including evacuation of the building during emergencies
- Respond immediately to any emergency situation
- Perform light physical duties such as straightening up rooms, toys, changing diapers, etc.

Depending upon your position, you may be required to have additional abilities such as:

- Perform CPR in an emergency situation
- Prepare properly cooked meals and assist with cooking projects

E. PROFESSIONALISM

An employee's professionalism refers to his/her ability to interact with co-workers, children, and parents, in a calm, clear, considerate, and respectful way. Staff are encouraged to remember that the way in which they conduct themselves directly reflects on him or her as an individual as well as on the Center as a whole. Parents depend on the staff at Middle Earth to provide a loving, comfortable, and supportive environment for their children during the day. Their confidence in our ability to provide this environment is greatly influenced by what they observe when they are at the Center and the types of interactions they have with individual staff members. The following guidelines are meant to help staff present themselves and Middle Earth in a positive manner.

When a staff member complains about a fellow employee to other staff, or parents, or in front of the children, this serves only to damage the morale at the center. Interpersonal disputes between employees must be handled by the individuals involved in a private manner.

Discussions regarding children at Middle Earth are to be kept strictly confidential. Staff must not discuss any child at Middle Earth with any parent other than the child's parent. Violation of this rule is grounds for a reprimand and may result in dismissal of the staff member. Some

parents may prefer for a teacher to discuss their child's behavior in a setting away from the child. Staff should be sensitive and responsive to this need.

All employees are expected to follow grievance procedures as outlined in the Grievance section of this manual. The airing of disputes or conflicts to people other than a supervisor, the Executive Director, or a Board member is discouraged as it is generally nonproductive and results in misunderstanding and a lack of confidence in our ability to deliver quality childcare.

F. YOUR APPEARANCE & DRESS CODE

While working at Middle Earth you are expected to dress in a comfortable and professional manner. You must always be neat and clean. Hair should be groomed and nails must be clean. When wearing shorts please be sure they are not too short and that tops are not too revealing (For example, female teachers may wear tank tops, but not open back halter tops or spaghetti straps). Shirts with logos or writing should be in keeping with the environment of caring and respect that Middle Earth promotes at all times. Please refrain from wearing large earrings since these can be a safety hazard when working with young children. It is our preference that tattoos and body piercing not be visible, and should be covered in a natural way. Wear comfortable shoes. High-heeled shoes, thong-type and open-back sandals should not be worn and can be work hazards. In addition to your appearance and dress, it is important that you refrain from using fragrances or smelling of second-hand smoke. Remember that you are working with young children and you do make an impact in the way you physically present yourself to the children and their families.

G. SMOKING

Middle Earth is considered a smoke-free environment. Smoking is not permitted in the presence of children, either on-site or during off-site field trips. Smoking is not allowed on ME CDC property at any time.

H. PERSONAL CALLS

Telephones are for business operation and communication with parents. Personal calls should be made during lunch break or before and after shifts. You should not receive or make telephone calls on the job, except for emergency situations. Personal cell phones should be turned off before entering the building and should remain away and out of sight during your shift.

If you are expecting an important call, let the front desk know or in an emergency, have them call Middle Earth (405)-561-7579 and we will come and get you. Otherwise, messages will be taken for you on all other calls and placed in your mailbox.

I. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The following principles apply to professional use of social media on behalf of Middle Earth Child Development Center as well as personal use of social media when referencing Middle Earth Child Development Center.

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- You need to know and adhere to Middle Earth’s Employee Basics Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook, and other center policies when using social media in reference to Middle Earth.
- You should be aware of the effect your actions may have on your image, as well as Middle Earth’s image. The information that you post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- You should be aware that content and information made available by you through social media may be observed by center families, staff, and others. You should use your best judgment in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to Middle Earth, its employees, or families.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- You are not to publish, post, or release any information that is considered confidential or not public. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, you should check with the administration of Middle Earth.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. You should refer these inquiries to authorized Middle Earth spokespersons.
- If you find you encounter a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, you should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of a supervisor.
- You should get appropriate permission before you refer to or post images of current or former employees, clients, vendors or suppliers. Additionally, you should get appropriate permission to use a third party’s copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.
- Social media use shouldn’t interfere with your responsibilities at Middle Earth. Middle Earth’s computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. When using Middle Earth’s computer systems, use of social media for business purposes is allowed, but personal use of social media networks or personal blogging of online content is discouraged and could result in disciplinary action or termination.
- If you publish content after-hours that involves work or subjects associated with Middle Earth, a disclaimer should be used, such as this: “The postings on this site are my own and may not represent Middle Earth Child Development Center’s positions, strategies, or opinions.”
- It is highly recommended that you keep Middle Earth related social media accounts separate from personal accounts, if practical.

Commented [4]: Confirm with Susan that permission to post photos with children is to be done with explicit parent permission only or make it clear that no photos of children should be posted on personal pages

Commented [5]: I remember seeing/ signing paperwork that explicitly asks if Middle Earth has permission to use my child’s image. However, that is only for Middle Earth- there is nothing about my child’s photo on an employee’s personal page.

J. VISITORS

Employees are discouraged from having visitors at the Center during their work shifts as this distracts them from close supervision of the children.

K. STAFF MEETINGS

Attendance at all school staff meetings and in-services is expected of all staff. Adequate notice will be given and staff will receive their regular hourly wage for attending mandatory meetings. Monthly meetings for lead and/or co-teachers are held during regular business hours.

L. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF

The Board of Directors is solely responsible for recruitment and selection of the Executive Director of the Center. At its discretion, the Board may involve staff representatives in the final selection of a new Executive Director. The Board reserves the right to review candidates for Assistant Director.

The Executive Director is responsible for recruitment and selection of all other staff. Personnel suitability will be based on integrity, intellectual competence, and physical condition necessary to perform the job. The applicant should possess adequate educational and experiential backgrounds with references to substantiate this. At his/her discretion, the Executive Director may involve other staff in the selection of a new employee.

M. CLASSIFICATION OF EMPLOYEES

Employee status is the major determinant of employment benefit eligibility. Questions concerning your employee status should be directed to the Center's Director of Program or Executive Director.

1. Trial Period

All employees of Middle Earth are hired on a trial basis. You must spend time in the classroom working with children in order that a Director can observe and evaluate your performance. This time period will be two weeks in duration and runs concurrently with your probationary period. If at the end of this initial period, you are performing satisfactorily, you continue until the conclusion of the six month probationary period.

2. Probationary Period

The probationary period is an opportunity for you to receive further orientation and training for your position. It also provides a Director and other direct supervisors (such as lead teachers) to observe and evaluate your performance. Feedback will be given as to your strengths and weaknesses in job performance during this time. If you satisfactorily perform your job, you will be removed from the probationary period. The duration of this period is six months.

3. Permanent Employees

- i. Full time employees are those hired to work 40 hours per week and have completed their six month probationary period.
- ii. Part time employees are those hired to work no more than 25 hours per week and have completed their six month probationary period.

There are several different staff positions at Middle Earth. You will be given a copy of your position description and job expectations by the Executive Director upon being hired.

N. ATTENDANCE, WORK SCHEDULES, AND TIME CARDS

The continuity of your attendance at work is more important than you could ever know. You should be at work prepared to receive children, not just arriving, at your starting time. If tardiness becomes excessive, your work schedule may be changed, and will be reason for reprimand. The timecard is the official record of attendance on the job and the basis for your

Commented [6]: Susan review for accuracy, particularly on the full-time/part-time hours required

paycheck. An attendance record is kept at the front desk.

All full-time positions are based on a 40-hour per week unless designated by the Executive Director. The Executive Director will establish your actual work schedule, including lunch breaks, according to the requirements of your job. All work time over your regular schedule must be approved by the Executive Director.

We ask that you give at least 2 weeks written notice for requesting any time off. Keep in mind that we cannot grant a request off for more than two full time employees in one day. You should submit your request as early as possible so that we can work to accommodate you. You will be notified if we are able to accommodate the request or if some adjustment will need to be made in the interest of both what is best for Middle Earth, as well as an effort to provide what you have requested.

We understand that unexpected circumstances, such as illness, will arise from time to time. We ask that you give us as much notice as possible when calling in sick, so that we may make the necessary arrangements to prepare other employees. If your scheduled shift is before noon, you should call the center at 7 a.m. If your scheduled shift is in the afternoon, you should call the center by 10 a.m. The employee, not another family member, **must call in**. The act of calling does not in itself constitute an excuse for absence.

O. PAY PERIODS AND WAGES

1. Payroll

Pay days are the 1st and 15th of every month. If a pay day should fall on a holiday or weekend, the employee will be paid the first business day following the holiday or weekend.

2. Salaries

The Executive Director's salary is determined by the Board of Directors. All other wages are determined by the Executive Director within a wage scale for the position based on experience, the level of responsibility, and comparison with salary levels for similar positions at other centers. Wage ranges must fit within the budget that has been approved by the Board of Directors.

3. Deductions

Middle Earth is required by law to withhold certain deductions from gross salary and all applicable guidelines. These include Federal and State withholding taxes and Social Security.

4. Raises

If resources are available, raises will be based on merit. Quarterly coaching sessions and yearly evaluations by the Executive Director will determine if a raise is or is not merited. The level and even the availability of these raises is not guaranteed and can only be determined after review of the Center's yearly budget.

5. Time Card

Amendments to a time card must be approved and initialed by the Executive Director. Clock in and out as close to your scheduled time as possible. Any overtime must be pre-approved by the Executive Director. Clocking in and out for another employee is strictly prohibited.

by federal law.

P. EVALUATIONS AND APPRAISALS

The Director makes periodic evaluation of personnel. In making this evaluation, the following criteria and guidelines are used:

1. Classroom management
2. Teaching skills
3. Relationship with parents
4. Rapport with children, parents, and other staff members
5. Attendance
6. In-service training
7. Career development
8. Staff meetings
9. Job descriptions

This information is kept in the employee's file and is available to the staff members and authorized persons only. Full-time staff completes a self-evaluation annually. Evaluation information will be used for promotions, movement for one position to another within the Center, and for pay raises. It will also be used for future job references. In addition, in accordance with the Oklahoma Reaching for the Stars Program, all full-time teachers must have a written professional development plan on file. The professional development plan is reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Q. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

1. Voluntary Termination of Employment

Any employee may terminate their employment voluntarily at any time. However, employees are expected to give at least two weeks written notice in order to allow adequate time to find a replacement for their position. Please do not discuss your resignation with other employees prior to notifying the Executive Director or Director of Program. This will help insure a smooth transition for the classroom.

2. Dismissal of an Employee

- i. Immediate termination may be enacted when an employee fails to adhere to the philosophy of Middle Earth or when an employee acts in a manner that is directly harmful to a child or Middle Earth operations.
- ii. Except in circumstances described above, no employee may be terminated without exception of the following process:
 - a. **Termination During the Probationary Period**—The Executive Director and/or the Director of Program will apprise the employee of their weaknesses as they pertain to the physical and educational program responsibilities of the employee.

The Executive Director and/or the Director of Program will summarize, in written form, the specific problems the employee needs to remedy. At the time the employee receives the written statements, the Executive Director and/or Director of Program and employee will discuss the problems. The Executive

Director and/or Director of Program will offer all the assistance he/she can for the purpose of helping the employee resolve the problem. This assistance may take the form of personal help from the Executive Director, or the Director of Program, or another staff member.

Within two weeks after the written notification to the employee, the Executive Director and/or the Director of Program and the employee will discuss the employee's progress; the employee will be notified of this in writing. No further action is necessary at this time. However, the Executive Director and/or the Director of Program will continue to observe the employee to make sure the problems do not recur. If the Executive Director and/or the Director of Program are not satisfied with the employee's progress, he/she/they may dismiss the employee. ~~Two weeks written notice is to be given to the employee.~~ **Depending on the circumstances of termination, a severance package worth up to two weeks salary may be offered to the terminated employee.** Such notice may be appealed to the Board of Directors.

Commented [7]: This is a liability issue depending on the employee's attitude to being terminated or what they may perceive as the cause of termination (e.g. parental complaints)

- b. **Termination After the Probationary Period**—The employee will be apprised by the Executive Director and/or the Director of Program of any problems and counseled as described in the first three paragraphs of the "Termination During Probationary Period".

3. Employee Layoffs

Maintaining a stable and consistent group of teachers in the classrooms is in the best interest of the children of Middle Earth. The Board realizes that job security is a crucial component of the stability of the staff. Therefore, every effort will be made to avoid reducing the number of employees. Nevertheless, under times of severe financial hardship, it may be necessary to reduce the number of staff in a room while staying within the DHS guidelines for teacher to student ratios. When possible, this will be done by the process of attrition. However, if the Board, after careful consideration of the financial status of the Center, considers it necessary, employee layoffs will take place. When determining which employees are to be laid off, the Executive Director and the Board will take into consideration the needs of the classroom as well as the seniority of the employees involved. Any employee who is laid off will be offered the first equivalent position that becomes available.

R. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, NON-DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARRASSMENT, GOSSIP, AND GRIEVANCE POLICIES

1. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Middle Earth does not discriminate for any non-merital reason such as race, religion, marital status, sex, or political affiliation. Middle Earth is an equal opportunity employer.

Any employee who feels the he or she has been the object of discrimination shall first discuss the matter with the immediate person and then the Director of Program. If the Director of Program is unavailable, complaints may be taken to the Executive Director. If not satisfied, he/she should then speak to the Board of Directors. Refer to the grievance section of this manual for the exact process to be followed.

2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

It is Middle Earth's policy to comply with applicable laws that provide equal opportunity in employment for all persons and to prohibit unlawful discrimination in employment. Implementation of the Center's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy is the responsibility of all Center employees. Employees will be evaluated on their adherence to the policy as part of their annual performance appraisal.

The Center's policy is that no employee may sexually harass another employee. An employee is subject to disciplinary action including dismissal for violation of this policy. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- 1) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment environment
- 2) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment and
- 3) Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is the basis for an employment decision affecting that individual.

3. GOSSIP POLICY

Another form of harassment is in the form of gossip. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment environment. When a staff member complains about a fellow employee to other staff, or parents, or in front of the children, this serves only to damage the morale at the Center. Interpersonal disputes between employees must be handled by the individuals involved in a private manner.

4. GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

When an employee has a problem with a fellow employee, he/she should first talk to that employee. If the dispute cannot be settled, the Director of Program or Executive Director may help out with conflict resolution.

Questions or concerns about policy and the operation of the classroom should be discussed first with the staff member's immediate supervisor, and then if necessary, the Director of Program. If the Director of Program is not available, the staff member may go to the Executive Director. If the concern is still not adequately addressed, the employee may take the concern to the Board. For issues that are not emergencies, this should be done at the next scheduled Board meeting (which is generally the fourth Tuesday of the month). The Board must have an opportunity to research the employee's concern. Therefore, the employee must submit the concern in writing to the Board at least one week before the next Board meeting. The Executive Director must be given a copy of all concerns that are to be sent to the Board. If an employee has a concern that deals directly with the safety and well-being of Middle Earth children or staff and this concern cannot wait until the next Board meeting, the employee should contact a member of the Executive Committee (i.e., the chair, vice chair, treasurer, or secretary) of the Board. A written memo concerning the matter should be given to the Board members with a copy to the Executive Director within 24 hours.

The Board reserves the right to table any concern that is not presented to them under the above guidelines. The Board also reserves the right to refuse to rule on any issue that it feels can be adequately handled by the Executive Director.

Middle Earth will not tolerate shouting, profanity, physical retaliation, devious behavior, or behaviors that would be considered harmful to persons, children, and the facility. Please make sure the Executive Director, Director of Program, or supervisors are made aware of any problems, personality differences, or other such detrimental behaviors that may occur.

III. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

A. INSURANCE

Employees who work more than 25 hours per week on their regularly scheduled shift are eligible for Middle Earth's insurance benefit program. Currently insurance benefits may include medical, dental, vision, prescription, and life insurance.

Employees are also covered by Workman's Compensation and Unemployment Compensation Insurance during assigned work hours.

The Center is required by federal and state law to match employees Social Security and payroll deductions.

B. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

In order to support staff in obtaining education outside the in-service training provided at Middle Earth, the cost of registration, conference, or training fees will be paid by the Center up to the required twenty hours annually required by DHS. If classes are held during an employee's regular working hours, the employee will be paid for the time spent in class. Requests for attendance will be considered on a first come, first serve basis and on the educational merit of the course, workshop, or conference.

As part of our licensure requirement, the state mandates twenty (20) hours of Department of Human Services approved training/education per year for all staff members and thirty (30) hours per year for a Center Director. The Board of Directors expects that teachers and other staff at Middle Earth will continue the life-long process of learning while employed at Middle Earth. This helps to insure that our staff are kept informed of new developments in the area of child development and safety. Training is a part of each employee's job description and participation is expected from all employees.

C. HOLIDAYS AND LEAVE TIME

1. Hours of Operation

MECDC operates 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. MECDC is open year round except for days annually to be determined by the Executive Director and approved by the Board for family notification. These days will coincide on &/or around the following holidays: New Year's, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. In addition, the Center will close for two in- service days prior to the beginning of the Norman Public School Academic year. Teachers will participate with in-service activities, such as professional development and preparing classrooms for the school year. These days will be determined and posted during December of the current year for scheduling in the following year.

MECDC will close if it is deemed unsafe for staff and families to travel, not necessarily following the public school schedule. Our Board Chair and Executive Director will take into consideration the road conditions, travel advisories, area schools and business openings or closings when making a decision regarding our hours of operation. Any changes in MECDC's schedule of

Commented [8]: Is this unemployment compensation insurance available to ALL employees? Or just those that are 25 hrs per week? How about those who are on probationary?
Workmans Comp is covered for any employee no matter their duration, I thought? Perhaps I am wrong, but wanted clarification.

operation (including early closures or late openings) will be announced by email, social media accounts, and the MECDC website.

Commented [9]: Should we pay staff who were scheduled to work on days we close for weather for the hours they were scheduled to work? Families are still paying for that day, so there isn't a financial loss, but if we're not doing it currently is there a need to change?

2. Paid Holidays

New employees in their trial period of employment (first two weeks) are not eligible for holiday benefits. Holidays for employees are generally as follows:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day, the Wednesday before, and the following Friday
- Two Days at Christmas
- New Year's Eve

Both full-time and part-time employees at Middle Earth are eligible for holiday pay if they meet the following conditions:

- Employees must be scheduled to work the day of the holiday
- Employees must work the day before and day after the holiday, if normally scheduled to do so
- Non-probationary employees eligible for accrued leave who have sufficient accrued leave may claim a vacation day before and/or after the holiday and still be eligible for holiday pay. Requests for leave must follow leave policies and be approved in advance by the Executive Director

Commented [10]: Should we put something like "if an employee calls in sick the day before or the day after said holiday, that holiday pay is not granted?" I don't know if we could do that, but since we may be combining sick and vacation pay together, I could see someone doing that. So, the 1st and last bullet point may conflict.

3. Leave Time

Policies in this area reflect an attempt to reconcile the personal needs of the Center employees with the day to day realities of operating Middle Earth's programs. You accept an obligation and responsibility to perform regularly and reliably. It is recognized that personal and family needs arise, and every effort should be made to allow for them. In addition, Middle Earth recognizes that given the physical and emotional demands of working with children, time away from work can be rewarding and restorative. You are expected to conscientiously follow the policies and procedures regarding taking time off and to demonstrate concern about the impact of your absence on the program.

4. Accrual of Leave Time

Full time employees who have completed their six-month probationary period will accrue leave time at the appropriate rate as listed below. The date of full time employment listed in the employee's personnel file will be the date used to determine length of employment for leave accrual and benefit purposes. Employees on a 9-month continuous appointment who work at least 30 hours per week may choose to either cash out their paid leave at the end of each 9-month appointment or to leave it on file for their return to Middle Earth the next academic year.

	Years of Service	Monthly Hours	Annual Accrual
All Eligible Staff	0-1 years	10	120/ hrs/15 days
	1+-4 years	12	144 hrs/18 days
	4+-10 years	14	168 hrs/21 days

Employees working less than thirty (30) hours do not accrue leave time.

5. Use of Leave Time

Leave time is to be used to cover time absent from work for any reason. Personal sick days will be deducted from paid leave time. Leave time may accrue during the six-month probationary period; however, it can only be used after completion of the initial six-month probationary period. Sick leave during the first six months is considered leave without pay.

Once again, all requests for leave time must be submitted in writing at least two weeks in advance to the Executive Director. These will be granted on a first come, first serve basis. Once leave time is granted, the person's name is placed on the Annual Leave Board located in the front office. No more than two full-time teachers may take a vacation at any one time. No more than one teacher at a time may take leave from any one classroom. Employees are encouraged at the beginning of each calendar year to coordinate leave time and cooperate in planning their vacations so that everyone may use the periods best suited to their needs.

No employee may take more than ten work periods of leave at one time.

An employee may choose to cash in unused leave time if they wish. An employee may cash up to five days of leave on a semi-annual basis. The employee must notify the Executive Director in writing of their intent to cash in leave time. The check will be issued no sooner than two weeks after the Executive Director receives the letter of intent. Due to budgetary constraints, no more than three employees may cash in leave in any quarter. This will be on first come, first serve basis. Non-probationary employees will be paid for any unused leave upon termination of employment.

Employees who have used up all accrued leave may be absent due to illness only. In these cases, the time will be unpaid. Employees absent without permission are subject to immediate termination.

Employees do not have the option of whether or not to use their paid leave for a day off from work, regardless of the reason for the absence. Only when their paid leave is exhausted will they be eligible to request to be placed in a leave without pay status.

Paid leave cannot be used prior to accruing the time off. Therefore, if an employee must, for example, take extended sick leave, they will need to utilize accrued paid leave before they can use leave without pay.

Non-probationary employees will be paid for any unused leave upon termination of employment. The Executive Director may recommend to the Board of Directors Executive Committee that terminal pay be denied to an employee discharged for serious cause.

If a full-time employee goes to part-time status, the current paid leave accrual may be retained for use by the employee subject to Middle Earth policies, or the employee may receive cash for the accrued amount at that time.

6. Leave of Absence

Leave without pay is discouraged. However, employees may request a leave of absence without pay for the purpose of family crisis or extended ill health or injury. The request must be made in writing at least one month in advance when possible and must state the reason for the leave. Requests should be submitted to the Executive Director. Each request will be considered on its own merits. In case of family crisis, the Executive Director may grant a leave of absence with shorter notice. During the leave, to maintain health coverage, full cost of coverage under the Center's insurance must be paid a month in advance by the employee. Leave time will not accrue during a leave of absence. Employees requesting or returning from an extended sick leave must bring in a doctor's note before returning to work.

D. MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE

Pregnancy is to be treated as any other extended sick leave. An employee may continue normal duties through pregnancy or use available leave while unable to perform regular duties. Employees who utilize leave for pregnancy shall suffer no penalty, retaliation, or other discrimination.

Full time employees who have worked a minimum of 1250 hours during the previous 12 months may be eligible for unpaid maternity/paternity leave. Employees desiring maternity/paternity leave should submit a letter stating their intention to return to the Center. This request will be honored for up to 12 weeks. When ready to return, they will return to the same position title and pay rate they were in before going on leave, although they may be placed in a different classroom. During the leave, to maintain health coverage, the full cost of coverage under the Center's insurance plan must be paid by the employee.

E. EMPLOYEES WITH CHILDREN

We know that some mothers seek employment to be near their children. We want you to feel comfortable leaving your child with a co-worker. When you do, your child becomes the responsibility of your co-worker. We ask that you not show partiality or favoritism to your own child over the other children who attend our Center. Employees with children enrolled at Middle Earth may be eligible for a tuition discount. There is a tuition reduction benefit for full time employees who have successfully completed their six months probationary period. The reduction benefit for those employees is 50% reduction in tuition for children enrolled at Middle Earth. in classrooms other than the infant room.

F. RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Employees who are scheduled a regular shift of more than 25 hours per week may be eligible for the opportunity to contribute to a 403B tax deferred annuity.

G. MEALS

Staff that are present when meals and snacks are served receive the meal or snack at no cost.

Commented [11]: What is the justification behind the 25 hours per week? Does this need to be modified?

IV. CHILDCARE RESPONSIBILITIES

A. CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are expected to be familiar with and to perform the routine duties as outlined in their job description. From time to time, extra duties not specifically detailed in the job description may be assigned by an employee's immediate supervisor. Instructions (when necessary) will be given as to how the duties are to be carried out.

All staff will help out with the routine maintenance of the classroom. This will include sweeping the floor and wiping tables after meals and snacks, cleaning counter tops, and wiping down the sink area in the bathrooms after the children have washed their hands.

Classrooms are to be kept organized. Cabinets and shelves used for storage are to be clearly labeled so items can be easily located.

An inventory of permanent equipment is to be done for each classroom on a semi-annual basis. See the Executive Director for the inventory schedule for your classroom, according to the following schedule:

_____ Dreamers and Tot I	_____ January and July
_____ Tot II	_____ February and August
_____ Serendipity	_____ March and September
_____ Discoverers	_____ April and October
_____ Explorers and Detectives	_____ May and November
_____ Big Kids and Kitchen	_____ June and December

It is the Lead Teacher's responsibility to see the inventory is done but all staff are expected to participate. One copy of the inventory is to be kept in the classroom and one copy with the Director of Program.

Team members are expected to coordinate the daily work schedule to provide for an adequate staff-student ratio at all times. Leave times should be discussed with other team members in advance so that the classroom is disrupted as little as possible. Keep in mind that only one full time teacher at a time may take leave from any one classroom.

Staff are expected to be in the classroom or directly supervising children during the majority of their work day. The staff lounge is available for staff use during breaks or planning periods. Staff are asked not to spend their break time in other classrooms as this detracts from the teachers' ability to supervise the activities of the class. Discussions regarding coordinated activities between classrooms or the organization of curriculum are best conducted during break time, staff meetings, or planning periods.

The wise use of your time is very important. We give each classroom one hour every week of paid planning time. This time is used to go over classroom needs, bulletin board prep, and curriculum preparation. It is not appropriate to be working on such things while children are playing in centers. You are to be interacting and responding to the children in your care.

All employees who have clocked out for the day are requested to avoid staying after work to chat with fellow employees who are still working. This occupies the time of the employee on duty and detracts from their ability to supervise the class.

Employees are discouraged from eating or drinking in the classroom other than at scheduled meal or snack times.

Lead teachers and Co-teachers are expected to offer periodic feedback to parents in the form of parent-teacher conferences, which are held in October and April.

All staff are encouraged to play an active part in welcoming children and parents to the room. However, pick-up and drop off times tend to be rather hectic and in general are not a good time to spend several minutes in discussion with parents. Issues that take more than a few minutes to be discussed should be addressed in a separately scheduled meeting between parents and teachers.

B. LESSON PLANS, CURRICULUM, & SCHEDULES

Lead teachers are expected to design lesson plans that meet the goals of the curriculum of Middle Earth. Lesson plans are to be turned in to the Director of Program for approval at least two weeks ahead of time and should contain at least two weeks of lessons. This will allow for continuity in the classroom should a teacher be absent unexpectedly. Teachers are encouraged to use nap time for planning and researching their lesson plans. A copy of lesson plans will be posted for parents to see and a copy will be placed in a notebook for future reference.

Lesson plans for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers should for the most part be structured on seven developmental milestone areas and address the individual needs and strengths of the children. Lead and Co-teachers are required to maintain a portfolio on each child that reflects the child's growth in these developmental areas. Pre-Kindergarten lesson plans should be structured on the same learning and assessment tools used in the Oklahoma State Early Learning Guidelines. Lead teachers and Co-teachers are responsible for apprising parents of their child's development during Parent/Teacher Conferences held in October and April.

Teachers are also expected to maintain an age and developmentally appropriate classroom schedule. The schedule must be posted for parents to see. Classroom schedules may not be changed without approval from the Director of Program.

C. CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

Teachers are expected to plan ahead and to anticipate what materials they will need for the projects outlined in their lesson plans. Basic art supplies such as paint, glue, paste, construction paper, paper plates, bags, etc. are to be ordered on a quarterly basis. Teachers and the Director of Program will discuss what supplies are needed and enough supplies should be ordered to cover the next three to four months' needs. These basic items will be distributed to each teacher when the order arrives. Extra materials will be kept in the back storage area.

Teachers will often need supplies for their planned projects that are not in their supply of basic stock items. A list of supplies that are needed should be submitted by writing it in the shopping list

and repair list book in the front office. It is essential that teachers plan ahead and submit requests at least two weeks ahead of time so that they can be sure they receive the needed items. Occasionally the Executive Director may find it necessary to deny a request that he/she feels is unreasonable.

The use of kitchen supplies for the purpose of class projects is permitted. For example a teacher may want to use dried beans or rice for an art project. The teacher must however fill out a Kitchen Request Form and submit it at least two weeks ahead of time. The cook is not allowed to release items from the kitchen for class projects without written approval from the Executive Director. It is also permitted to make edible projects in the classroom or to have projects that involve cooking. Since all classrooms must be served the same snack, there is usually a lot of food wasted when classes have a special edible project (i.e., if the snack for the day is banana bread, the children in each room must be served banana bread even if they are making a special snack as part of a class project). In order to minimize the wasting of food at Middle Earth, food projects are to be limited to one project per class per two-week period.

D. SUPERVISION REMINDERS

As all providers know, the task of operations of a child care center and or running a classroom is quite the task. It seems like every hour at least 50 different issues or distractions come up. However, one issue which should never get lost in the 'distraction zone' is the direct supervision of children. Here are some regulation reminders which address supervision:

Maintaining ratios is very important, and these represent the very basic levels of supervision set up by Child Care Licensing.

	Ratios	Group Size
Infants	1 to 4	8
One's	1 to 6	12
Two's	1 to 8	16
Three's	1 to 12	24
Four & Five's	1 to 15	30
Six's & up	1 to 20	40

A Classroom can be in ratio, but the teacher may not be supervising adequately. Staff members should be able to account for what is going on in their classroom at all times. To quote the ordinance directly, 'direct supervision means watching and directing children's activities within close proximity within the same room inside or within a designated outdoor play area.' Teachers will also position themselves so as not to be hidden from observation. Keep in mind that staff members are not meeting the above definition when they are talking amongst themselves or leave the classroom for even a second.

Maintaining accurate attendance logs is a MUST. A record of the time a child arrives at the facility, as well as the time the child leaves is mandatory. This log is a written reflection of supervision because it shows the coming and going of each child. Remember the attendance log should be taken out with the teacher even when fire drills and other emergency procedures are conducted.

The Field Trip Permission Sign-Up Form (FTPSF) is another example of 'written supervision'.

The FTSPF must be done any time a child is transported in a vehicle. Attendance is checked each time children board and exit the vehicle. After children have departed from the transportation vehicle, the driver then must conduct a 'visual sweep' of the vehicle to ensure every child has gotten off and then they must sign the FTSPF attesting to all this being done. These FTSPFs must be kept for four months. The best way to keep a child safe is to supervise them!

E. CRITERIA FOR CLASS MOVE-UPS

Middle Earth uses general guidelines following industry best practices to determine when children are ready for a move up. They must be administered in a flexible manner to allow for the unique abilities and needs of each child. Parents are to be notified in writing of the intent to move up a child and must be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns with the teacher and/or Director prior to the move. Move ups should be done on a gradual schedule. When possible, teachers should avoid moving a child by him/herself. By allowing children to move up in groups of two or more, the children adjust to the transition more smoothly.

F. FOOD AND NUTRITION

Middle Earth participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and must adhere to their guidelines. Be sure to serve ALL the food you are given for your children and the staff in the room. Sizes of the portions are written on the top of the container for both children and adults. Everyone is to be served, including staff, even if they do not want to eat it. Food is never used as a reward or punishment. Always confer with the kitchen team regarding the numbers of the children and staff who were served, and be sure to write the meal count down outside the kitchen window. Reviewing the Serving and Measuring of Food Contract in this book will be of benefit to you.

Commented [12]: Is this still being done this way?

Children should wash their hands before being seated for meals and after finishing eating. Children should be encouraged to try all foods, however, if a child is not interested in a particular food, do not force him/her to try it. Teachers are expected to model appropriate behavior at the table, including pleasant table conversation and etiquette. This is a good time to talk about foods of different cultures. Topics which pertain to good nutrition should also be discussed at breakfast, lunch, or snack times. Meal times should be calm, relaxed, and unrushed.

G. DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

We adhere to written Child Care Licensing regulations:

1. Child care facilities must ensure that age appropriate, constructive-disciplinary practices are used for children in their care.
2. Children shall not be subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating, or frightening..
3. Discipline shall not be associated with food, rest, or bathroom privileges.
4. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment such as shaking, striking, swatting, thumping, pinching, etc. is prohibited.

In a broader sense, discipline at our center is defined as the methods a staff member uses to

manage children's behavior. In addition to the written Child Care Licensing regulations, Middle Earth's Statement of Purpose and Philosophy (detailed on page 2) provides general guidelines as to how discipline and treatment of children should be approached at the Center. Discipline should always be done in a positive manner!

The first step towards managing behaviors is setting realistic expectations of each age group. A toddler is not expected to behave and respond in the same manner as a preschooler. Staff members must be aware of what constitutes acceptable behaviors for whatever age group that they are teaching.

1. Staff members need to look at how classrooms are set up and how they conduct activities that ensure problems will be minimized.
2. Children in a classroom must have appropriate and interesting things to do and have enough time to engage in meaningful activities and experiences that require little or no more adult involvement than is needed.
3. Staff members need to make sure they have an orderly environment with well-defined spaces, age-appropriate materials, and a schedule geared to the needs of children. All of these contribute greatly towards order and calm, help minimize conflicts, and greatly reduce the kinds of negative behaviors we are trying to manage and/or avoid.

However, some measure of challenging behaviors is unavoidable and must be managed. Suggested approaches we can implement to deal with negative behaviors include:

1. **Logical Consequences:** An example might be "Since you broke the crayons, you will need to leave the art area and find another place to play."
2. **A Time and Place to Calm Down:** Providing a safe space away from others can be a helpful way for a child to regain his/her composure. It is particularly effective when teachers help children learn to take themselves there when they are upset or need a quiet space. The key is that this is not punitive and it is self-regulated – the child determines when to return to the group.
3. **Reinforcement:** The phrase "catch them being good" is a way to encourage, reward, and provide positive social reinforcement to children for desired behavior.

We must ensure the physical safety of everyone in our Center. We cannot and will not tolerate physically aggressive behaviors. If there is persistent behavior problem with a child or children, we will have a combined conference with the parents, teachers, and one or more of the Directors regarding how as a group we can modify the behavior going forward.

The final policy of termination at the Center is; if the continued behavior problem represents a danger to the staff or other children, we reserve the right to ask parents to withdraw their child from our Center.

We encourage you to speak with the Director of Program if you have any questions regarding our discipline policies or procedures.

H. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse and neglect is a serious problem which can have devastating effects on the abused or neglected child, the parents, and other loved ones. Part of your job responsibilities is to discreetly examine each child in your care every morning for signs of abuse or neglect. You are *required* to document in writing and report any and all suspicious bruises, bumps, or abrasions, etc. immediately to a Director. In our Center, if you even suspect child abuse, or neglect, you are *required* to document it in writing and report immediately to a Director.

The Center's policy in the event you, as a teacher, are accused of child abuse or neglect whether it is here at the center or off the premises will be:

- You will be relieved from your duties in the classroom
- You may be put on administrative leave or given duties within the center but away from children until a thorough investigation has been completed
- Child Care Licensing will be called and a 'self-report' will be made.
- The investigation process will include but is not limited to: interviews with co-workers, other children in the classroom, individuals involved in the incident, review of any security footage available, interviews conducted by licensing inspectors, DHS authorities or police officers.
- The Center will cooperate fully with all authorities in order to reach a satisfactory conclusion.
- The outcome of the investigation will determine if the employee is terminated or released to return to her/his regular duties back in the classroom.

I. ACCIDENT AND INJURY REPORTS FOR CHILDREN

You are required to fill out an Accident/Incident Form when one occurs. Remember to include the child's last name, and be as objective and informative as possible when describing the incident. Do not use other children's names when describing to the parent what occurred. The form should be signed by the Director of Program or Executive Director before it is shown to the parent. The parent will then read and sign the Accident/Incident Form at pickup time and return it to you. If a parent would like a copy of Accident/Incident Form, you may make one for them; however, the original form must stay at Middle Earth. Turn all forms in to the front desk and they will be filed in the child's folder. Record each accident/incident on your classroom log sheet. This log is to be turned in to the Director of Program monthly.

J. FIRST AID PROCEDURES

Scrapes and scratches should be washed with warm soapy water and then a band-aid should be applied. DHS regulations prevent us from putting any antibiotic ointment on the child. If the child's parent is present at the time of the incident, they may apply antibiotic ointment, but we may not. Ice packs, located in the staff freezer, may be used to prevent swelling or calm the child and help relieve any pain. It is your responsibility to put a clean bag on it and return it to the freezer when you are finished with it. Do not leave them outside or let the children play with them.

All incidents need to be reported to the Director of Program, and an Accident/Incident Report detailed above should be completed. Depending on the seriousness of the injury, a parent may need to be called to come and assess the situation. In the case of a serious emergency, 911 will be called.

If an employee is injured during their normal work routine, a written Accident/Incident Report should also be filled out. Notify the Executive Director immediately, and appropriate actions will

be taken in response to your injury.

K. MEDICINE PROCEDURES

MEDICINE PRESCRIBED BY A PHYSICIAN OR SPECIFIC OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS are administered only by the lead teacher, co-teacher, or a member of the administration. Parents must sign a special form before medication of any kind may be given. Medicine must be in the original container with the child's name on it and have a valid expiration date. If we are to give over-the-counter medication we must have written permission from the child's pediatrician. A designated person will log administration of medication and ensure medicine is stored properly. Out-dated medication will be given back to the parent or disposed of.

L. CHILDREN'S ILLNESS

If a child becomes ill while in your classroom, notify the front desk immediately. If you feel a child is running a temperature, you may use a thermometer under their arm or on their forehead. Report to the front desk immediately if a child has a temperature of 101 degrees or higher, if a child has vomited, if a child has two or more runny bowel movements, if a child has undiagnosed seeping or red rimmed eyes, or if a child has an undiagnosed skin rash. The front desk or a Director will take the appropriate action such as calling the parent or emergency assistance.

M. HEAD LICE PROCEDURES

No matter how hard the Center tries, head lice does spring up now and then. Remember: HEAD LICE IS VERY CONTAGIOUS! At the first sign of extraordinary amounts of head scratching, please do a head check on all the children in your care. If you find a child with head lice notify the Director of Program immediately and isolate the child. All bedding is to be sent home to launder and the classroom de-liced, which includes immediately placing all of the infected child's belongings in an air tight bag, washing all of the classroom linens and washable soft toys, placing non-washable stuffed animals and cloth toys in an air tight container for 30 days, vacuuming the carpets, and cleaning and disinfecting the room. Daily head checks of all the children will need to be conducted for 10 days following the outbreak.

N. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Notices of Communicable Illnesses are in the front office. Ask the Director of Program.

O. HAND WASHING AND HEALTH CARE PRACTICES

We work in an industry filled with germs, bacteria and viruses. Middle Earth promotes the use of latex gloves for all diaper changing tasks, for cleaning up any bodily fluids, and any garbage removal. *Hand washing is expected after using the restroom, before and after preparing food or snacks, after wiping runny noses, working with blood, removing trash from classroom, or any other messy job.* You can't wash your hands too much in childcare. Refrain from touching your face. It is important that staff help the children in their care learn to follow the same hand washing practices to protect themselves from the germs, bacteria, and viruses.

Hand Washing Procedures:

- Turn water on and wet hands
- Put soap on hands and wash (Sing: Row, Row, Row Your Boat)
- Rinse hands thoroughly
- Dry hands with paper towel
- Use paper towel to turn off faucet

One of the most important times for hand washing is during diaper changing times. We have a specific routine for diaper changing which meets the DHS Childcare Licensing regulations.

Diaper Changing Procedures:

- **Step 1:** Preparation: Have the diaper area set up and changed before bringing each child to the area. Supplies should be removed from their containers and placed in reaching distance, but not on the changing surface, before starting the diaper change. Have enough wipes for the child's bottom. Have a clean diaper ready. Use a plastic bag for soiled clothes, and have clean clothes ready if soiled clothing is anticipated. Use non-porous gloves. If using diaper cream, dab on a disposable piece of paper or tissue to apply to the child's skin.
- **Step 2:** Diapering Procedure: Place the child on the clean diapering table. Remove the child's clothing to access the diaper. If the child's clothes are soiled, place the soiled clothing into a plastic bag. Remove the child's soiled diaper and place it into a lined, hands-free trash container. (To limit the odor, seal soiled diapers in a plastic bag before placing them into the hands-free trash container.) Use wipes to clean the child's bottom from front to back. Throw all soiled wipes into a lined, hands-free trash container. Remove your gloves and throw them into a lined, hands-free trash container. Put a clean diaper and clothing on the child.
- **Step 3:** Cleaning the child's hands: Place the child at the sink and wash their hands following proper hand washing procedures. (If the same sink is used for diapering/toileting as for food preparation, then faucet handles and sink must be sanitized with bleach-water solution after each diapering/toileting use.) Return the child to a safe play area.
- **Step 4:** Wash and sanitize diaper area: Clean the diapering area with soap and water after every use to remove visible soil. Spray the diapering surface with bleach-water solution. Leave on two minutes and wipe or air dry. Any toys the child has played with during the diaper change must be sanitized.
- **Step 5:** Final Step: Wash your hands using the proper hand washing procedure, without contaminating any other surfaces. Be sure that the diaper changing surface is dry before use with another child. Record the diaper change on the child's daily sheet.

In the younger-age classrooms, when toilet training is required, all soiled clothes and diapers are to be treated as bio-hazardous material and handled in a proper manner by wrapping them in plastic bags and sending them home with the child's parents for the parents to launder. Any Middle Earth sheets or blankets that have been soiled with blood, vomit, or feces must also be treated as bio-hazardous material and handled in a proper manner by wrapping them in a plastic bag and sending them home with the child's parents to be laundered by the parent (Please make sure you ask the parent to return them to the Center after they've been laundered). Accidents on the floor and around the toilets must be cleaned up immediately with soapy water then sanitized with a bleach mixture.

Cleaning & Sanitizing Procedures

Clean tables or sinks with soapy water and dry with paper towel. To sanitize table or sinks, spray bleach solution (1qt. of water to 1tbs. bleach or 1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water), wait 10 seconds, and wipe with a paper towel or let air dry. Use a clean towel or paper towel for each table. It is also possible to use an alternate approved sanitizing solution; however, **do not** mix any alternate solutions with bleach solution.

P. PLAY GROUND SUPERVISION

The purpose for the playground is not to give staff members a rest from the regular activities of the day, nor is it a time for staff members to catch up on personal conversations or reading. Rather it is a time for the children to have an opportunity for large muscle development, for fresh air and sunshine, and for interactions with children in other classes. It is also a time when regular classroom activities such as art, reading, science, music, and dramatization can be moved into a different environment for added interest. It is a time that new activities such as organized games, sports, and sand and water play can be introduced.

Keep in mind the real purpose of outside play. Interaction with the children while on the playground is expected. Playing with children, interacting, and talking with the children will make your job more meaningful. REMEMBER, you are to be watchful of all children, not just those in your direct care. We work together as a team, being those other pair of eyes or hands that makes up a successful team.

Teachers need to promote all rules of safety and proper use of equipment. They also need to make sure equipment is safe and in good repair. Staff members are also encourage to take on personal or group projects to help develop added areas of interest on the playground.

The following are playground safety guidelines you should follow:

1. Staff must remain alert, active, and involved with the children and separated in order to be effective supervisors. Please do not sit down for extended periods of time.
2. Teachers should take their attendance chart, first aid kit, special needs medication, and a small plastic trash bag when going to the playground.
3. When entering the playground, check the children against your attendance chart. Check again when coming back into the building and then again when back in the classroom.
4. Gates remain closed at all times. Check gates frequently.
5. If children from any classroom are on the playground, at least one staff person from that classroom must also be on the playground to maintain staff/child ratios and so that the total responsibility for that group of children does not fall on staff from other classrooms.
6. Tricycles and wagons need to be used with caution.
7. Children may play and dig in the sand, not throw it. Sand play occurs away from the slide.
8. Supervise the climbers at all times. Children must hold on with their hands. Places designed for sitting down (such as benches) should be used for sitting down, not standing or climbing.
9. Supervise the slide carefully. Children may only go down slides on their bottoms facing forward. Walking up the slide is not allowed.
10. Children are not allowed to climb gates or fences.
11. Throw unrepairable toys away, such as broken buckets, shovels, etc. Other broken, yet repairable toys may be placed in the back common area and the front desk informed. Park all other loose playground toys against the fence next to the gate.

Commented [13]: Where are we placing broken toys at the new building?

12. Before coming inside, cover the sand box and pick up any trash on the playground.
13. Let your other teachers know when you go inside with children or leave the playground for any reason.
14. When parents pick up their children from the playground, make sure they've come through the classroom door. Have them sign out their child on your attendance chart, make sure they are escorted back to the building, and unlock the back door for them so that they may reenter the building.
15. Make sure the children drink plenty of water and be alert for signs of heat or cold stress.
16. Follow recommended lengths of time for outdoor play per age group for winter and summer weather.
17. Each child should have a signed permission slip for sunscreen and insect repellent. The sunscreen and repellent are provided by the child's family. Please keep these bottles out of reach of children at all times. Reapply as needed according to the directions on the bottle.
18. Be alert for safety hazards such as standing water, stray animals, or strangers. Report any concerns immediately to the front desk.
19. During warm weather months, a designated classroom will take a cooler filled with water and some disposable cups out to the playground in the morning. Another designated classroom will bring the cooler and cups back inside in the afternoon. The cooler is to be rinsed and left to dry on the drain board in the kitchen.

Q. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR FIRE, WEATHER, AND EARTHQUAKE

Middle Earth conducts monthly fire drills which require children being evacuated from the building. Each classroom has an emergency exit poster showing the emergency route. It is important you learn the proper procedures for conducting these drills and the main assembly area for your classroom. Grab your classroom clipboard (Note: your clipboard should also have a green sheet of paper and a red sheet of paper attached.), first aid kit, special needs medications, and evacuation kit. Follow the designated route and calmly and quickly evacuate the building with your children making sure to shut the door when you leave. After you reach the assembly area you are to take roll using your clipboard, hold up the green sheet if all of your children are accounted for and the red sheet if you are missing one or more children, and report to the Director of Program the number of children in your care. You may re-enter the building when the 'all clear' is given.

The center will conduct tornado drills quarterly. Again you will follow the exit route displayed on your poster, taking your clipboard, first aid kit, special needs medications, and evacuation kit. Roll will be taken. You may return to the classroom when the 'all clear' is given.

In the event of an earthquake, stand with your back braced against a load bearing wall. Once the tremor has stopped, calmly and quickly evacuate the building with your children, taking your clipboard with the attendance sheet, first aid kit, special needs medications, and evacuation kit. After you reach the assembly area you are to take roll using your clipboard and hold up the green sheet if all of your children are accounted for or the red sheet if you are missing one or more children. Administer any needed first aid. Do not enter the building until an 'all clear' is given.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY EVACUATION:

Children will be transported to an off-site location to wait for the arrival of their parents. Teachers will be responsible for taking along materials and supplies essential to maintain their class in a safe manner as well as their attendance chart, first aid kit, special needs medications, and evacuation

kit. The Director of Program will be responsible for taking children's records and additional first aid materials.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY VAN EVACUATION:

Children must remain in the van until such time they may be evacuated to a safe location. Upon departure from the van, children must stay next to van and the driver will direct traffic as needed to allow children to reach their safe destination. The driver will notify the center of the problem and provisions for a safe pick up will be finalized.

R. CENTER CLOSINGS

The Executive Director, in conjunction with the Board Chair, may choose to close the center in the event of hazardous weather, a loss in power, heat, or water. Teachers and families will be notified by phone or email if the center closes during regular school hours. Information will also be posted on our website: www.middleearthok.org

S. FIELD TRIPS

On our enrollment forms there is a place to sign giving consent for Middle Earth to transport children. Parents will be informed as to where we will be going and if there is any additional cost. Parent's **MUST** sign individual permission slips for each trip their child goes on.

Field Trip Procedures

- Take clipboards with accident/incident reports
- Take child Information sheets with parent emergency numbers
- Take roll call list with staff and driver signatures (a copy of this is to be left with the front office)
- Take directions with the route to the destination clearly followed (a copy of this is to be left with the front office)
- Call roll on the van before you leave Middle Earth
- Write the departure time on the roll call sheet
- The teacher should engage in active supervision of the children for the duration of the field trip
- Call roll before leaving the field trip and after getting on the van
- Take a cell phone with you in the van and on the trip

Each teacher should be given a list of the names of the children for whom they are responsible (the assignments will be made by the lead teacher prior to leaving the center). Children shall not be transported on field trips in personal cars without written permission from that child's parent

Rules while on field trips

- Children must stay with the teacher at ALL times
- Each teacher should take roll every 30 minutes and be able to see or hear their assigned children at ALL times
- Teachers should institute a buddy system while children are on field trips
- If the children need to go to the restroom, take the entire group with you into the restroom...STAY WITH THE CHILDREN WHILE THEY ARE IN THE BATHROOM ON A FIELD TRIP
- If you do not have a male teacher with you to take the boys in the bathroom, knock on the

men's restroom door. When you have determined that there is no one in the restroom, allow your male students to enter the restroom. Stay outside the restroom door until the boys are finished. Politely ask any members of the public to wait until your male students are finished. **DO NOT LET STRANGERS INTO THE BATHROOM WHEN YOUR STUDENTS ARE USING IT, UNLESS YOU ARE IN THERE TO SUPERVISE.**

- Maintain the same expectations of behavior that you would in the classroom and follow the rules and regulations of the site you are visiting

Van Rules

- Sit facing forward in your seat at all times
- Seat belts **MUST** be worn until the van has made a complete stop and driver has said the students can get out
- While in the van, quiet voices must be used to ensure the safety of everyone in the van
- When two vehicles are traveling, they must stay together

On field trips we like to take along extra supervision, so if parents are free and would like to attend, please do not hesitate to ask for volunteers. Children will **NOT** be allowed to participate unless a parent has signed the appropriate field- trip form. A verbal release is **NOT** acceptable.

Extra Precautions that must be completed when exiting the van or bus:

1. Upon arrival at the destination the driver of the vehicle shall:
Mark each child off the log as the child departs the vehicle and conduct a physical inspection and visual sweep of the vehicle to ensure that no child is left in the vehicle.
2. Upon arrival at the destination a second staff member shall:
Conduct a physical inspection and visual sweep of the vehicle to ensure that no child is left in the vehicle.

MIDDLE EARTH EMPLOYEE BASICS

(Note: This is a copy of a form that is signed upon the hiring date by all employees and is included in this handbook for the benefit of the employee.)

There are two week and a six month trial periods of employment. At the end of this time, an evaluation will be made. If a prospective employee is not suited for childcare work, they can, however, be terminated before the end of the six month trial period.

1. I understand that I should introduce myself to the children and their parents in every classroom where I work.
2. I understand that additional time on a timecard beyond a regular schedule will be cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
3. I understand that team members or substitutes are not guaranteed hours. I fully understand that my hours and my duties may be changed at any time and that I may be assigned a different age group at the request of the Executive Director or Director of Program.
4. I understand that I must fill out a Leave Request form (lead and co-teachers) or an Absent Request form (team members) in advance to request time off (except substitutes). If not approved the form will be returned.
5. I will read and thoroughly study the LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS and MIDDLE EARTH PARENT HANDBOOK and understand them.
6. I understand that I am not to administer corporal punishment. This means no punishment of a physical nature, e.g., shaking, striking, spanking, swatting, thumping, pinching, etc.
7. I understand that I will never leave any children unattended for any reason whatsoever.
8. I understand I cannot use coarse or vulgar language.
9. I understand that I am not to yell at children or be negative with them. Discipline is always done in a positive manner.
10. I understand that I am not a babysitter, and that I must, at all times, interact with the children. At nap time, I will use the FREE time constructively. I will be engaged in an activity to better the Center—clean, prepare lessons, etc. I understand that I may be asked to work in another area during the nap period.
11. If a child is hurt while in my charge, I will fill out a complete accident report and give full details to the center Executive Director. This includes all injuries, bites, scrapes, etc.
12. I understand that I am responsible for taking 20 hours of child care training per year in addition to maintaining first aid and CPR certification.
13. I understand that I am to show affection to the children with pats, hugs, and kind words—not candy or gum.
14. I understand that on the playground I am to position myself so that I can see and move with the children and to interact with them.
15. I understand that there is to be NO SMOKING ON MIDDLE EARTH PROPERTY. If I must smoke, I must clock out and do it on my own time and out of sight.
16. I understand that I may not eat food in the classrooms unless it is provided as part of our food program or approved classroom activities.
17. I understand that the telephones are for business operation and communication with parents and that personal phone calls should be made during lunch break or before and after shifts and limited to three minutes in duration. I understand that I may not receive telephone calls while on the job, except for emergency situations. Personal cell phones should be turned off before entering the building.
18. I understand that milk (and occasionally juice) is the only beverage allowed on the breakfast, lunch, or snack table and that teachers must be served milk (but need not drink it). Teachers may have other drinks in the classroom in a non-opaque glass with a non-opaque lid cover. No

hot drinks.

19. I understand that staff is to park in the middle section of the parking lot.
20. I understand that if I leave the building during my break, I must inform the Executive Director or Director of Program and that I must clock out.
21. I understand that if I am injured in any way, I am to report to the Executive Director or Director of Program immediately.
22. I understand that children will copy the behavior, language, and attitudes modeled by me and that I must set a good example at all times. (As an example, if teachers use tables for chairs, so will children).
23. I understand that all children, parents, and visitors should be treated with kindness, friendliness, patience, respect and professionalism.

Signature

Date

Director

CONTRACT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

(Note: This is a copy of a form that is signed by all employees upon hiring date and is included in this handbook for the benefit of the employee)

Middle Earth Child Development Center is a multi-cultural environment which provides education through play and child-teacher interactions.

The philosophy of Middle Earth clearly states that all children are to be treated as unique individuals and respected for those individual differences. Staff are considered role models for the character, values, and integrity expressed in the content of the philosophy.

As employees of the Center, staff will be responsible for the objectives of this philosophy and will:

- Interact with each child in such a way that limits the use of labels or attitudes which reflects race, gender, or religious stereotypes, that is, terminology will be free of bias or behavioral characterizations that label or stereotype.
- Maintain a standard of conduct that serves to protect the privacy, confidentiality, rights, and safety of each child we serve. Information or knowledge about a child at the Center is strictly confidential whether it is written, anecdotal, or simply impressions collected about any given child. With the exception of Center staff meetings, staff are strongly discouraged from discussing behavior or concerns of any child with anyone other than that child's parent without the written permission of the child's parent.

I understand that the failure to comply with the conditions of this contract will terminate my contract with Middle Earth Child Development Center.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

SERVING AND MEASURING OF FOOD

(Note: This is a copy of a form signed by all employees upon hire date and is included in this handbook for the benefit of the employee.)

1. Cleanliness is foremost to keep in mind.
2. Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling food or dishes.
3. Even though gloves are worn when handling food, hands still need to be washed first.
4. When the trays are picked up from the kitchen, the children cannot help carry food or dishes back to the classroom. They may help return dirty dishes back to the kitchen.
5. You need to have your hair pulled back if it is long or in your face, so that you won't have a need to brush it out of the way. If you do touch your hair, you need to wash your hands again. (The same applies if you sneeze, cough, or blow your nose.)
6. Use the serving cups or spoons to help serve the food. Don't ever use your own or the child's spoon or fork to help serve the food. If you touch the food with a used piece of silverware, the food is then considered contaminated and needs to be thrown out.
7. When serving the food, be sure to follow the measurements written on each of the bowls. We are on the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the food must be served as stated. Be sure to follow the milk measurement chart in your classroom. Each age group has a specific amount of milk that needs to be served.
8. We are grateful to have you working with us, here at Middle Earth. We want only the best for our children!

Staff Signature/Date

Director's Signature/Date

STAFF HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

After reading, this acknowledgement is to be signed and dated by me and given to the Executive Director.

This Employee Handbook includes policies and procedures applicable to Middle Earth Child Development Center employees. Middle Earth reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate, or change any or all such plans, policies, or procedures in whole or in part at any time with or without notice. The language used in this handbook is not intended to create, nor is it to be construed to constitute a contract of employment or as a contract guaranteeing continued employment between Middle Earth Child Development Center and its employees. Employees are free to leave the employ of Middle Earth Child Development Center at will, and Middle Earth Child Development Center is equally free to terminate the services of any employee at will. The contents of this handbook supersede all other printed and online policy documents.

I understand and agree to the fact that it is my responsibility to read the Staff Handbook and become familiar with its contents. I acknowledge my understanding of the contents of the Staff Handbook.

Employee Signature

Date