

Staff Guidelines



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Welcome to the Children's Choice Family

You have applied and been accepted to do a very important job, the job of facilitating the positive development of children. We are happy to welcome you into our Children's Choice family. Our mission is to facilitate the positive development of children through our holistic approach to out-of-school-time programming that supports families. We create playful learning environments, caring and empowering relationships, and enriching experiences that meet the ever-changing physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of children.

We believe that quality Out-of-School Time (OST) programs are more than a safe places for kids to be while their parents are working, and they are more than fun places to be. It is one of the few times in a child's day which provides the opportunity to interact positively with children of different ages. It is perhaps the only time in a day that educators, who have the time to give significant one-on-one attention to children, are available. We have the unique ability to teach social skills, which are essential in youth development, delinquency prevention and the development of the future citizens of this country. We join the family and the school in the role of facilitating and participating in the positive development and education of children.

We often find that new staff fall into one or more of three personality types...

The Gatekeeper is very detail oriented and safety conscious. The Gatekeeper pays attention to the routine, deadlines, and necessary paperwork. The Gatekeeper knows where each of the children is at all times. The Gatekeeper ensures the program is clean, tidy, and organized. The gatekeeper ensures that equipment is taken care of, supplies are not wasted, things are resources are used with care.

The Activity Freak is the life of the afterschool program that always has ideas for fun things to do. The Activity Freak knows that the essence of childhood learning is play. Playfulness, enthusiasm and "funergy" seem to flow from the Activity Freak. Kids flock to the Activity Freak, and are willing to play any game that the Activity Freak wants to play.

The Soul Searcher is emotionally in touch with the daily, individual changing needs of the school-age child and coworker. The soul searcher shows empathy and understanding when speaking with others. When a kid or a teacher is sad and in need of some encouragement, the soul searcher knows and acts. Children bond closely and often discuss close personal things with the Soul Searcher.

Great afterschool educators are strong in all of these functions, but more importantly they are critically reflective practitioners – listening intently to children, carefully observing what is happening in the program, constantly reflecting on their performance, and continually developing their skills. It is this critical reflection on our practices in OST that makes an afterschool educator a professional.

Again, welcome!

Let's have lots of fun!



Mike Ashcraft

The Children's Choice Story

Before starting Children's Choice, Mike worked for an organization that had a common way of operating and making decisions. That organization was classically hierarchical – a big boss at the top and some upper-level administrators were the “thinkers” and the “deciders.” They withheld knowledge, information, power, and control. The rest of the staff were the “doers” – fulfilling tasks assigned to us, our performance measured by how these tasks were completed. The performance measures were all about money, often to the detriment of quality. We, the doers, were capable of thinking too. We had ideas, lots of ideas, and some of them were good.

When we created Children's Choice, we knew how important it was to do things differently. We decided to put quality first, knowing that if we focus on quality, the business of the business will take care of itself. We decided to focus on the staff in a way that we could ALL be the thinkers, deciders, and doers. We knew it was wise to listen to the doers who are in the programs doing the work every day. We also knew that it was wise to listen to the children and families who are also the doers, experiencing the program in their own ways. We knew that there was congruity in the needs of both children and staff, that both have a need to be listened to, a need for a sense of belonging, and a need for autonomy.

In some organizations, Mission Statements, Values Statements, and Vision Statements are written when an organization is founded and then they are forgotten. Not so at Children's Choice. We know our mission and we remain focused on it every day. **Our mission is to facilitate the positive development of children through our holistic approach to out-of-school-time programming that supports families. We create playful learning environments, caring and empowering relationships, and enriching experiences that meet the ever-changing physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of children.**

This is what we do every day. We create environments, relationships, and experiences – the great OST programming triad. This is the boat we are all in, and we ask everyone to get their paddles in the water and help us accomplish the mission. On our journey we are guided by the boss of Children's Choice. The boss is our values. They guide our decision-making and problem-solving. We hire for these values. We assess performance based on these values.

We are the first school-based, school-age care provider in Albuquerque to be licensed by the Children, Youth and Families Department of New Mexico. We are the only school-based, school-age care provider in New Mexico that is nationally accredited and designated an ECECD 5-Star OST program.

We believe that OST programming is more than a safe place for kids to be while their parents are working, and it is more than a fun place to be. It is one of the few times in a child's day which provides the opportunity to interact positively with children of different ages. It is perhaps the only time in a day that teachers, who have the time to give significant one-on-one attention to children, are available. We have the unique ability to teach the social skills that are essential in youth development, delinquency prevention and the development of the future citizens of this country. We join, in true partnership, with the family and the school in the role of participating in the positive development and education of our children.

7 Core Values

<p>Safety and Beneficial Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I supervise children closely and follow health and safety guidelines. • I understand that risk is essential for health, well-being, and whole child development. • I help people learn by providing challenging opportunities to fail. • I allow risk-taking activities like swimming, running, and rock climbing because they have the benefit of developing confidence, caution, and courage. • I make like a Personal Floatation Device, keeping others safe as necessary to still get “into the water” while growing and developing positively. 	<p>Positivity and Playfulness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that play is the essence of childhood learning and that brain and intellectual development are enhanced by play. • I project a “can do” attitude, a positive outlook, and playful energy. • Being playful and playing with children is my way of being. • I find joy and opportunities to be playful in ordinary moments. • I am courteous and respectful to others. • I am good at “finding the pony” during difficult times. • I make like a Puppy and bring boundless “FUNERGY” to my job. 	<p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I listen deeply to the people I serve with empathy and understanding. • I make listening visible through documentation. • I listen to others, reflect on that listening, and plan experiences to help others grow and develop. • I facilitate discussion rounds to honor and elevate the voices of others. • When I hear an opinion different from my own, I dig deeper and respond curiously. • I make like a Sponge, absorbing everything, listening with my whole body, soaking up what others are saying. 	
<p>Belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that belonging is a basic human need. • I introduce and orient new members. • I am welcoming and inclusive, helping others discover the wonderful ways we are alike. • I create a homelike environment and display the images, art, and voices of the children. • I cultivate positive relationships. 	<p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that people need autonomy, and to have a say in decisions that affect them. • I am not “in charge,” instead I serve those in my charge. • I ask questions and offer choices. • I share knowledge, information, power, and control. • I plan and facilitate an emergent curriculum that draws from the 	<p>Community and a Culture of Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I serve others and nurture their needs. • I care for the physical, mental, and emotional health of the community, the families, my coworkers, and the kids. • When I have issues with others, I talk to them, not about them. • I care for the organization and take care of our image in the community. • I care for and conserve materials, resources, and time. 	<p>Lifelong Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that change is constant and improvement must happen even when succeeding. • I am always learning how to best facilitate the positive development of children. • I am a critically-reflective practitioner on a quest for personal mastery. • I apply my learning to improve my practices.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I create playful activities and rituals with the purpose of building a sense of belonging. • I make like a Magnet, making connections and drawing others together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interests of the children. • I make like a Circle of Sociocracy, holding space for the voices of others, a space to exercise their power, problem-solving, and creativity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I hold myself accountable for behaving in ways that show I care. • I make like a Baker, not getting my own slice, but baking a bigger pie for everyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recognize my mistakes, admit them, and learn from them. • I get outside of my comfort zone so that I can grow. • I make like a Voyager, seeking new visions of world-class quality.
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Mission

To facilitate the positive development of children through our holistic approach to out-of-school-time programming that supports families. We create playful learning environments, caring and empowering relationships, and enriching experiences that meet the ever-changing physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of children.

Vision

The vision is ideological, but possible. It is challenging, but realistic. It is not a wishful fantasy, but an attainable picture of our future. It is the result of accomplishing our goals and our mission.

We envision a future... where (THIS) is possible!

- Children's Choice works in true partnership with children, staff, family members, and members of the community to provide the support they need to meet their full potential.
- everyone has a place where they belong, where their voice will be heard, where there are ample and equitable opportunities for continuous growth and improvement.
- a workplace that empowers and develops new leaders, enhances the physical, mental, and emotional health of the staff, and creates a culture that brings joy and a sense of caring.
- strong, competent children run the programs and strong competent staff run the organization.

Goals

It is the goal of the Children's Choice OST program to give each child an opportunity to...

1. Develop physical, intellectual, and social skills.
2. Develop a sense and understanding of positive values.
3. Develop self-confidence, self-respect and self-reliance.
4. Develop good decision-making, leadership and social competency skills.
5. Develop positive family and peer relationships.
6. Develop interpersonal and cultural competencies.
7. Develop interest, respect and understanding of our natural world.
8. Develop sportsmanship, teamwork and a sense of fair play.
9. Develop a commitment to learning.
10. HAVE A WHOLE LOTTA FUN!

Philosophy Statements

Image of the Child & Social Constructivism

We view children as strong, competent, tenacious learners who are active protagonists of their growth and development processes. Children do not passively acquire knowledge that flows from teachers. Moreover, what children learn does not necessarily follow what is taught. Talking isn't teaching, and listening isn't learning. "More learning is caught than taught." Learning is due to the children's own construction, a consequence of their actions and work. Learning is an active process whereby knowledge is built by the learner. They layer new knowledge upon what they already know. Knowledge is constructed through relationships, social interactions

and experiences. Learners co-construct knowledge with others in a social context. They create meaning from experiences. Children build ways of thinking and behaving by interacting with their environment and with other more knowledgeable or less knowledgeable people, and these interactions lead to ongoing changes in a child's thoughts and behaviors.

As children construct their own knowledge, adults can scaffold learning by giving children new vocabulary, suggesting possible solutions to problems, providing resources, modeling behaviors, or showing them where to find more information. Imagine educators and caregivers as a scaffold that children can use to more quickly and easily construct their own knowledge. Scaffolding is a way to extend the knowledge children construct to new heights to reach upper developmental levels they couldn't have reached without the scaffolding. It helps them to climb from one area of learning to another – to make connections. Scaffolding challenges children to learn and helps them develop new ways to think and new cognitive strategies to use. Scaffolding is a way to facilitate (or make easier) the positive development of children.

All cognitive functions flow from social interactions within the context of culture. Most of the learning happens through dialog, and reflecting on shared experiences. Learning does not happen first on the inside, and THEN expressed on the outside; learning happens first on the social level and then it expands and becomes more as it becomes inner speech, an inner dialog that evolves into mindset.

Growth, Development, and Learning:

We are OST professionals who understand and appreciate early and middle childhood as dynamic periods of growth and development. We champion the interaction of school-age children with their peers and adults alike in a safe environment. We recognize, value, and promote the unique opportunities children encounter in OST.

Childhood is characterized by many early stages of intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth. We enhance classroom learning by providing children with opportunities to practice skills they have learned in the classroom and apply them in real-life situations that have personal meaning. We offer safe activities and environments staffed by caring, authoritative, competent adults and are a result of collaborative efforts between families, schools and the larger community.

A unique opportunity lies in our flexibility to focus on the entire breadth of developmental needs of children. In this way, we are uniquely positioned to facilitate the positive development of a wide variety of competencies

Children's Choice values and appreciates the importance of the caregivers. They invest in them massively and trust them massively. They are expected to make mistakes and to learn from their mistakes. It is important to Children's Choice that all employees enjoy their jobs and find their work meaningful. Caregivers are expected to be playful and have fun.

Children's Choice understands that people who enjoy their work and find it meaningful have are more productive, more committed and do a better job. A playful and fun-filled work environment creates better staff teams. This results in a higher quality program, which results in healthier and happier families, which in the long-term is good in a business sense.

By trusting and empowering staff, looking out for their best interest, and genuinely caring about their emotional well-being, we develop more productive and effective staff teams. When leaders create healthy and positive work environments and a culture of playfulness they can thereby increase job satisfaction and performance. Leaders can focus on the big picture and the powerful positive feedback systems that can strengthen and transform their organizations.

Role of the Adult:

Under the old paradigm authority and control were centralized within a clear, vertical chain of communication and command, and there was a high level of formalization, rigid departmentalization and a narrow span of control. Under the old paradigm employees were expected to follow policies, procedures and instructions. They were expected to keep busy and not expected to think. The administrators were expected to do all of the thinking and organizing - the “brains”, and the caregivers were expected to implement their instructions – the “hands.”

Under the old paradigm only the administrators were highly trained and educated. Only administrators were given the knowledge about the inner-workings of the organization. Top-level administrators alone had the power to make changes and decisions. They used this power to control lower level managers and entry-level staff members. Caregivers were treated as mindless automatons.

Children’s Choice shifted from a paradigm of control to one of empowerment. Under the new paradigm, Children’s Choice squashes the hierarchy and gives employees at all levels the knowledge and information needed to exercise power and control. Children’s Choice blurs the lines between the roles of administrators and caregivers. Caregivers are highly trained and can be trusted to make decisions and guide the development of the program and the organization.

The purpose of our program is to be not only a safe and fun place for children to, but also a place for growth, nurturance, and development of life skills. The role of the OST educator working in this program is to be a facilitator of the positive development of children through healthy interactions. Our programs are like theatrical productions, and we are all cast in multiple roles. We make like puppies, portraying the emotional affect of positivity and playfulness that we call funergy. We are mediators who are both caring and stern and who intervene with the intention of helping kids to be self-guided. We are set designers who prepare environments that foster relationships between people and materials. We are researchers who listen, observe, record, and hypothesize. We listen to children’s questions and ideas and observe their actions. We are collaborators and accomplices that help children to carry out their plans. We brainstorm and make mind-maps, and diagrams on how the topics of interest might branch out. We are their audience who sometimes watch, remaining silent, and sometimes applaud with enthusiasm. We are documenters who take notes, photos, and gather evidence to use as the basis for programming our environments, relationships, and experiences. When we use the term educator, we refer to all of us who share the mission to facilitate the positive development of children regardless of title.

Our mission is to facilitate (make easier) the positive development of children. The word facilitate originates from the Latin adjective *facilis*, meaning “easy.” In Spanish, *fácil* means easy. But the role of an educator at Children’s Choice is not to make tasks and projects easy for children. A better way to describe our role is as a provocateur. We provoke strong emotions, excitement, and interests. We provoke a spark of interest in something that may grow from slight curiosity into focused attention and engagement, which can grow into passion.

A provocateur is not making a task easier. Instead, we are in essence *difficil*-itators. I know, that’s not a word, but we sometimes make up words – like funergy. In Spanish, *difficil* means difficult. So, a provocateur observes what children are doing and saying, looks for ways to explore their ideas more deeply, and adds challenge, difficulty, and complexity. When we do this, we bring them into the Zone of Proximal Development where positive development happens best. When someone’s interest grows into passion, and that passion is combined with hard work and perseverance for long-term goals, they develop grit. So, we make the positive development of children easier not by making things easy, but by making things more difficult and more complex.

We work to establish and encourage realistic boundaries and high expectations for children. High expectations provide children with the appropriate challenges and feedback necessary for brain enrichment. We plan for interactions with fun, caring, authoritative and mature adults, who are experts in child development. We plan for interactions between children of different ages who model responsible behavior and share a sense of community.

Our role is to create a dialog-rich program. We ask good, open-ended questions that stimulate children's thinking and provoke discussion. We facilitate, orchestrate, and gently guide – keeping the dialog on track, so that every child has a chance to participate, and so that children consider the matter at hand with all their attention and interest. In these conversations, the educator does not fish for right answers or impart information. We listen. We honor those who speak and let them finish what they are saying.

Documentation

Documentation is a very deep and intentional form of listening where the listener (adult or child) is so engaged in the act of listening that they are documenting what the speaker is saying by taking notes, or making audio or video recordings. It is the act of gathering these recordings together with other artifacts they use to express themselves: drawings, sculptures, and photos of creations that are too difficult to display (block castles, miniature cities, mud buildings) for the purpose of Reflective Practice.

When we OST practitioners observe and listen to the children, they continuously suggest to us what interests them, and what they would like to explore in a deeper way. One of the most powerful things you can do with school-age children is involve them in gathering documentation. Let them take pictures and create videos that document and celebrate learning. Bring children to revisit documentation panels in the making. Read and reread and reflect.

Pedagogical documentation is an invaluable way to connect children to the community, create a sense of belonging, and to reveal to the children how WE SEE THEM. Documentation tells them that their ideas, their effort, and their strategies are taken seriously. Children may use documentation to learn how we view them and their ideas, or as food for thought to form new ideas. Documentation also helps school staff, faculty, and families stay connected to the program and creates a sense of community in which all voices are listened to. The very act of documenting changes the educators' views of teaching and learning. To paraphrase what we say about reading in the third grade... first we learn to document, and then we document to learn.

Reflective Practice

Reflective Practice is the process of discussing and interpreting Documentation together with a group of critically reflective practitioners (coworkers) and/or a group of children for the purpose of understanding the needs and interests of children and each other. Reflective Practice allows practitioners to hear diverse perspectives and interpretations, helping them construct their own theory base of knowledge to develop personal mastery.

Why do we engage in the practice of documentation and reflection? In part, so that we can learn to design and facilitate more engaging, meaningful, and enriching experiences that produce longer lasting and more profound holistic child development outcomes - experiences that emerge from the needs and interests of children and staff, and are planned and negotiated through meaningful, reciprocal relationships, so that we cultivate autonomy, belonging, and competencies, so that we are facilitating the positive development of children and staff.

We engage in documentation and reflection in order to understand how they and we are learning, so that we can scaffold the learning, so that we get to learn alongside them, so that we are constructing new knowledge and competencies as we work and reflect together, so that we are facilitating the positive development of the children and ourselves.

Environment:

We think of the OST program environment as an actual educator – an additional teacher. When we create a model environment, every child is presented with many developmentally appropriate materials and activities, so most of the children are engaged socially with each other and the materials. This gives the OST educator the freedom to work with small groups, truly listen to the children, and engage in documentation and reflective practice. The OST environment sends important cues to children about the way they should behave and feel, so

we provide an environment that encourages desirable behavior. We first provide an environment, which meets the basic biological needs of children such as safety, nutrition and water. Then we create a variety of areas where children can involve themselves in diverse ways: art, construction (fine motor skills), quiet conversation, food, science, strategy games, dramatic play, and outdoor play. We provide novelty and enrich the environment through new colors, posters, child's art, and music. We display documentation panels that narrate important learning moments. The program environment is a warm, nurturing and encouraging climate, a place where children are challenged in a non-threatening way.

Curriculum

Intentionality is the key to programming. We embrace curriculum that emerges from the interests of children and/or educators and is negotiated as it evolves within the social processes of the program. The movement toward boxed curriculum designed to raise math and literacy test scores restricts the vision and diminishes the image of the OST practitioner to being mere consumers and disseminators of information. Documentation, team reflection, and the negotiation of emergent curriculum enhances our image of the OST practitioner by viewing them as learners, questioners, critical thinkers, and creators of new and better knowledge of programming practices.

Quality OST programming provides balance in a child's life – balance between work and play; rituals and novelty; choice and community-building. Social Constructivism teaches how important active, hands-on experiences are in the learning process, so we use many resources to ensure the program focuses on the positive development of the whole child, integrating strategies for physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.

The activities are but one component of intentional programming that we consider. We provide a developmentally appropriate routine that is consistent and stable yet flexible, a routine that allows for the individual developmental needs of school-age children. Every child has unique needs. Some kids need to relax quietly right after school, some need a snack, some kids need to run off some energy, and some need to talk to their friends. Our routine allows kids to make these choices and explore and experiment with many other child-directed activities when the school bell rings. Children need some time to settle in before beginning the staff-directed activities that are integrated into the schedule.

It is important that children have the opportunity to develop and practice social skills during activities so most activities involve mixed-age groups and a lot of interaction and playfulness. Novelty in experiential learning is a key to brain development, so we provide a variety of experiences such as field trips, guest speakers, role plays, long- and short-term projects, and enrichment clubs.

The OST curriculum focuses on a variety of skills through the implementation of enrichment clubs that may emphasize art, math, science, theater, physical education, music, journalism, the environment or public service. Through these enrichment clubs, we teach life skills such as cooking, earning/saving money, wise consumerism, health, nutrition, and safety; as well as social competencies such as problem solving, decision-making, negative peer pressure resistance skills, conflict resolution skills, friendship skills, and comfort with people of different backgrounds.

Compensation Philosophy Statement

Programs that are a model of quality have fairly compensated, well-trained, and strongly-committed staff. Children's Choice maintains a competitive compensation plan in order to recruit and retain top-quality staff. Employees are compensated based on their level of education, level of experience, continuing education, and performance. The more competent an employee is; they more they are compensated.

Rationale

Turnover of caregivers in OST programs is a major indicator of quality. Children in centers with high turnover spent less time engaged in social activities and were found to build vocabulary at slower rates than those in

more stable settings (Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips, 1990; Howes, Phillips and Whitebook, 1992). Children in higher-quality programs which were associated with low turnover rates had better language and pre-math skills, had more positive self-concepts, engaged in better relationships with their teachers, and demonstrated more advanced social competencies (Helburn, 1995). There are many factors that need to be part of a staff recruitment and retention plan: pay, training, empowerment, meaningful work, connection to co-workers, personal relevancy, the potential of full-time work, benefits, etc. Not the only issue, but one of the most obvious issues tied to turnover is that of low wages. If child care/afterschool/youth development educators cannot earn a worthy living wage in OST, they will seek other employment. The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reports mean wages for over 700 occupations, as surveyed by the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program. According to the 2004 OES survey, only 17 occupations report having lower mean wages than child care workers. Those who earn higher wages than child care workers include service station attendants, parking lot attendants, kennel workers, tree trimmers, and food servers.

The Children's Choice philosophy is that while programs may never be able to pay caregivers what they are truly worth, they must find ways to establish compensation levels that are fair and competitive in the human service industry. When caregivers and site directors are worrying and complaining about their pay, they spend less energy on improving performance and accomplishing the mission of the organization. Competitive compensation should not be viewed as a consequence of organizational success, but a prerequisite for success. Good compensation is an investment in quality.

In addition to good compensation, the other extremely important factor in quality and turnover is professional development. Research findings strongly indicate a need for higher levels of training and professional preparation, enhancement of available resources to reduce turnover. One researcher's major findings included "a clear relationship between both training and program quality, and training and longevity in the field, which suggests that providing expanding training opportunities, especially for newer staff, may have positive implications for retention" (Morrow, 2000, p. 48). There was a statistically significant relationship between intent to leave and the amount of training respondents had received. Those who intended to leave had significantly less training (Morrow, 2000).

We have created an additional element in our system to link competencies with compensation. In our organization, we offer six full-day training modules per year. When our staff attend these training events, they get a dime raise in their hourly pay, which comes out to about \$180 per year. We do this because we value learning and the more competent they are, the more they deserve to be compensated.

Ten Commandments for Staff in Children's Choice OST Programs.

1. Know each child by name and greet all children by their names each day.
2. Interact and participate with the children.
3. Prepare a model indoor environment daily.
4. If the kids mess it up, they clean it up. Keep the site clean at all times.
5. Never leave a child unsupervised.
6. Use firm, fair and consistent discipline practices, following the discipline policy.
7. Offer the scheduled activities with enthusiasm.
8. Arrive at work on time or early. Your co-workers are counting on you.
9. See everything through the eyes of a concerned parent.
10. Have Fun!

Formal Organizational Chart

It is the philosophy of Children's Choice to operate as a "Learning Organization", which means in part that we try to be non-hierarchical in every possible way. The staff members operate as a team, so each member is responsible for expressing concern or disagreement with the actions of any other team member regardless of ranking within the organization. All staff members are strongly encouraged to be involved in the hiring process, curriculum design, policy development, etc. All aspects of the operation of Children's Choice are open to staff involvement at any level. All staff including "administrators" are actively involved with the children in the day to day operation of the program the majority of their time at work. Children's Choice is a not-for-profit corporation.

The board of directors is legally responsible for actions of Children's Choice.

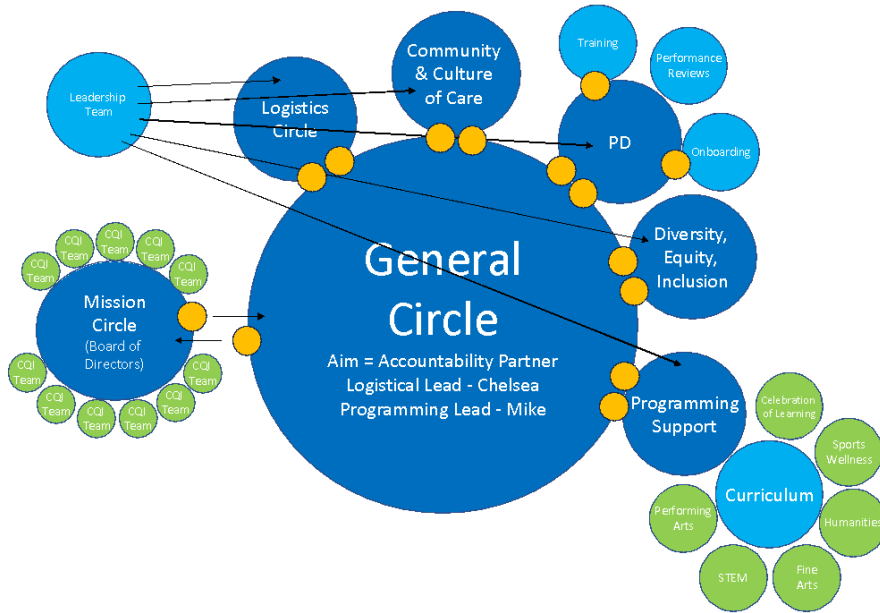
At the staff level, Mike Ashcraft is the Executive Director, responsible for the overall operation of the organization, and facilitating positive performance and professional development of all employees. The Executive Director supervise the Logistics Coordinator and the Programs Coordinators who supervise the Afterschool Program Directors/Site Directors.

The Programs Coordinators provide additional mentoring, guidance and support for the Site Directors. The Programs Coordinators inspect the sites for licensing and accreditation standards. The Site Directors supervise the Associate Directors, and caregiving staff. Individual sites have meeting to discuss site-specific issues. Multi-level design teams meet to design curriculum or work tools such as evaluation criteria. The site directors meet with the program director and founders each week to disseminate information, create program development strategies, lead change efforts, make decisions and solve organizational problems. The entire organizational staff comes together once a year for a leadership and teambuilding retreat.

The site directors, who are responsible for the day-to-day operation of their individual OST programs, are full-time professionals which meet the qualifications of The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care. The site directors are responsible for facilitating positive performance and professional development of the school-age teachers or school-age caregivers. The school-age caregiver is the entry-level position for Children's Choice.



In 2020, Children’s Choice adopted Sociocracy as a way of making decisions and quality improvement efforts.



This means that in addition to being organized within a legally necessary hierarchical structure for legal accountability with local, state, and federal requirements, in terms of the day-to-day operational or implementational decisions, we have adopted the Sociocratic Circle-Organization Model. What does this mean?

- **The Principle of Consent:** We make decisions following the Principle of Consent. Except as required by law and as otherwise stated in these policies, procedural decisions shall be made with the consent of circle members. Consent shall be defined as having “no reasoned objections.” In other words, a policy decision can only be made if no member of the circle raises an argued and paramount objection to it. Should there be a paramount objection to a decision, arguments for the objection must be given. An objection without reasoned argument will not be considered.
- **The Principle of Circles:** Children’s Choice is organized into a hierarchy of semi-autonomous, self-organizing circles that are responsible for operational decisions within their domain. A circle is a group of persons who are operationally related. Each circle has its own aim and has the authority and responsibility to execute, measure, and control its own activities and to maintain an appropriate level of knowledge and skill, overseen by the parent circle.
- **The Principle of Double-Linking:** In the hierarchical structure of circles, a lower circle is double-linked to the next higher circle by the Circle Leader and at least one additional person, belong to and participate in the decision making of the next higher circle.
- **Circle Structure:** Children’s Choice is organized into a hierarchy of double-linked circles, in the following order, from top to bottom.

- A. **Board of Directors/Mission Circle:** The Board of Directors shall be identical to the Mission Circle, the highest circle in a sociocratically-governed organization. The Aim of the Board/Mission Circle is to accomplish the Children’s Choice mission. Except as required by law or as otherwise stated in these bylaws the board shall function according to the Sociocratic Circle-Organization Model principles, and be subject to any provisions of these bylaws and all the corporations policies and procedures. Further information about the Board of Directors is contained in Article IV.
- B. **General Circle:** The Aim of the Board/Mission Circle is to accomplish the Children’s Choice mission. The operational leaders of the General Circle shall consist of the CEOs appointed the Mission Circle. Additional members of the General Circle include the Programs Coordinators, and at least one representative from each Program Site. The General Circle shall manage the operations of the Corporation within the limits set by the Mission Circle. The General Circle shall delegate part of its decision-making authority to lower operational circles so their aims can be achieved. The General Circle shall decide, in its sole discretion, whether new operational circles should be created or whether existing circles should be split up, combined, or dissolved. The operational circle in question may not participate in the decision to dissolve itself. The consent of the representative of the operational circle in question shall not be required for the General Circle to act, but such representative may in such discussions in the General Circle.
- C. **Operational Circles:** Definition: an Operational Circle is a group of people with a defined membership and a shared Aim defined by the “parent” or higher-level circle. The Aim of all Operational Circles is to support the mission through more specific Aims that support the Aim of the Parent Circle. Circles have autonomy to make decisions within certain limits (a defined Domain) agreed on in the next higher circle.
- D. Each circle, within the Aim and Domain set by the next higher circle, shall:
- a. determine and control its own actions to achieve its aim as defined by the next higher circle,
 - b. consent to new members,
 - c. assign the leading, doing, and measuring of circle roles and responsibilities to its own members to achieve its aim and execute its own policies,
 - d. maintain a transparent, record keeping system of policy decisions and other information,
 - e. elect one or more representatives from its members to serve as the circle’s representative(s) to the next higher circle
 - f. decide how to allocate the resources included in its budget,
 - g. form helping circles to do research, gather information, and prepare decision-making recommendations for the circle,
 - h. assigning an aim and allocating part of its resources to those circles (helping circles may be composed of persons from the circle, other circles, and external advisors),
 - i. with the participation of the representative(s) of that circle, elect the operations leader of the next lower circle, and
 - j. decide whether lower circles shall be subdivided, combined, or dissolved.

Children's Choice Child Care Services, Inc.

Program Policies

Preface

These policies and procedures are issued by Children's Choice Child Care Services, Inc. In cases where these policies differ from one of the following related requirements, regulations and codes, Children's Choice must follow the more stringent requirement.

Objectives of the Policies & Procedures

- to establish minimum standard policies and procedures for the management of Children's Choice facilities which provide school-age care
- to establish procedures that systemically facilitate a high level of safety;
- to encourage the establishment and maintenance of school-based, school-age care programs that provide a humane, safe, and developmentally appropriate environment; in order to protect the health, safety, and development of the children.

Policy for licensure by the Children, Youth and Families Department.

All Children's Choice programs are required to be licensed as child care providers by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, Child Care Licensing Division of the State of New Mexico. A copy of the license must be posted in a conspicuous area in the program space at all times.

Administrative Policies

Hours & Days of Operation:

- Before-School Program (where applicable): 7AM - until school begins.
- After-School Program: school dismissal - until 6 PM.
- Full-Day Program: 7AM - 6PM.

Full-Day Programs will be offered at select schools during the winter, spring and summer vacations, conference weeks, teacher in-service days, Martin Luther King Day, and Presidents Day. We are closed: January 1, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas and Christmas Eve (when these days fall on a weekend, we will observe the holiday on the same day as the federal government). Children's Choice will be closed on the following days: January 1, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas and Christmas Eve. When December 31 falls on a weekday we are closed because school security is off. If the national holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed the same day the federal government observes the holiday. We are also closed on "snow days."

Yearly Calendar

Children's Choice training dates, training dates from outside source, staff retreats, staff orientation and design team meetings are continually being added and constantly changing.

Weekly staff meetings are decided and scheduled at the site level and discussed with all team members at the site level.

Each school has a unique school calendar for in-service days, conference weeks, and vacation breaks. This site-specific calendar is shared with staff on the site level.

January 1 = Closed - paid holiday

Martin Luther King Day = Open for full-day program

President's Day = Open for full-day program

APS Spring Break = Open for full days for the entire break

Memorial Day = Closed - paid holiday

Juneteenth = Closed – paid holiday
July 4 = Closed – paid holiday
Labor Day = Closed – paid holiday
Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving = Closed – paid holiday
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day = Closed – paid holiday
December 31 = closed on weekdays, not a paid holiday.

Children's Records:

Children's Choice will maintain complete records for each child to be completed before the child is admitted. Records will be kept at the program for twelve (12) months after the child's last day of attendance. Records will all information required by licensing to include:

- Registration and Enrollment Agreement: These online forms must be signed by at least one parent with an outline of the services and any costs.
- On-Site Accident Reports: This form is used to record any accidents, injuries or illnesses that occur during the program and which require first aid or medical attention and any observations of recent bruises, bites or signs of abuse or neglect, both of which must be reported to a parent. The accident must be signed by at least one parent, and a school-age care staff member.
- Medication Record: Children's Choice must keep a written record of the dosage, date, time of medication, with the signature of the staff member that administered the medication, and the initials of the child who received the medication. This information will be provided to the parents who will initial/date acknowledgment of the information received on the day the medication is given.
- Confidentiality Policy & Procedures regarding access to children's records.
 - The registration information and payment contract will be readily accessible to licensing officials.
 - Any parent or guardian may request to inspect any formal documents in their children's records at any time for any reason.
 - Children's Choice will not release private personal information to outside parties without the informed, written authorization of the parent or guardian on record. The parent will decide if the reason to release the information is valid. A copy of the signed Authorization to Release Confidential Information form will be kept in the child's file and a copy will be given to the parent or guardian if desired.
 - Children's Choice will maintain confidentiality of information unless the child's welfare is at risk. When there is reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, Children's Choice may deem the request valid and decide to share confidential information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the child's interest.
 - Children's Choice will keep the file for at least three (3) years after the child's last day of attendance.

Personnel Records:

Children's Choice maintains a complete human resources file on each staff member, including substitutes and volunteers having direct contact with the children. Children's Choice takes appropriate steps to protect the privacy of personal information contained in human resources files. The Executive Directors designate the official records custodian. An official human resources file for all staff employees will be retained in the Children's Choice main office in a locked cabinet. Other human resources files may be maintained, as appropriate, at the individual sites at which the staff may be scheduled to work or act as a substitute staff.

The types of documents maintained and retained in human resources files may include the following:

- Application for Staff Employment,
- Resumes or Curriculum Vitae,
- Diplomas, certificates, training records and related personal accomplishment documentation,

- Job Offer,
- W-4 Form,
- I-9 Form,
- 3 Year Employment History Verification,
- Fingerprint Receipt,
- Criminal Records Clearance,
- Job Description,
- Training Log,
- Signed On-Site Orientation,
- Current CPR/First Aid Certification,
- Performance Evaluations,
- Corrective Action Records,
- Temporary Disability Records,
- Consultation Reports and other related documentation,
- Appropriate insurance, retirement and other benefits information,
- Company laptop/credit card/petty cash agreements
- Direct deposit requests, and/or
- Employee Separation Sheet.

Internal access to the human resources files is subject to the following guidelines:

- A staff employee, after verification of the employee's identity, may review any information pertaining to him/her contained in the file.
- A properly identified and authorized representative of a staff employee, with a signed authorization from the employee, may review any information pertaining to the employee contained in the official file. If the authorized representative wishes to make a copy of any information in the employee's file, a written request for copies shall be addressed to the Executive Directors. A reasonable charge may be made for copies.
- Site Directors may request and review human resources files provided there is an official need for such access.

External access to human resources files of personally identifiable information or other employment related data/information about an individual without written authorization from the employee/individual shall be directed to the Program Coordinators. That office shall release only the following information:

- Past or present employment,
- Verification of dates of employment, and/or
- Position or title.

A Children's Choice employee is prohibited from releasing any information about another employee to an outside employer or agency without a written authorization from that individual.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as a prohibition against a letter of recommendation or other employment related information being released upon signed authorization of a present or past employee. This information shall be based on documented facts or shall be stated as the opinion of the writer. A copy of the employee's authorization should be attached to any document released.

An employee's site assignment and telephone number may be made available through an employee phone list and/or email staff schedules.

Other external access to human resources files shall be authorized only by the official records custodian and normally under the following circumstances:

- Upon demand from licensing, FOCUS Quality Specialists, and Accreditation Endorsers at any time.
- To protect the legal interests of Children's Choice.
- In response to a law enforcement authority, when appropriate.
- Pursuant to a federal, state or local government statute or regulation that specifically requires disclosure of certain information to certain parties.
- In response to a lawfully issued administrative summons or judicial order including a search warrant or subpoena. A subpoena or other legal process for the production of the human resources file shall be reviewed by the Executive Directors prior to release of the information.
- In compelling circumstances affecting the immediate health or safety of the individual.
- Children's Choice will maintain confidentiality of information unless the employee's welfare is at risk. When there is reason to believe that an employee's welfare is at risk, Children's Choice may decide to share confidential information with the agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the employees' interest.

An employee has the right to request correction or amendment of any information contained in the employee's human resources file.

Process: The official records custodian for Children's Choice authorizes the appropriate parties to retain the documents or human resources files as stipulated within this policy and pursuant to state licensing and appropriate governing authorities' record retention regulations and guidelines. Children's Choice will keep the file for at least seven years after the employee's last day of employment.

Site Directors maintaining employee files are responsible for ensuring a proper need or a right to know when allowing review of such files. The program Coordinators may be consulted regarding access to human resource files.

Payroll Records: Payroll and time records of all part-time employees will be maintained to meet reporting requirements of applicable federal and state regulations and insurance underwriters. Both the employee and the supervisor are held accountable for the accuracy of time records, which reflect the exact hours and days actually worked. Contract employees submit a check request/payment voucher, which identifies the service provided, and the amount owed.

Behavior of Children:

Rights and Responsibilities of Children:

- Every child in the program has the right to be safe.
- Every child in the program has the right to be treated with respect and kindness.
- Every child in the program has the right to have and share their opinions and desires.
- Every child in the program has the right to participate in all activities if they have met their responsibilities.
- Children are responsible for following the instructions of staff and enrichment instructors the first time given.
- Children are responsible for remaining in supervised program spaces.
- Children are responsible for showing their whereabouts on the accountability system (clothes pin accountability board) on site.
- Children are responsible for showing respect for their fellow program participants and staff.
- Children are responsible for treating the supplies and equipment with care and respect.
- Children are responsible for following posted program rules and posted rules for interest centers.
- Children are responsible for cleaning up their own messes and participating in program-wide clean-up activities.
- Children are responsible for the care and supervision of their personal belongings.

Standards of Behavior

We believe in a positive form of guidance and behavior management. The word discipline is derived from the Latin word

discipulus, meaning “a learner”. Our role in guidance is to teach children how to make good choices and help them develop self-discipline, a sense of caring, a sense of fair play, and maturity. We encourage individuality and independence, but each child must be able to interact within the group’s limits. We have frequent discussions involving the children in creating the standards of behavior in the program, a social contract, so the children are aware of the following basic rules.

Children’s Choice prohibits ALL negative or unnecessarily punitive approaches to behavior management, including, but not limited to:

- Physical/corporal punishment /aversive stimuli of any type, including shaking, biting, hitting, or putting anything on or over a child’s mouth;
- Withdrawal of water, food, rest, bathroom access, or access to outdoors;
- Forced physical exercise;
- Group punishment for individual behavior;
- Abusive or profane language, including yelling;
- Any form of psychological pain, demeaning, shaming, public or private humiliation; or
- Unsupervised separation.

Program Rules

1. Follow the instructions of Children's Choice staff the first time given.
2. Respect and care for other people and their possessions.
3. Respect and care for the supplies, the equipment and the facility.
4. Be responsible for your own actions, possessions, and messes.
5. Walk slowly and speak softly in the multi-purpose room.
6. Use playground equipment the way it was meant to be used.
7. Stay in areas that are supervised by Children's Choice staff.
8. Show citizenship by participating in site clean up activities.
9. Be honest and trustworthy in all you do.
10. Be fair when playing games and using equipment.
11. Have Fun!

Discipline Procedures

Our educators first attempt to prevent misbehavior by creating high-quality learning environment that encourage desirable behavior, creating empowering routines and activities that engage kids in appropriate self-guided behavior, and building caring and supportive relationships that promote prosocial behavior. Unfortunately there are times when children display inappropriate behavior. There will be “No Tolerance” for major infractions such as unprovoked violence, threats of violence toward children or staff, or evading supervision, in which case we will ask the parent(s) to pick up the child from the program immediately. For other infractions, the following procedures take place.

Step 1. Warnings:

We let the child know specifically what he/she is doing that we want to stop, and what consequences they can predict will happen if this behavior continues. Note: When children break rules that they know and understand, especially those with automatic consequences that are established in advance, they don't get warnings.

Step 2. Follow Through on Warning:

Forfeit Privileges: A child who is abusing equipment forfeits his/her privilege to use that equipment that day. Children who are arguing forfeit the privilege of playing together that day. A child who is defiant forfeits all CC privileges until he/she complies with appropriate staff instructions.

Receive a Logical Consequence: Children may be required to complete a logical consequence in order to restore the privileges they forfeited by making a bad choice. Consequences are not punishments or angry reactions from educators. Logical consequences are related to the misbehavior, reasonable for the developmental level of the child, and respectful of children. A child who chooses to engage in destructive behavior will correct the damage and engage in some type of constructive behavior such as organizing the equipment. A child who chooses to throw trash on the ground will pick up that trash, plus extra trash. A child running in a walk slowly area may have to go back to where they started running and walk slowly.

Reparations: This is the, “you broke it, you fix it” consequence. A child who accidentally causes another child to be injured may be asked to help administer first aid. A child who vandalizes property or destroys equipment will be asked to restore or replace the item. A child who insults another child may be asked to think of and say a number of things that are good about that child.

Restitution: This more advanced stage of guidance, is for children who have already learned about logical consequences and reparations. This is the, “you broke it, so **how** are **you** going to fix it” stage. The child will be

involved in deciding what action will “make it right” to the victim, creating a personal solution and building the skill of recognizing mistakes, admitting mistakes, and fixing mistakes. The victim may be an individual child, the organization, or the CC program community.

Parent Notification: Parent will be notified of the problem and be asked to talk to the child on the phone, or pick up the child from the program.

Step 3. Parent Conferences:

During the parent conference the problem will be discussed and possible solutions examined. A behavior contract outlining expected behavior and the staff’s, the child’s and the family’s role in the solution will be drawn up.

Step 4. Follow-Up:

A follow up meeting with the parents and Children's Choice staff may be scheduled to review the child’s progress.

Step 5. Suspension:

In the event that the child’s behavior does not improve, a week-long suspension will be invoked.

Step 6. Dismissal:

If the child’s behavior upon return from suspension is not improved, he/she will be dismissed from the program.

Children's Choice makes every effort to work positively with each child, but the fact remains that our environment is not conducive to every child, and not every child has the skills or the desire to benefit by our type of program.

Note: Children may be dismissed or suspended from the program with no warning for major infractions where the safety of the staff or other children are compromised such as violence, threats of violence, or evading supervision.

Anti-Bullying Policy

It is important that all members of our community experience a program where all individuals can participate in a safe, respectful, and fear-free environment. It is the responsibility of every stakeholder to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes and supports this principle.

An act of bullying results in the targeted student feeling oppressed, fearful, distressed, injured, or uncomfortable. The aggression is repeated on more than one occasion and can include: physical, verbal, emotional, racial, sexual, written, electronic, damage to property, social exclusion, and intimidation. Bullying may be motivated by actual or perceived characteristics such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or identity, mental, physical or academic disability. Bullying often takes place in a social context.

Recognizing Bullying:

Bullying is more than a disagreement. For purposes of this policy, bullying is a way of using power aggressively in which a person is subjected to intentional, unwanted and unprovoked hurtful verbal and/or physical actions. Bullying is intentional, disrespectful, aggressive behavior, often with a difference in balance of power or strength. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. The term bullying shall encompass the activity of cyberbullying.

- Physical: hitting, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings.
- Verbal - taunting, teasing, intimidating, name calling, making threats.
- Social - gossip, manipulating, excluding/isolating, interfering with friendships.

Recognizing what is NOT Bullying:

- Children interacting have positive/neutral facial expressions.
- Children are not using their full physical force in “rough and tumble play.”
- Children alternate roles (chased and the chaser).
- Children choose to participate and/or stay together/keep interacting afterwards.
- Conflict is not bullying. When conflict happens, staff use conflict resolution strategies
 - When conflict happens, consider it a teaching moment. Take some time to process the situation and teach the ART of seeing both sides of any argument. Don’t “swoop in” and solve the conflict. Instead help kids come up with strategies for possible solutions.
 - Encourage children who are upset to “take two” = 2 W’s: Walk & Water. Take a walk and get some water.

- o Encourage the use of the Solo Spot: a place where a single child can go to take an emotional time out.
- o Teach de-stressing strategies: Robot-Rag Doll; Balloon Breaths; or Mr. Play Dough Head.
- o Encourage use of a Peace Table/Spot: a place where kids can sit and talk through their problem. Rules: tell the truth, no interrupting, no name-calling, try to solve the problem.

Bullying Intervention:

For unprovoked physical violence, the offending child should be sent home immediately.

For less serious occurrences, if appropriate/needed to keep children safe, physical separation might be necessary until both children are calm and ready to have some mediation and communication.

When you see something that you think might be bullying, A.C.T. A = Ask Questions; C = Choices - kids come up with choices and options for themselves (separate, boundaries moving forward, pick different activity, etc. T = Try it. Agree on one of the choices and try it out.

Follow Up:

After the issue is resolved and a choice is agreed on, follow up with children individually. Ask what is working; what is not working; and what changes need to be made to make the situation better.

Reporting Bullying:

Suspected bullying must be documented on an Incident Report and reported to the Site Director, school Principal, and shared with all program staff, so that the school is aware of the problem and in case issues are carrying over between school day and after-school, and so the entire team ensures bullying does not continue.

Continued Bullying:

Continued Bullying will not be tolerated. Staff are required to implement escalating consequences for bullying to include behavior contracts, suspension, and dismissal from the program.

Health, Safety & Nutrition Policies:

Procedure for conducting annual assessment of potential risks.

The Programs Coordinators will prepare quarterly reports, which include information and data from all:

- Accident Reports
- Incident Reports
- Licensing Surveys
- Fire Inspections
- Child Surveys
- Family Surveys
- Staff Surveys
- Host Surveys
- Parent Grievances

Each year at the annual leadership retreat, both Executive Directors and all Programs Coordinators will review this report to assess any actual or potential risk. The assessment and strategic plan to address any potential risks will be included in the annual strategic plan in the “Basics” section.

Accepting and Releasing Children Policy:

- Morning Sign-in: A parent or adult guardian must register with a signature the official transfer of the child from the care of the parent into the care of Children’s Choice.
- Afternoon Sign-in: A Children’s Choice staff member must register with a signature the official transfer of the children from the care of the school into the care of Children’s Choice.

- Sign-out: Upon departure from the program, a parent or adult guardian with written authorization to pick up the child must sign-out every program participant, officially transferring the child from the care of Children's Choice to the care of the parent.

Check-In and Check-Out Procedures

After-School Program: Children check-in with the school-age staff. In the after-school program, after all of the children have arrived; check the Ipad/attendance sheet for "no-shows." If a child who is scheduled on the Ipad but not indicated on the attendance sheet to be present in the after-school program does not check-in, the staff person doing check-in is responsible for following up on the child by calling the parents. Before making phone calls check with the other staff and children to attempt to determine the whereabouts of the child and check the phone messages.

Children must be signed out: We will check children out to authorized persons only. We ask everyone we do not know who arrives to pick up a child to show us identification. If a person other than those authorized arrives to pick up a child, we will not release the child to that person unless we have received permission from a parent first.

Check-Out Procedures:

- Every staff person is responsible for ensuring that no child leaves the site with anyone who does not have written permission. Before allowing anyone to sign out a child, introduce yourself and ask to see the person's photo identification. Check the identification against the people authorized to pick up the child.
- If a person not authorized on the registration form arrives to pick up the child, notify the director immediately and call the parent.
- Phone authorization: Verify the code word supplied by the parent to ensure you are actually talking to the parent.
- If a parent appears to be upset by this policy, reassure the parent that this policy is in place to ensure the safety of his/her child. Introduce yourself and reassure the parent that as soon as you get to know him/her, this will not be necessary.
- Ensure that all parents sign out their children on the iPad.
- If a child leaves without being signed out, move to the "not checked out room" and remind the parent to sign out in the future.

First Aid Policy:

All staff are required to be certified in First Aid and CPR. Children's Choice will have one (1) staff member or caregiver currently certified in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on duty at all times. Children's Choice will keep a first-aid kit and a first-aid manual together in the program in a location inaccessible to children and easily accessible to adults. The first aid kit must contain at least, band-aids, gauze pads, adhesive tape, scissors, soap, non-porous latex gloves, and a thermometer. School-age caregivers will treat blood spills cautiously and promptly decontaminate the area. Staff members will wear non-porous, single-use gloves when handling a blood spill, bloody diarrhea, bloody nose, or any other bodily fluid. Children's Choice will clean contaminated surfaces first with hot soapy water then with a disinfecting solution which is effective against HIV and Hepatitis B.

Health and Hygiene Policies:

Hand-washing: Children and staff members will wash their hands with soap and warm running water as needed. Staff and children will wash their hands whenever hands are contaminated with body fluids and always:

- After using a toilet;
- Before and after caring for a sick child;
- Before any food service activity, including setting the table;
- Before and after eating; and
- After handling pets or animals.

Housekeeping:

The program will keep the premises, including furniture, fixtures, toys and equipment clean, safe, disinfected, and free of debris and potential hazards. Materials dangerous to children must be secured in a manner making them inaccessible to children and away from food storage or preparation areas.

Staff will protect children from potential hazards such as the following: caustic or toxic art materials, cleaning agents, medications, hot liquids, and overexposure to heat or cold. All toilet rooms will have toilet paper, soap, and disposable towels at a height accessible to children. Children's Choice will not use a common towel or washcloth. Signs, showing proper hand-washing techniques must be posted in all hand-washing areas. All closets and bathroom locks accessible to children must have key access from the outside, preferable in the form of an outside release.

Food Service Policy:

Since we serve only snacks, we are not inspected by the Health Department. The staff must be diligent in maintaining a clean and healthy environment. Serving bowls, juice containers, tablecloths, tables, microwave, etc. must be clean and sanitary. A program will sanitize eating utensils, dishes and cups before reuse by washing them in a commercial dishwasher or by completing the following steps:

- 1 - wash with soapy water;
- 2 - rinse with clean warm water;
- 3 - sanitize by using 2 oz of bleach to 1 gallon of water (or bleach equivalent product approved by ECECD).

Wash all fresh fruit and vegetables. Serve food promptly and refrigerate immediately after use. Keep food requiring refrigeration, at 45 degrees (Fahrenheit) or below, and frozen food at 0 degrees (Fahrenheit) or below. Label and date all leftover food. Drinking water must be readily available at all times. In addition to these policies, Children's Choice staff must be familiar with and comply with the food service licensing requirements and accreditation requirements.

Procedures for maintaining cleanliness in the indoor or outdoor environment

Children's Choice will keep the premises, including furniture, fixtures, toys and equipment clean, safe, and free of debris and potential hazards. Staff will ensure that any indoor or outdoor activities, which create cleanliness issues, will be corrected before moving on to a new activity. Children's Choice will return the indoor or outdoor environment to school use in as good or better condition than it was when we took possession of the space.

- All garbage and refuse receptacles in kitchens and in outdoor areas will be durable, and constructed of materials that will not absorb liquids.
- Programs will sanitize eating utensils, dishes and cups before re-use by washing them in a dishwasher or by completing the following steps:
 - 1) wash with soapy water;
 - 2) rinse with clean warm water; and sanitize using a bleach: water solution - using one and one half teaspoons of bleach with one gallon of cool water or use an EPA registered sanitizer.
- Programs will provide sanitary cups or a drinking fountain for drinking water.
- Programs will not allow children to share drinking or eating utensils.
- Programs shall thoroughly sanitize food preparation surfaces before and after each use.
- Programs will treat blood spills cautiously and promptly decontaminate the area.
- Staff members will wear non-porous, single-use gloves when handling a blood spill, bloody diarrhea, bloody nose, or any other blood.
- Programs will clean contaminated surfaces first with hot soapy water then with sanitize using a bleach: water solution - using one and one half teaspoons of bleach with one gallon of cool water or use an EPA registered sanitizer.
- The program will have a cot or mat available for sick children and it will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after use.

- Staff will note any cleanliness issues in the outdoor environment that are not caused by the afterschool program and report them to the Site Director, who will complete a work order for APS Maintenance and Operations.

Fire and Emergency Safety Policy:

Fire Evacuation Plan: A fire evacuation plan must be posted in all indoor activity areas.

Inspection: Children's Choice shall request an annual fire inspection from the fire authority having jurisdiction. If the policy of the fire authority having jurisdiction does not provide for an annual inspection of the program, the program must document the date the request was made and to whom. A copy of the latest inspection must be posted. The latest copy of a fire inspection must indicate no violations or have accompanying documentation that any violations recorded in the fire inspection have since been corrected.

- **Exits:** There must be at least two (2) exits from each room. There must be at least two (2) exits remote from each other on each floor of the program. Exits ways must be kept free from obstructions at all times. Children's Choice will post evacuation plans, clearly showing two (2) exit routes for each room used by children in a visible and appropriate location within each room.
- **Drills:** Children's Choice will conduct and document at least one (1) lockdown or shelter in place per quarter and one (1) fire drill each month during normal program hours of operation. Children's Choice will:
 - Hold the drills at different times of the day;
 - Use the fire alarm or detector system;
 - Emphasize an orderly evacuation rather than speedy; and
 - Children's Choice will keep on file for at least 12 months a record of the fire drills with the date, time, number of adults and children participating, and any problems encountered during the fire drill. Records will be kept for one year.
- **Phone:** Children's Choice will keep a working telephone in an easily accessible place for calling for help in an emergency and will post emergency phone numbers for fire, police, ambulance, and the Poison Control Center on the phone.
- **Other Emergencies:** In case of weather or other emergencies, listen for instructions from the emergency-reporting agency.

Emergency Preparedness/Response Plan:

Emergency Definition: For the purpose of this policy, an emergency is a crisis that is an unexpected interruption from a previously normal state of functioning producing reactions such as turmoil, instability, and upheaval in a system. Examples: fire, bombing, hostage, shooting, loss of power or water, gas leak, snowfall, windstorm, APS closing.

Training and Information: Personnel receive training in how to respond to many types of emergencies such as injury, burns, unsafe environments, and insect stings in mandatory First Aid and CPR training. Personnel are trained in what to do if a non-authorized person attempts to remove a child from the program during their orientation. Personnel are trained in Children's Choice Emergency Procedures and handling illnesses during their orientation. Children are trained in emergency evacuation procedures in monthly documented fire drills. An evacuation plan is posted in all indoor activity areas. Written emergency numbers are posted on the program phone, so personnel can get help with any emergency.

In case of emergency: Determine if there is eminent threat or danger. And if necessary, take action to protect children, staff, and property. Eliminate or move away from threat. This may include evacuation, shelter-in-place, or lockdown.

Evacuation Procedures: in case of a danger on campus (fire, gas leak, bomb threat)

1. If fire, smoke or explosion occurs, activate the fire alarm.
2. Director/Senior Staff Member in Charge will gather the following items: iPad (for attendance); Field Trip Backpack with first aid kit, sunscreen, and child registration forms.
3. Do not take personal belongings.

4. Do **NOT** lock doors.
5. For children with special needs or chronic medical conditions, provide any needed assistance, and add any meds or inhalers to the field trip backpack.
6. Take the closest and safest of two identified routes.
7. Ensure all students, staff, and visitors exit the building and gather at the designated location.
8. Take attendance.
9. If the nearby area outside of the school is deemed unsafe, walk to the designated evacuation location above.
10. Take attendance.
11. If appropriate, call the main office and ask to be transported to our main office at 10601 Lomas Blvd NE, Albuquerque NM 87112; phone (505) 296-2880.
12. Once all children are safe, notify parents through the mobile app notification system, and follow up with individual phone calls until all parents have been reached. Follow normal checkout procedures when reuniting parents and children.
13. In case of iPad failure, document on paper, the name of the persons who picked the child, and the time each child was picked up.

Evacuation Sites:

- **Arroyo Del Oso:** Outside = Sister Cities Park, SW Corner of McKinley & Harper; Inside = Del Norte High School 5323 Montgomery Blvd NE, 883-7222.
- **Bandelier:** Outside = Hyder Park adjacent to Bandelier on SW corner of Pershing and Wellesley; Inside = Highland High School, 4700 Coal Ave SE, 265-3711.
- **Double Eagle:** Outside Double Eagle ES Park; Inside = North Star ES, 9301 Ventura NE, 856-6578.
- **Georgia O’Keeffe:** Outside Georgia O’Keeffe ES Park; Inside = Eisenhower Middle School, 11001 Camero Ave NE, 292-2530.
- **Hubert Humphrey:** Outside = Academy Hills Park; Inside = Eisenhower Middle School, 11001 Camero Ave NE, 292-2530.
- **Inez:** Outside = Taylor Park across Indian School from Inez; Inside = Zuni Elementary, 6300 Claremont Ave NE, 881-8313.
- **John Baker:** Outside = Holiday Park South side of Comanche just North of Holiday St; Inside = Hoover Middle School 12015 Tivoli NE, 298-6896; alt Onate E.S. 12415 Brentwood Hills Blvd NE, 291-6819.
- **North Star:** Outside = North Star ES Park; Inside = Double Eagle Elementary, 8901 Lowell St NE, 857-0187.
- **Osuna:** Outside = Osuna ES Park; Inside = Hubert Humphrey, 9801 Academy Hills Dr. NE, 821-4981.
- **Sombra Del Monte:** Outside = Aztec Park, SE corner Moon & Cherokee; Inside = Madison M.S. 3501 Moon St NE, 299-4735.
- **All Schools** - Outside of Neighborhood Location: 10601 Lomas Blvd NE, Albuquerque NM 87112. (505) 296-2880.

Shelter in Place Procedures: If there is a potentially dangerous situation near campus, APS will place schools in a shelter-in-place status. The school building will be locked. Students and staff are allowed to move around inside the designated room, continue with activities, and to have organized and supervised restroom breaks, medical attention, food, and water. No one is allowed into or out of the building. In case of emergency in which the outdoors are less safe than indoors (toxic spill, severe weather, a wild/dangerous animal outside). If authorities provide directions to shelter in place, or if you otherwise learn of unsafe conditions outdoors, take the following steps.

1. Close and lock any openings to the outside.
2. In case of toxic spill or smoke outside, turn off heating, ventilation, and cooling system, and use duct tape and plastic sheeting in the emergency kit to seal cracks around doors
3. Gather essential emergency supply kit.
4. Select an interior room furthest away from the hazard.

5. Instruct anyone with their own phone to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are safe, but to remain inside until the hazard is eliminated, and authorities tell you all is clear.

6. Change the greeting on the phone to state that the program is closed and that everyone is safe and remaining in the building until authorities say it is safe to open again.

Direct Threats on Campus. APS uses the ALICE Protocol. ALICE emphasizes the empowerment of staff to make decisions and to utilize the building infrastructure, movement, noise, and distance to help in surviving an active life-threatening event. The best course of action is determined based upon the best information obtained about the threat.

The ALICE system includes the following possible actions:

- Alert - How you find about a life threatening situation (announcements, noises such as gunshots, screaming, text or special media. Take these notifications seriously and act immediately.
- Lockdown, barricade and fortify. If necessary barricade the door with anything you can find including desks, chalkboards, whiteboards, backpacks. Once the entrance is barricaded look for an escape route - get away any way you can and then rush as far away from the situation as possible.
- Inform - Once you are in a safe place call 911 and let police know what is going on. Do not hang up the phone. If you can call - call, text, or post social media to get the word out.
- Counter - If you are old enough and comfortable doing this, take actions that will put you in control. This could mean screaming, running around in circles, moving around, spreading out, throwing objects at the intruder, rushing them as a group - anything it takes to stay safe. Do not hide under tables or in corners. This makes you more of a target.
- Evacuate - This is your best option when possible. Do not worry about any belongings or anything else. You want to get as far away from the intruder as you can. And then call for help.

Continuity of Operations: If some emergency or disaster has occurred that makes resuming operations in the school impossible, the program will be temporarily housed at 10601 Lomas Blvd, NE. This facility is ADA compliant, has water, restrooms, fire alarm system, food, school supplies, plenty of indoor active and quiet spaces, and all records for children and staff.

Notifications: Children's Choice will notify parents and guardians in writing of any incident, which has threatened the health or safety of children in the program. Children's Choice will report to licensing any incident that has threatened or could threaten the health and safety of children and staff members, such as, but not limited to: a lost or missing child; the death of a child; the abuse or neglect of a child; any incident, including but not limited to accidents, illness, and injuries, that requires medical care beyond on-site first aid; fire, flood, or other natural disaster that creates structural damages to a program or poses a health hazard.

Snow Days/Emergency Closing Days:

Children's Choice will follow the APS decision on snow days or other emergency or safety-related school closing situations. When school is closed because of snow, emergency, or any safety concern Children's Choice is also closed.

Playground Safety Policy:

When children go outside to play each day, the school-age caregiver who is the outside "Gatekeeper" must do a routine check for safety hazards. Look for any changes in the outdoor space such as construction equipment, maintenance projects, etc. Notify the school principal immediately if you notice any safety hazard such as sharp metal edges, rusty metal, loose nails/screws, icy/slippery sidewalks, loose climbing structures, inadequate impact absorbing material such as sand underneath climbing equipment, etc. Discontinue use of any area with a safety hazard. Children's Choice outdoor safety checklists are used to ensure a safe outdoor environment.

Procedure for maintaining safety in the indoor and outdoor environment

All staff are required to attend the Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Infection Control Training Module. Children's Choice will meet or exceed all local safety codes and state licensing safety regulations for indoor and outdoor

environments. Staff use the following Indoor and Outdoor Safety Checklists in spring, autumn, and summer and ensure there are no observable safety hazards in the program space by identifying them, and immediately correcting them or removing them, or completing a work order to have them fixed.

Indoor Safety Checklist

The room is free of clutter.
Furnishings are in good repair.
There are no sharp edges or splinters.
The room contains no highly flammable furnishings.
There is adequate space for children to play.
Storage units are stable.
Children are protected from hazardous chemicals and equipment.
Floors are dry.
Rugs do not slip.
Exits are marked and free of obstructions.
There is adequate adult supervision, at least 1 adult to 15 children.
Staff interact with children rather than each other.
Smoke detectors, and exit lights are in working order.
Electrical wires are not frayed and cords do not pose a hazard.

Outdoor Safety Checklist

Equipment is free of splinters and sharp edges.
There is adequate impact absorbing material under equipment.
There are safety zones around swings where no one walks.
No objects are under or around where children might fall.
There are no observable safety hazards, such as glass, or debris.
There is adequate outdoor space for safe active play.
Bolts, and nuts on equipment are fastened and do not stick out.
Equipment is free of rust or chipped paint.
Equipment is sturdy and securely affixed to the ground.
The area is fenced.
Children are protected from traffic, strangers and possible hazards.
There is adequate adult supervision, at least 1 adult to 15 children.
Staff interact with children rather than each other.

Children's Choice staff will supervise kids closely and follow all health and safety procedures to ensure safety.

- Children's Choice staff set appropriate limits to ensure safety, reduce risk of abduction & prevent accidents.
- Staff know and take initiative to meet state licensing health and safety requirements.
- Staff protect children from safety hazards such as the following: caustic or toxic art & cleaning materials, medications, hot liquids, and overexposure to heat or cold.
- Staff supervise children appropriately, according to children's ages, abilities, and needs.
- Staff closely supervise high-risk activities.
- Staff position themselves to see the maximum amount of children in the program while interacting with children, staff, or families.
- Staff acting as gatekeepers keep clip system accurate at all times.
- Staff lead groups of children when in transition; children do not run ahead.
- Staff are aware of the location of all other staff on duty.
- Staff know where children are and what they are doing.
- Staff are aware of the location of all children in their area of supervision and can monitor safety.
- Staff ensure children are carefully supervised and are in direct view at all times, unless using the restroom, to maintain safety.
- Staff notice and approach any unknown persons in their area of supervision.

- Staff ensure playground equipment is consistently used the appropriate way in which it was designed to be used.
- Staff consistently follow check-in and check-out procedures.
- Staff note when children arrive, when they leave, and with whom they leave.
- Staff properly and consistently follow PM no-show procedures.
- Staff know and consistently follow missing child procedures
- Staff know and consistently follow emergency procedures and complete accident reports.
- Staff know and consistently follow field trip risk management procedures.
- Staff know the location of first aid kit, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, and other emergency equipment.
- Ensures that ill children are separated in order to prevent the spread of communicable disease.
- Notifies and discusses health concerns affecting the community with families.
- Plans ahead for strategies to lessen risk during higher risk activities.
- Focuses attention on the behavior of the children and address behaviors that pose a risk to their safety.

Facility Maintenance:

We are based in public schools. Although we clean up after ourselves and do cleanup projects all over the campus, our facility is maintained by the Albuquerque Public Schools Maintenance & Operations Department (M&O). M&O is responsible for making changes to ensure compliance with the health and fire authority, etc.

Student Accident Policy/Medical Emergencies:

When a child is injured during the program, a staff member certified in first aid administers appropriate first aid. After the child has been cared for, the staff member will prepare an accident report, which includes a description of the accident, any treatment given or other action taken. The parent will sign the accident report and receive a copy. In case of serious injury requiring emergency medical attention, Children's Choice will notify the parents and call for emergency transport immediately. Once an accident, incident, or grievance report is completed a copy will be provided to the Programs Coordinator. The Programs Coordinator will review and log the report indicating the child's name, the site, and if and how they relate to:

- illness
- injury
- facility safety
- medications
- situations where person was determined to be a risk to self or others
- risky activities

Each quarter the Programs Coordinators will conduct a review of the log to note any patterns on site and/or with specific children.

Medical Emergency Procedures:

Accident Prevention: Through our behavior management plan, quality supervision, safety checks, fire drills, increased supervision and clear and consistently enforced limits during high-risk activities, no-show procedures, etc. we can prevent many accidents from happening.

- Know locations of all first aid kits and keep them well stocked. Take basic first aid supplies with you on field trips and when you are supervising the playground.
- For small cuts, scrapes, bruises, etc. administer appropriate first aid. Wash the cut with soap and water and apply a bandage if necessary. Apply ice in the case of bruises.
- For deeper cuts and bigger bruises follow the above procedure and notify the director. Fill out an accident report.
- For any type of head injury (even small bumps) notify the director; clean the wound if necessary, and apply ice. The director will notify the parents. Fill out an accident report.
- For more serious injuries, i.e. those requiring stitches, broken bones, etc. notify the director immediately. He/she will see that the appropriate first aid is administered and that the appropriate persons are notified. All staff are required to obtain CPR/first aid/basis life support training.\

- For major trauma such as stoppage of breathing or uncontrollable bleeding, call 911 for emergency transport and follow basic life support procedures, notify the director who will notify the parents and state licensing.
- Remember, there are so many "what if's" when it comes to emergency situations, stay calm and use your head when making judgment calls.
- Accident reports must be filled out on all but very minor injuries. Give a copy to the director and the original to the parent. For more serious incidents fill out some witness reports if possible.
- When handling these situations do not leave the group unsupervised or without adequate supervision. Only one staff persons should be with the injured child. Two or more staff persons may be with the injured child only if a 15:1 child-staff ratio with the rest of the group is maintained.
- When the rest of the staff members are supervising the children, tell them the truth about what has happened, but the use of language is important. Do not panic the other children. Use soothing language and tone of voice. Keep calm, and remember that what you say will be repeated around the dinner table that night.
- In the event of media coverage of a Children's Choice incident, refrain from making any statements other than to refer questions to the director.
- Maintain professionalism at all times.

Medication Policy:

Whenever possible, children should receive any needed medication through the office of the school nurse or health assistant. When this is not possible the following policy applies.

- Children's Choice will keep all medications in a locked and identified container inaccessible to children and will refrigerate medications when necessary. If the area where medications are stored is accessible to children, medications must be kept in a locked container. If the refrigerator is inaccessible to children, medications do not need to be in a locked container in the refrigerator.
- Programs will give medication only with written permission from at least one parent, to be administered according to written directions from the prescribing physician. In the case of non-prescription medication, the parent must provide written instructions.
- A designated staff member will be responsible for giving medication to children. The designated staff member will ensure non-prescription and prescription medications have a label with the child's name and the date the medication was brought to the program. Children's Choice will keep non-prescription and prescription medication in the original container with written instructions, including the name of medication, the dosage, and the hours and dates the child should receive the medicine.
- The designated staff member will keep a written record of the dosage, date, and time a child is given medication with the signature of the staff who administered the medication. This information will be provided to the parent who will initial/date acknowledgment of the information received on the day the medication is given.
- When the medication is no longer needed, it shall be returned to the parents. If this is not possible, expired medications can be returned to Albuquerque Police Department command substations or to any pharmacy. The program shall not administer expired medication.

Sick Children Policy:

- Children or staff members absent due to any communicable disease will not return to the program without a signed statement from a physician.
- When a child becomes ill during Children's Choice. The child's parents will be promptly notified and asked to pick up the child. Children's Choice will then separate the child from the rest of the children, attempt to make the child comfortable, and continue to monitor the child.
- Children's Choice will send a child home when:
- The child's oral temperature is 100.4 degrees (Fahrenheit), and the child shows signs of illness; or a caregiver observes signs of contagious disease or severe illness.
- The program will have a cot or mat available for sick children and it will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after use.
- Children may not attend school or the OST program if they have any disease listed as communicable.

Chronic Health Conditions:

Staff must be familiar with the allergies and other health conditions that are listed in the child's profile. Asthma, ADHD, allergies to food, and allergies to medications are common and important to know.

Missing Children Policy:

Once in the care of Children's Choice, if a child becomes missing and cannot be located after ten (10) minutes search by the staff, the parent, the police, the program director, and the school administration will be notified by the staff member in charge.

Child Abuse Identification and Reporting Policy:

The New Mexico Children's Code states that "**every person...who knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or neglected child shall report the matter immediately.**" Failure to report is a crime. The prevention, identification, treatment and reporting of child abuse and neglect is mandatory. All program staff must be made aware of the following procedures and reporting guidelines.

Child Abuse Identification:

Abuse and accidental injury can look similar, but there are important differences. Remember you do not need to be able to prove that abuse has occurred in order to make the report.

Signs of physical abuse:

- Unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Child seems frightened, cowers or cries when certain adults are around
- Child is suddenly sad and depressed, aggressive, or withdrawn.

Abuse legally means the child

- has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious harm;
- has suffered physical abuse, emotional abuse or psychological abuse;
- has suffered sexual abuse or sexual exploitation;
- has been knowingly, intentionally or negligently placed in a situation that may endanger the child's life or health; or
- has been knowingly or intentionally tortured, cruelly confined or cruelly punished.

As a mandated reporter, you are required to report.

1. **Cuts & Bruises:** Cuts and bruises caused from accidents normally occur on bony areas of the body (elbow, knees, etc). Injuries to soft tissue areas (stomach, buttocks) are less likely due to an accident.
2. **Frequency:** If an injury happens often, it is less likely to be an accident.
3. **Multiple Injuries:** If multiple injuries are present, especially if they are in different stages of healing, they are less likely to be an accident. (This can be difficult to judge. Not all bruises look the same or progress in the same manner. Remember, if you suspect that a child has been abused, report it.)
4. **Series of Injuries:** If a series of injuries or a single injury appear in a pattern or resemble an object (electrical cord, wooden spoon, etc.) the injury should be suspect.
5. **Inconsistent Explanation:** If the child's or caregiver's explanation for the injury is inconsistent with the facts, the injury would be suspect.

Neglect Identification:

Signs of neglect

- Child is frequently absent from school or child care
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and smells
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather

Neglect legally means the

- abandonment of a child;

- the failure to provide proper parental care, subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for the child's well-being;
- the failure to take reasonable steps to protect the child from further harm when a child is physically or sexually abused and the child's parent, guardian or custodian knew or should have known of the abuse; and
- parental inability to discharge their responsibilities to and for the child because of parental incarceration, hospitalization, or physical or mental disorder or incapacity.

Example of Neglect

1. **Abandonment:** Child abandonment without provision for support or without communication for 3 months if the child is less than 6 years old or for 6 months if the child is older than 6.
2. **Lack of Care:** Lack of proper care; lack of educational obtainment, lack of medical attention, or anything else necessary for a child's well-being.
3. **Failure to Protect:** The child's parent or guardian should have known about abuse and failed to take reasonable steps to protect the child from harm.
4. **Inability:** Inability to discharge parental responsibilities because of incarceration, hospitalization or physical or mental disorder or incapacity.
5. **Children who Disclose Abuse or Neglect:** A child disclosing abuse is one of the most important indicators of abuse or neglect. Your response to a child's disclosure of abuse or neglect is important. If you do not respond, the child may feel betrayed. Use caution since being overly emotional may scare the child.

Signs of sexual abuse

- Difficultly walking or sitting
- Child suddenly becomes very modest or does not want to participate in physical activities
- Demonstrates excessive sexual knowledge or behavior
- Tries to run away

Signs of emotional abuse

- Child shows extremes in behavior, such as extreme passive or aggressive behavior
- Is either inappropriately adult or infantile
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Reports lack of attachment

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures: Here's what you do if you have knowledge or reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected. Your supervisor will help you through this process.

- First take action to treat, shelter, or otherwise assist the child if necessary.
- Notify your supervisor immediately and ask for assistance.
- Complete a Child Abuse or Neglect Report form, providing all information requested.
- We recommend that you file this report with the knowledge, assistance, and support of your supervisor.
- Section 32A-4-3 of the New Mexico Children's Code mandates that anyone who has knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or neglected child must report it immediately.
- To file this report call #SAFE (#7233) from a cell phone or 1-855-333-SAFE, and use this written report to provide a verbal report over the phone.
- You can identify yourself to the caseworker, and still ask the report to be kept anonymous if you prefer.
- File this paper report with your supervisor.
- Site Director will make a copy for the school, and file the original with the CC office.

Serious Incident or Accident Resulting in Actual Harm, Serious Injury or Death

- In the event of a serious incident or accident, state licensing will be notified immediately. They will decide whether to not to launch an investigation.

- The Executive Directors will launch an internal investigation within 24 hours of the incident and or accident being reported.
- The incident and progress of the investigation will be communicated to the board of directors as the investigation is still underway.
- The incident will be reviewed with the top leadership team at the next weekly meeting.
- The investigation includes solicitation of witness reports from all involved individuals.
- For children who are unable to write, an adult will transcribe the statement.

Procedure for reviewing and reporting incidents and accidents that involve threat of or actual harm

Accident reports must be filled out on all but very minor injuries. For more serious incidents fill out some witness reports if possible. Children’s Choice will provide an accident report to the parents and place a copy of the signed report in the child’s file, which will include a description of the accident, any treatment given or other action taken. In case of serious injury requiring emergency medical attention, Children’s Choice will notify the parents and call for emergency transport immediately. Accident Report forms are provided by Children’s Choice. Once an accident, incident, or grievance report is completed a copy will be provided to the Programs Coordinator.

Children’s Choice will notify parents and guardians in writing of any incident, including notifiable illnesses, that has threatened the health or safety of children in the program. Incident reports involving suspected child abuse and neglect must be reported immediately to children’s protective services and local law enforcement.

Children’s Choice will report to licensing any incident that has threatened or could threaten the health and safety of children and staff members, such as, but not limited to: a lost or missing child; the death of a child; the abuse or neglect of a child; any incident, including but not limited to accidents, illness, and injuries, that requires medical care beyond on-site first aid; fire, flood, or other natural disaster that creates structural damages to a program or poses a health hazard; any of the illnesses on the current list of notifiable diseases and communicable diseases published by the office of epidemiology of the New Mexico department of health; any legal action against a program or staff members related to the care and custody of children; the use of physical or mechanical restraints, unless due to documented emergencies or medically documented necessity; or any known change in an educator’s health condition or use of medication that impairs his or her ability to provide for the health, safety or welfare of children in care.

Data from all incident and accident reports will be included in the Quarterly Report. This report will be reviewed quarterly by the Executive Directors. In addition, at the annual strategic leadership retreat this information will be reviewed by all Programs Coordinators and Executive Directors.

Contra ban Policy:

Children’s Choice will prohibit smoking in all areas, including vehicles, and will not allow any alcoholic beverages, firearms or non-prescription controlled substances (drugs) on the premises or in vehicles.

Toxic Materials:

For questions on contact with any material that is questioned to be toxic, read the label of the substance and follow the instructions. In addition, any material that might be toxic such as cleaning agents must be listed in a Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) book maintained at each school in the school office. The MSDS book should have a sheet on any item used in the school and instructions on what to do in case of accidental exposure or allergic reaction.

Staffing Policies:

- Each OST program site will have a site director.
- Children’s Choice will maintain child-staff ratios at all times and must never leave children unattended except in use of restrooms.
- Children’s arrivals and departures must be supervised and documented.
- Program provider must have a system for knowing where the children are at all times.

- Program providers must have a plan for different levels of supervision according to the level of risk involved in an activity.
- Program providers must have a system in place to keep unauthorized people from taking children from the program.
- Children's Choice will have a minimum of two (2) staff members present at all times.
- If the program has less than seven (7) children, the second caregiver must be physically present in the same activity area where the children are, but may be engaged in other duties.
- Each site will have a minimum of one (1) adult for every fifteen (15) children or fraction thereof.

Staff-Child Ratios & Group Size & Supervision of Higher Risk Activities:

Children's Choice provides an overall ratio of 10:1 children-staff. Staff coverage is shifted from increase staff supervision in an activity area based on an increase in the number of children in that activity area and/or an increase in the risk level of the activity taking place in that area. Staff ratios and group sizes are smaller when children are learning a new or difficult skill or during activities with higher risk levels (cooking club, woodworking).

Maximum group size for any single adult is fifteen (15). Maximum group size with more than one staff member should not exceed thirty (30), except during low interaction/low risk activities such as watching a performance or show, or participating in a meeting. In the event of an emergency involving a child follow the emergency procedures. When handling these situations do not leave the group unsupervised or without adequate supervision. Only one staff persons should be with the injured child. Two or more staff persons may be with the injured child only if a 15:1 child-staff ratio with the rest of the group is maintained."

System/Plan for Supervising Children:

- One staff person in each activity area always functions as a "Gatekeeper". Once children are checked into the program, they may go to an active play area or to the bathroom or water fountain after asking permission from a Gatekeeper and marking their destination on a visible check-out system in the main activity area near the family corner, (for example, by putting a clothespin by their name on a poster or by writing their name on an eraser board).
- The Gatekeepers have 2 way radios. When a child goes from one activity area to another, one Gatekeeper lets the other Gatekeeper know which child is headed that way and to look for the child's arrival.
- Children use the school restrooms without direct adult supervision during the school day and during our programs.
- Children must be in direct line of sight when walking to or from supervised programs areas; for example, to and from the restrooms or playground.
- The Gatekeeper who gives a child permission to use the restroom has the responsibility of checking on the child if he/she does not return in a timely manner.

Policies and Procedures for vehicle use

Only Children's Choice authorized drivers may transport children. Children may only be transported by Children's Choice authorized drivers in a Children's Choice owned vehicle. Staff may not transport children in personal vehicles.

- Children's Choice and/or our current vehicle insurance provider will first run a driving record check on any prospective drivers before granting authorization. The insurance company will validate licenses and driving records annually.
- Drivers with more than 3 minor convictions (improper parking, speeding less than 15 miles per hour over the speed limit, failure to produce a valid drivers license) within the last 3-year period will be denied authorization.
- Drivers with any major conviction (careless/reckless driving, failure to report an accident, driving with a suspended/revoked license, improper lane change or turn resulting in an accident, following too close resulting in an accident, speeding more than 15 miles per hour over the speed limit, at-fault accident) within the last 3-year period will be denied authorization.

- Persons who have been convicted in the last seven years of a misdemeanor or felony DWI/DUI cannot transport children.
- Children's Choice will keep a copy of a valid NM drivers license for all drivers authorized to operate the vans.
- Children's Choice will keep a copy of a valid NM Commercial Driver's License for all drivers authorized to operate the bus.
- Children may be transported only in vehicles that have current registration and insurance coverage.
- Drivers are responsible for maintenance, cleanliness, and obeying traffic laws and ordinances during the time the vehicle is in his/her possession.
- Drivers will ensure that all vehicles used for transportation of children will have an operable
 - fire extinguisher,
 - first-aid kit,
 - first-aid manual,
 - water and
 - blanket.
- Drivers will perform safety checks and maintain the vehicle:
 - Ensure routine maintenance is performed in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.
 - Ensure lights and reflectors are in working order.
 - Ensure the vehicle is clean, therefore more visible.
 - Ensure warning devices such as horns, back up lights are in working condition.
 - Ensure brakes are adjusted and working properly.
 - Ensure worn or defective tires are identified and replaced.
- Program staff will load and unload children at the curbside of the vehicle or in a protected parking area or driveway. The program will ensure children do not cross a street unsupervised after leaving the vehicle.
- No one will smoke in a vehicle used for transporting children.
- A program will license all vehicles used for transporting children and will meet all applicable state vehicle laws. A child shall be transported only if the child is properly secured in a child passenger restraint device or by a safety belt as follows. School buses that are not equipped with passenger restraint devices are exempt from this requirement.
 - Children five years of age through six years of age, regardless of weight, or children who weigh less than 60 pounds, regardless of age, shall be properly secured in either a child booster seat or an appropriate child passenger restraint device that meets federal standards.
 - Children seven years of age through 12 years of age shall be secured in a child passenger restraint device or by a seat belt.
- Vehicles used for transporting children will be enclosed and properly maintained.
- Vehicles shall be cleaned and inspected inside and out at least weekly.
- At least one adult transporting children shall be currently certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Any driver involved in a traffic accident while conducting official business will submit to mandatory controlled substance and alcohol testing.

Field Trip Procedures:

Preparation: Field trip destinations and transportation should be confirmed well in advance. Put specific field trip information such as destination, departure and return times, special clothing required, spending money options, and a phone number where you can be reached, on the Activity Calendar made available to parents and on a sign for the door. If you have not taken a field trip to this site before, do a safety/risk analysis of the site before scheduling. Take the iPads, first aid supplies, some waiting in line games, etc. on all field trips.

- Check that all children have field trip permissions.
- Children will not go to a private residence unless accompanied by two (2) adults.
- Announcements: Discuss with the group any safety risks at the field trip site and any safety/behavior boundaries. Discuss with your group the specific rules of the field trip and expected behavior, consequences for misbehavior, and any other vital information before beginning the field trip.

- **Accountability:** The ultimate accountability of children **MUST** be done in writing, on a paper attendance sheet, by name as each child loads the vehicle. Once on board, the accountability of children must be tightly controlled - the vehicle is a safety tool for accountability.
- **Bus Behavior:** Once on board, when ready to depart, get all children silent and remind them: Keep totally seated during the trip. Use quiet voices so that the driver can hear. etc. Staff spread out to cover the back, middle and front of the bus.
- **Payment:** Bring any contracts or agreements with the field trip site with you. Always get a receipt for payment! We are tax exempt for consumable goods such as food, but not for some direct services such as mini-golf.
- **High Standards:** Once at the field trip site, maintain high standards of professionalism and quality care. Have fun and enjoy the field trip. Stay alert; safety and gatekeeping (accountability for all children) are very important on field trips. Staff spread out and provide quality supervision. Avoid unnecessary chatting on all high-risk activities such as field trips. Wear Children's Choice shirts and encourage all children to wear theirs.
- **Check Out:** If a parent arrives to pick up his/her child, ensure that normal check out procedures are followed and that the parent signs out with the director on the master attendance sheet.
- **Warning & Regrouping:** 15 minutes before the children must get ready to leave announce that the time is coming. Ensure that the group takes good care of the field trip site. Restore the condition of the site before leaving. Help children learn to be responsible for their belongings on field trips. Give special care to ensure that children who tend to lose things do not loose things on a field trip.
- **Accountability:** The ultimate accountability of children **MUST** be done on the attendance sheet by name in writing as children load the vehicle.
- **FLAP - Finish Like A Professional:** Make sure to pick up all trash before leaving the bus. Make sure that no back packs, shoes or sleeping kids are left on the bus. Thank the bus driver.

Program Development Policies

Staff Meetings, Planning Time, Involvement and Communication:

There is no set limit on the amount of time that staff may spend solving problems and developing the program. Typically staff meet weekly for one to two hours to reflect on documentation, finalize curriculum plans, discuss concerns or wishes, make behavior management goals and plans for individual children, plan special events, discuss program policies, etc. All staff will be encouraged to be involved in program development and setting program policy. Paid staff time will be designated for communication about the development of the children and the program, through staff meetings and other activities, outside of hours when staff are required to supervise children. Depending on the availability of the staff, staff program design team meetings, CQI team meetings, weekly staff meetings, individual performance review meetings and daily informal meetings (after we set up the program environment & before the children arrive) are all opportunities to discuss any ongoing topic. While the program is providing care to children, staff are asked to ensure that any necessary staff-staff communication does not significantly reduce the amount of staff-child interaction time.

Special Needs Policy

We will make reasonable accommodations to provide fully inclusive child care for any children with special needs who are enrolled in an elementary school which hosts our program. We provide services to children, without regard to disability providing that the child will not:

- constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of himself or herself or others in a group child care setting, or
- require supervision, educational services, and/or personal services beyond that reasonably expected of the existing staff, or
- require specialized equipment not present or available to the program.

Initial enrollment decisions will be based on reasonable judgment concerning the likelihood that the child's participation in a group child care setting can provide adequate educational, physical, and social/emotional adjustment, given the nature and extent of the disability. Initial enrollment may be provisional for a period to be stated by the Director at the time of enrollment. Continued enrollment may be reconsidered at any time, for any child, based on the above provisions.

Reasonable accommodation may include adapting space and activities so that all children can participate fully. Accommodations that would fundamentally alter the nature of or create an undue financial burden on the program, such as one-on-one care, cannot be made. Children who are assigned a one-on-one Behavior Management Specialist (BMS) may only attend the program when the BMS is present. Parents must provide all pertinent information regarding the child's special needs, and any educational plans that would assist the staff in the care of the child.

Family and Community Policies

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Policy:

Children's Choice will strive to hire staff that can relate to child's home language and culture in order to maximize the congruence between expectations in the home and in the program. Children's Choice will avoid the use of children as translators.

Family Orientation, Information and Parent Involvement Policy:

- Children's Choice provides a parent manual as a written orientation to all new families.
- In addition, Children's Choice provides a video orientation to new families on our website.
- We use a variety of means to keep families informed about the programs including, but not limited to: newsletters, daily informal contact, activity calendars, wipe boards in the family corner, mass mailings, the website, Facebook, Twitter, and phone calls.
- At the Family Corner, families will find a place to daily sign their children in and out, activity calendars, program evaluation forms, newsletters, resources for parenting and family classes, special events, and ideas for things to do as a family.
- Staff will communicate with individual families about their children through daily informal contact, phone calls, notes in the family files, questionnaires, accident reports, surveys, as well as parent conferences. In addition staff/family conferences and meetings will be scheduled as part of the discipline procedures. Excerpt: "Parent Notification: Parents will be notified of the problem and be asked to talk to the child on the phone, or pick up the child from the program. Step 3. Parent Conferences: During the parent conference the problem will be discussed and possible solutions examined. A behavior contract outlining expected behavior and the staff's, the child's and the family's role in the solution will be drawn up."
- Each site will host family events twice per year.
- Each site will host staff/family meetings as part of a parent advisory group or quality improvement task force when working on the self-study for accreditation.
- Children's Choice has an "open-door" policy, which encourages family members to visit the program at any time.
- We recognize and respect parents as the most important influence in the lives of their children. We feel that parents have both the right and the responsibility to share in decisions about their children's care and development. We understand that parents need to be happy with the program in order to meet both Children's Choice and the school's goals.
- We strive to involve parents through a variety of activities. Families may choose to volunteer in one or more of many different areas that are designed to use their own individual strengths or specialties. We understand how busy, working families who need child care are and ensure that the ways to be involved are designed to meet your busy schedule. We would like to communicate with you through daily informal contact, parent conferences, newsletters, activity calendars, phone calls, parent meetings, etc. We would like to invite every parent to drop by the OST program announced or unannounced at any time to see what we are doing and have some fun with us!

Ways to Get Involved:

- **Family Events:** We host two family engagement events per year.
- **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Team:** The CQI Team is a self-study team for program improvement and accreditation through the Council on Accreditation. The Accreditation Team composed of parents, staff, faculty, community members and children meets on an as needed basis. The team is empowered by the Board of Directors to conduct program observations, collect and tally staff, child and parent evaluations, and build an action plan for program improvement.

- **Programming:** Are you interested in doing arts & crafts projects, teaching any type of game or activity, hosting a field trip to your place of work, going on a field trip to help-out?
- **Resource Development:** Will you collect dramatic play items for dress up, medical care, pretend business, military, beauty salon, etc.? Are you willing to collect “loose parts” such as pine cones, thread spools, plastic lids, seed pods? Are you willing to ask businesses to donate items for raffles, prizes, etc.?

Community Partnership Policy:

- OST providers must utilize available community resources. Program sites should make additional lists, specific to their immediate community resources available for staff to use in intentional programming and for family members to use for family support. A list of community resources is provided by Children’s Choice.
- It is our policy to provide information about community resources to meet the needs of children and their families whenever possible, through bulletin boards, newsletters, notes home, program sponsored community service projects, etc.
- All staff are strongly encouraged to participate in developing and building relationships with contacts in the community that we can utilize to develop and expand our program offerings. The City of Albuquerque pools/outdoor areas/zoo/ museums/bike rodeo, the Sandia Forest Ranger District, UNM Athletic Center, the public libraries, and groups like the Friends of the Rainforest and the Bosque Environmental Monitoring Program are examples of community partnerships.

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians:

Rights:

- Parents have the right to be treated with respect and have the same services that are available to others.
- Parents have the right to visit the program at any time. Any custodial parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the program is permitted unlimited access to the program during operating hours for the purpose of contacting the child or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the premises the parent or guardian will notify the staff of his/her presence.
- Parents have the right to a full explanation of the services offered by Children’s Choice Child Care Services, Inc.
- Parents have the right to select the services that meet their needs.
- Parents have the right to expect their personal information will be maintained in a confidential manner.
- Parents have the right to file a grievance without interference or retaliation.
- Parents have the right to written notification of the resolution and an explanation of any further appeal, rights or recourse; and
- Parents have the right to appeal any decision with a CEO/Executive Director.

Responsibilities:

- Parents are responsible for signing their child into and out of the program.
- Parents are responsible for paying for services in advance of services rendered. Payment is due on the Monday morning of the week that service is rendered.
- Parents are responsible for notifying us in advance about any change in attendance.
- Parents are financially responsible for any medical attention or treatment provided.
- Parents are responsible for picking up their child from the program immediately if their child is suspended for a major behavior infraction that is deemed to jeopardize the health or safety of any other person.
- Parents are responsible for knowing and following the policies of Children’s Choice and the Parent Code of Conduct as outlined in the Parent Manual.

Parent Code of Conduct:

Parents and staff are role models for children and must therefore act accordingly. Parents are responsible for behaving appropriately, and working respectfully and cordially with the staff to resolve any problems. Failure to do so may result in loss of childcare services. Parents must refrain from:

- Physical punishment of children.
- Verbal abuse, yelling, swearing or cursing.

- Threatening staff, other parents, or children.
- Smoking.
- Quarreling with other parents or staff.
- Disciplining other people's children.

Inebriated Parents Policy:

A child will not be released to a parent that appears to be inebriated or under the influence of any substance that might impair judgment or reasonability. If a parent of a child who arrives at the program location appears to be inebriated, and intends to drive, the program staff must ask the parent to arrange for an alternate form of transportation. The child will be retained until an alternate approved driver is notified and can pick up the child. In the event an inebriated parent insists on removing a child from the program with the intention of driving the child, the program staff must notify the parent of his/her intention to immediately report the situation to the appropriate law enforcement entity.

Stakeholder Grievances or Complaints Policy:

- All stakeholders have the right to file a grievance about any program incident or decision without interference or retaliation. For purposes of this policy, a grievance is an official statement of a complaint or conflict over an alleged violation of an approved policy, procedure or practice, or applicable local, state or federal law. For the purposes of this policy, stakeholders may include program applicants, program participants, or the family members of participants.
- Step 1: The stakeholder is encouraged to discuss the issue with the person involved, and to have a witness present if desired. Complaints or grievances, which are not adequately addressed with the person directly involved, may be referred to that employee's supervisor.
- Step 2: If the issue is not resolved to the stakeholder's satisfaction, the stakeholder can request written or verbal notification of the resolution and an explanation of any further appeal, rights or recourse, including the name of the person responsible for supervising the person about whom the grievance is being made. A stakeholder who is unable to read will require a verbal notification. The stakeholder can expect a timely notification based on how much time it takes to investigate and discuss the issue – typically 24 – 48 hours.
- Step 3: If the issue is still not resolved to the stakeholder's satisfaction, the stakeholder has the right to appeal to the person responsible for supervising the person about whom the grievance is being made.
- Step 4: In exceptional cases where a solution cannot be reached, stakeholders have the right to file a written appeal to a CEO/Executive Director. The stakeholder can expect a timely notification based on how much time it takes to investigate and discuss the issue – typically 24 – 48 hours.
- Final authority over any grievance rests with the Executive Directors. In exceptional cases where a grievance involves the Executive Directors, the stakeholder may file a formal, written grievance with the Board of Directors. The Board will then determine the method it will use to resolve the grievance, and its decision will be final. No stakeholder who has filed a complaint in good faith will be unlawfully interfered with or disciplined or otherwise retaliated against.

Financial Policies

Conflict of Interest Policy & Procedures:

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. A person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the appropriate governing board or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists. No person who exercises any functions or responsibilities with respect to the activities of Children's Choice or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process may obtain a personal or financial interest or benefit from the activity of Children's Choice and at the expense of Children's Choice without specific board approval, either for him/herself or those with whom they have family or business ties during his/her tenure with Children's Choice or for one year thereafter. Any transaction or vote involving a potential conflict of interest shall be approved only when a majority of disinterested directors determine that it is in the best interest of the

corporation to do so. The minutes of meetings at which such votes are taken shall record such disclosure, abstention and rationale for approval.

Procedures: Staff and board members should avoid conflicts of interest wherever possible and must disclose any potential conflict. A staff or board member must withdraw or be recused from any discussion or decision on the issue. Children's Choice will seek estimates or competitive bids to ensure that the organization is receiving fair value in the transaction. We will only decide to hire or contract with a board member if they are the best-qualified individuals available and willing to provide the goods or services needed at the best price.

Fundraising Policies & Procedures:

Children's Choice expects the programs to lead or participate in one fundraiser per year. In addition, Children's Choice solicits donations from businesses, foundations, or individuals. Children's Choice may accept on behalf of the corporation any contribution, gift, bequest or devise for the general purposes or for any special purpose of the corporation.

Procedures: The Executive Directors of the organization must approve any new fundraising effort. In any fundraising venture staff or board members must accurately describe the purpose for which solicitations are being made. Children's Choice will spend funds for the purposes they were solicited with the exception of reasonable costs for administration of the program. Children's Choice must maintain accounting segregation for any restricted funds. We will thank donors and show our appreciation by publicly acknowledging them in a variety of ways that may include: newsletters, social media, website, flyers, etc. We will respect any request for donor confidentiality by not publishing information in publicly available documents.

Personnel Policies

Preamble:

A goal of Children's Choice Child Care Services is to consistently recruit, develop, motivate, reward, and retain the most competent employees possible in aiding Children's Choice's achievement of its mission.

Purpose:

This policy is designed to assist in consistent and objective personnel administration decisions in a manner that is equitable to employees and in accordance with Children's Choice 's objectives. This set of personnel policies is intended to merely be a guideline. It is not an employment contract and should not be construed as such. Furthermore, no promise, statement or writing made by a supervisor may be interpreted to constitute an employment relationship other than "at will." Rather, your employment with this nonprofit corporation is "at will," terminable by either yourself or the nonprofit corporation at any time, without notice, with or without cause, except as otherwise provided by law.

Administration:

The Directors of Children's Choice share responsibility for the overall administration and interpretation of this adopted policy. The direct administration of the policy and the supervision of staff are the responsibility of the Directors. However, these may also be delegated to designated representative(s) where appropriate. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, but may be changed at any time by the Children's Choice Directors, with approval of the Children's Choice Board of Directors

Coverage:

All employees of Children's Choice are covered by this policy.

1. Employee Classifications:

A. Full-Time Employees are those persons who are regularly scheduled to work 130 hours or more each month; and who are continuously employed on a full-time basis for 10 months or more during a calendar year.

- B. Part-Time Employees are those persons who are employed to work less than 130 hours per month, and may or may not be regularly-scheduled.
 - C. Seasonal or Temporary Employees are those persons who are employed for a short-term period regardless of the number of hours worked per week. These employees do not accrue leave or receive employee benefits. Summer Day Camp and vacation camp employees are considered seasonal employees.
2. Fair Labor Standards Act (F.L.S.A.) Classification:
- A. Exempt Employees are full-time employees, paid on the basis of an annual salary and are not entitled to overtime. Included are persons assigned to program and/or administrative functions, and other personnel in accordance with the F.L.S.A.
 - B. Non-Exempt Employees are paid on an hourly basis, and are subject to premium pay of overtime in accordance with the F.L.S.A. Non-Exempt employees are prohibited from working overtime unless they have received prior approval.

Employment:

1. Recruitment and Selection Policies and Procedures:

When job openings develop, Children's Choice may publicize job openings through such media as will bring notice of recruitment to as many qualified persons as possible. For example: Indeed, Simply Hired, UNM Daily Lobo, Albuquerque Journal, Craig's List, etc.

All positions including volunteer positions have a job description approved by the Children's Choice Directors. Prospective employees must complete the appropriate employment application.

The Programs Coordinators review written applications, using them as a screening tool to select candidates for interviews.

Applicants are interviewed by at least two staff members, but typically by a panel that may include Programs Coordinators, Program Directors, Associate Directors and Caregivers. Prepared interview questions are used. If the panel chooses to make a job offer, the Programs Coordinators oversee the completion of the background check, job offer, scheduling, and onboarding process.

An employment reference must be obtained from the most recent employer and every place the applicant has worked with children. A minimum of three reference checks must be documented. The past three years of employment/educational history must be documented. Prepared employment and personal reference questionnaires are used.

The applicant may be removed from consideration if by way of example only and not by way of limitation he/she:

- 1) does not possess the qualifications for the position,
- 2) has established an employment or personnel record as evidenced by reference checks of such a nature as to demonstrate unsuitability for employment,
- 3) is afflicted with any mental or physical disqualifying disease or handicap that would not permit the candidate to perform the job functions,
- 4) uses drugs or excessively uses intoxicants,
- 5) has been arrested or convicted for crimes against children,
- 6) withdraws his/her application or
- 7) is otherwise unsuitable for the position.

All candidates for a position shall be evaluated against the same qualifications and requirements.

2. General Qualifications for all Staff Members:

Ethical Responsibilities to Children's Choice:

Every Children's Choice employee shall demonstrate the highest standard of individual conduct, personal accountability, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, consideration of the rights of others and the highest principles of good business practices and relationships. (The #1 Code from the NAA Code of Ethics).

Employees shall be persons who are aware of and subscribe to the purpose and goals of Children's Choice, and possess the special knowledge, skills and ability required for their positions. All caregivers will have the capability to care for and supervise children. Caregivers (staff members) who work directly with children and who are counted in the staff/child ratios must be eighteen (18) years of age or older.

Specific Staff Qualifications and Criteria for Assigning Supervisory Responsibilities:

Based on the applicant's qualifications and desires they may be offered an appropriate position using the detailed tool below. That position is assigned a supervisor with the qualifications necessary to supervise that position.

Staff Supervision Policy:

All program staff will have a designated supervisor (typically the Site Director) who will prepare performance evaluations at least once a year. Together with the supervisee, the designated supervisor will prepare goals for performance improvement and future training and professional development goals.

Background Checks:

All staff members will apply for an ECECD Background Check and an APS Background Check before working directly with children. Children's Choice will be responsible for obtaining criminal records checks on all employees and volunteers.

3. **Caregiver Qualification Levels**

Caregiver/Group Leader means an adult who directly cares for, serves, and supervises children in a school-age care program. Caregivers (staff members) who work directly with children and who are counted in the child-staff ratios must be eighteen (18) years of age or older.

A Level:

Is at least 18 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field, **AND** three months of experience **AND** three credit hours child and youth development (3)
- OR a AA degree in a related field, **AND** six months experience
- OR two years of college in a related field or equivalent certification **AND** nine months experience **AND** three credit hours child and youth development (3)
- OR HS Diploma or GED, **AND** eighteen months experience **AND** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to child and youth development programming.

B Level:

Is at least 18 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field, **AND** three months of experience **OR** three credit hours child youth and development.
- OR AA degree or two years of college, **AND** nine months experience, **OR** three credit hours child and youth development
- OR HS Diploma or GED, **AND** eighteen months experience, **OR** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to child and youth development programming.

C Level:

Is at least 18 years of age and has completed at least

- High School Diploma

- OR GED

D Level - Assistant Caregiver/Assistant Group Leader means a staff member who is not counted in the child-staff ratio, who may be a volunteer, or who is under the age of 18 years. An Assistant Group Leader interacts with children under the direct supervision of a Group Leader. Is at least 16 years of age

4. **Associate Director Qualification Levels**

A Level:

Is at least 18 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field **AND** three months of experience **AND** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to sac programming.
- OR an AA degree or two years of college in a related field, **AND** six months experience **AND** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to sac programming.
- OR an AA degree or two years of college in an unrelated field or equivalent certification **AND** one year experience **AND** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to child and youth development programming.

B Level:

Is at least 18 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field **AND** three months of experience **OR** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to sac programming.
- OR an AA degree or two years of college in a related field **AND** six months experience **OR** six credit hours in child and youth development (3) & other areas related to sac programming (3)
- OR an AA degree or two years of college in an unrelated field or equivalent certification **AND** one year experience **OR** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to child and youth development programming.

C Level:

Is at least 18 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field **AND** 1 year of experience
- OR an AA degree or 2 years of college **AND** 2 years of experience working with school-age children
- OR a High School diploma or GED **AND** 3 years of experience working with school-age children

5. **Program Director Qualification Levels**

A Level:

Is at last 21 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field **AND** six months experience **AND** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to SAC programming.
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field, **AND** one year of experience **AND** nine credit hours (3) in child youth and development (3) and (6) in other areas related to afterschool programming.
- OR an AA degree or two years of college in a related field or equivalent certification, **AND** eighteen months experience **AND** nine credit hours (3) in child youth and development (3) and (6) in other areas related to child and youth development programming.

B Level:

Is at least 21 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field **AND** six months experience **OR** six credit hours in (3) in child and youth development and (3) in other areas related to sac programming.
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field **AND** one year of experience **OR** nine credit hours (3) in child youth and development (3) and (6) in other areas related to afterschool programming.

- OR an AA degree or two years of college in a related field or equivalent certification **AND** eighteen months experience **OR** nine credit hours (3) in child youth and development (3) and (6) in other areas related to child and youth development programming.

C Level

Is at least 21 years of age and has completed at least

- Bachelor's Degree in a related field
- OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field AND 1 year of experience
- OR an AA degree or 2 years of college AND 2 years of experience working with school-age children
- OR a High School diploma or GED AND 3 years of experience working with school-age children

6. Programs Coordinator Qualifications:

Programs Coordinators (PC's) typically oversee up to seven OST programs. PC's are responsible for program implementation and evaluation, general administration, fiscal management, organizational development, and human resource management. PC's must be at least twenty-one (21) years old; and have an Associates or Bachelor's Degree in a Related Field (school-age care, child development, early childhood education, youth studies, recreation, family social sciences, and elementary education), or a K-6 Teaching Certificate, Child Development Associate (CDA) Certificate, Certified Child Care Professional credential (CCP), or a National Administrator Credential (NAC) plus two years of experience in a school-age care or related setting (work with school-age children in a recreational, fine arts, camping or academic setting, licensed or registered family school-age care programs, licensed center-based school-age education and development programs, elementary school classrooms and family support programs.), and six credit hours in child and youth development and program administration; OR a Bachelor's Degree in an unrelated field, two years of experience and twelve credit hours of professional preparation in post secondary training in child and youth development, administration, and other areas directly related to school-age care programming.

Employment Packet:

All employees shall be furnished with a position description and a job offer, which will include pertinent information such as salary/rate of pay, effective hiring date, and benefits summary.

Equal Employment Opportunity Statement/Discrimination/Nepotism Policy:

Children's Choice is an equal opportunity employer. It's policies and actions are intended to reflect this commitment of equality of opportunity for all. Base hiring and promotions decisions are made solely on a person's record and ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position. We have no general prohibition against hiring relatives or friends. We will accept and consider applications for employment from relatives of current employees, but if hired, generally, will not be placed into positions where they directly supervise or are supervised by another close family member. Base hiring decisions and promotions are not influenced by any friend or family of the candidate who is a current employee at Children's Choice. Participation in discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, national origin, culture, disability, sexual preference, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, disability, or age (40 or older).

American Disabilities Act:

Children's Choice will make reasonable accommodation to service any client regardless of any disability. It is the policy of Children's Choice to comply with all portions of the American Disabilities Act.

Records:

- A. Prehire: Individuals seeking employment will complete the appropriate application forms, three year history; and if offered a position, will sign a job offer and position description.
- B. Posthire: Individuals who have been hired must obtain certification of a criminal records check clearance and background check as required by law, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and First Aid Training, fill out a W-4 form, and show a valid driver's license and social security card, or other documents as allowed by the IRS form I-9. Employees must submit accurate time reports or vouchers in order to be paid.
- C. Physical Disability: If an employee is unable to perform the job due to a medical condition, or physical/mental handicap, the employee will be required to have a physical exam at Children's Choice 's expense

to determine if the employee can handle the position. If the examining physician determines that the employee cannot perform the essential functions of the position, the employee will be terminated after Children's Choice has made an attempt to reasonably accommodate the disability.

Orientation and Initial Evaluation:

An initial orientation shall be provided for new employees prior to working with children. All new employees undergo a 90-day probationary/evaluation period. The purpose of such an initial evaluation period is to provide an opportunity for both Children's Choice and the new employee to assess their respective satisfaction with the suitability to the job. During the period, employees are eligible for all benefits, required by law and provided for by this policy.

Employment at Will:

New Mexico is an "at will" employment state, which means employment can be terminated by either the employee or the employer at any time for any reason.

Conditions on the Job:

1. Hours of Work:

Immediate supervisors are responsible for the preparation and supervision of the working schedule for all of their employees. All such schedules shall be governed by applicable laws and needs of Children's Choice.

2. Overtime: Staff classified as "Non-Exempt" are prohibited from working overtime hours without prior approval from a supervisor.

3. Employee Grievances: Policies and Procedures

For purposes of this policy, a grievance is an official statement of complaint or conflict over an alleged violation of an approved personnel policy, procedure or practice, or applicable local, state or federal law. Children's Choice gives all employees the opportunity to seek internal resolution of work-related concerns. Whenever people work together, differences will occasionally arise. When this happens, employees should talk frankly and early with the individual who is the source of the concern. If the problem cannot be resolved after a good faith effort, employees should attempt to resolve the problem informally with their supervisor as soon as possible.

In exceptional cases where a solution cannot be reached, the employee may file a formal, written grievance with the supervisor of the employee named in the grievance. The employee should do this within a reasonable time after the concern arises and should outline clearly the nature of the grievance. Children's Choice will give a copy of the written grievance to the person named in the grievance. The direct supervisor (or authorized designee) will set up a meeting to discuss the complaint. The supervisor may also meet with others who are named in the complaint or who may have knowledge of the facts set forth in the complaint. After investigating and discussing the grievance, the employee who filed the grievance and the employee named in the grievance will receive written notification of the resolution and an explanation of any further appeal, rights or recourse. If the grievance is resolved to the employee's satisfaction, the terms of the resolution will be recorded and signed by the employee and the supervisor (or designee). If the grievance is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction, the employee may appeal to the direct supervisor of the employee who provided the written resolution. Final authority over any grievance rests with the Executive Directors.

In exceptional cases where the grievance involves the Executive Directors, the employee may file a written grievance with the Board of Directors. The Board will then determine the method it will use to resolve the grievance, and its decision will be final. No employee who has filed a complaint in good faith will be unlawfully interfered with or disciplined or otherwise retaliated against.

4. Harassment Policy:

It is the policy of Children's Choice to expressly forbid any forms of harassment of employees. The term "harassment" includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes and other verbal, graphic or physical conduct which relate to an individual's race, color, sex, religion, national origin citizenship, age or handicap. Harassment also includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, unwelcome or offensive touching or other verbal, graphic or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Violation of this policy will subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. Employees who feel that they are being harassed in any way by another employee should inform their immediate supervisor or a Children's Choice Director. It is the employee's responsibility to bring such concerns to a Children's Choice Director immediately. Any concerns will be investigated immediately and kept confidential. The conclusion of the investigation will include a written recommendation as to the appropriate disciplinary action, if any, which will take place. A copy of the investigation and its conclusion will be maintained in the personnel file of the complainant and the alleged perpetrator.

5. Whistleblower Policy: Children's Choice will not retaliate against an employee whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to, protection from retaliation in the form of an adverse employment action such as termination, compensation decreases, or poor work assignments and threats of physical harm.

6 Expenses and Allowances:

Expenses incurred, while on approved Children's Choice business, shall be reimbursed. Such expenses may include:

A. Travel expenses: including fares, mileage at a rate set by the Directors, meals and lodging.

B. Conference and training event expenses: including those related to travel, meals, lodging and registration fees.

C. Membership dues and meals: in service club, professional society or community organization where such membership is deemed advantageous to the interests of Children's Choice.

Employee Behavior Policies

Cell Phone Use

Staff are prohibited from using personal mobile devices for making phone calls, texting, or using email while they are on duty supervising children.

Social Media Policy

Children's Choice celebrates and documents everything we do. We often take photos and videos in the program. These photos and videos are freely used within the program without the need for a media release statement. For example photos might be posted in the program environment, or added to a lesson plan; or videos might be shown at a parent event at the school.

In addition, Children's Choice publishes materials that help us share our model and accomplish our mission. We create lesson plans we share with other organizations; we have a blog about our program activities; we create brochures and flyers; we share resources on our website; and we show images in our presentations and workshops. We currently have a YouTube channel, Facebook page, Twitter profile, Instagram account, and Pinterest board where we post photos and videos about program ideas and activities.

We encourage staff to utilize our social media technology to share stories about the wonderful experiences we provide. Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication, learning, and storytelling. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits, including curriculum development.

Children's Choice is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders who utilize social media technology for professional purposes, including staff and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner. Children's Choice strives to create friendly, helpful, and professional social media environments that mirror the academically and socially supportive environments of our programs.

In recognition of the public and pervasive nature of social media communications, as well as the fact that in this digital era, the lines between professional and personal endeavors are sometimes blurred, we have adapted this policy, which we expect will evolve over time.

Staff are encouraged to treat social media places like the program spaces. If an image or language is inappropriate in the program space, it is inappropriate for social media.

The Site Director is responsible for ensuring that any children who are identifiable in a photo or video have a signed media release statement before the image is shared outside of the program – in brochures, in training events, online, etc. (see “Media Release Statement” below)

Any photos or videos intended to be shared online can only be posted on official Children’s Choice social media sites and only after the Site Director has verified that any identifiable children depicted have a signed media release statement.

- Staff are prohibited from creating their own Children’s Choice program-related social media accounts. If a program wants an individual Facebook page, Twitter profile, etc., they may request that the organization set up the account and give the employee revocable “admin” privileges.
- Staff are prohibited from any one-on-one staff-participant meetings in chat rooms or posting on participant’s social media pages.
- Staff are prohibited from “tagging” or identifying children in any photo or video shared online.
- Staff are prohibited from tagging other employees without permission.
- Staff are prohibited from communicating with currently-enrolled program participants (children) via social media.
- Staff are encouraged to like, comment on, or share any images, videos, or stories posted on official CC sites.

Alcohol Consumption at CC Events

Whether or not to drink alcohol beverages is entirely a personal decision. All employees must ensure that their performance at work and their judgment are not impaired by alcohol. An employee’s decision to drink alcohol beverages at a CC related function includes an obligation to act responsibly and to get home safely. In all situations, an employee’s conduct when consuming alcohol is his/her responsibility.

Substance Abuse Policy

Children’s Choice is committed to protecting the safety, health and wellbeing’ of all employees and other individuals in our workplace. We recognize that alcohol abuse and drug use pose a significant threat to our goals. We have established a substance abuse policy that balances our respect for individuals with the need to maintain an alcohol and drug-free environment. CC encourages employees to voluntarily seek help with drug and alcohol problems.

Covered Workers

Any individual;

- Who conducts business for the organization,
- Operates an CC vehicle or his or her own vehicle while conducting business for CC
- Is conducting business on the organization’s property or other work site

is covered by our substance abuse policy. Our policy includes, but is not limited to Executive Director, managers, supervisors, full-time employees, part-time employees, seasonal employees, contractors, and volunteers.

Applicability

Our substance abuse policy is intended to apply whenever anyone is representing or conducting business for the organization. Therefore, this policy applies during all working hours, whenever conducting business or representing the organization, while on or off organization property, and at CC sponsored events.

Prohibited Behavior

It is a violation of our substance abuse policy to use, possess, sell, trade, and/or offer for sale alcohol, illegal drugs or intoxicants. Under Federal law and New Mexico law, marijuana is considered an illegal drug. Employees may not drink if prohibited by law. Employees may not provide alcohol to, or purchase alcohol for, an individual under the legal drinking age at any CC event if alcohol is available.

Searches and Testing

Entering the organization's property or work sites constitutes consent to searches and inspections. If an individual is suspected of violating the substance abuse policy, he or she may be asked to submit to a search or inspection at any time. Searches can be conducted of pockets and clothing, lockers, backpacks, wallets, purses, briefcases and lunchboxes, desks and workstations and equipment. Refusal of a search constitutes an admission of guilt. Employees suspected of being impaired may be ordered to take a drug test. The tested employee may at his/her option, request a split sample. The laboratory results of all drug/alcohol testing will be reviewed by a Medical Review Officer (MRO).

Reasonable Suspicion

If there is reasonable suspicion that an employee is under the influence of an illegal drug or a legal drug not prescribed to the employee or abuse of a legal drug that is prescribed or alcohol, the suspected employee may be tested. The Executive Director should be consulted before sending an employee for testing. In all cases, a supervisor must accompany the employee to a testing facility. In no instance is the suspected employee allowed to drive himself or herself to a testing facility or after the test, allowed to drive home. The supervisor should call a taxi or arrange for other transportation. If an employee admits to being under the influence of an illegal drug or a legal drug not prescribed to the employee or abuse of a legal drug that is prescribed or alcohol, the employee may be sent home. In no instance is the employee allowed to drive himself or herself home; the supervisor should call a taxi or arrange for other transportation.

Post accident

Employees are subject to testing when they cause or contribute to accidents that seriously damage a CC vehicle, machinery, equipment or property or result in an injury to himself or herself or another employee requiring offsite medical attention. A circumstance that constitutes probable belief will be presumed to arise in any instance involving a work-related accident or injury in which an employee who was operating a motorized vehicle is found to be responsible for causing the accident. In these instances, the investigation and subsequent testing must take place within two hours following the accident, if not sooner. *Under no circumstances will the employee be allowed to drive him or herself to the testing facility.*

Consequences

Employees who refuse to cooperate in required tests or who use, possess, buy, sell, manufacture or dispense an illegal drug in violation of this policy will be terminated. The first time an employee tests positive for alcohol or illegal drug use under this policy, the result may result in discipline up to and including termination. Employees will be paid for time spent in alcohol or drug testing and then suspended pending the results of the drug or alcohol test. After the results of the test are received, a date and time will be scheduled to discuss the results of the test; this meeting will include a member of management/supervision and HR. Should the results prove to be negative, the employee will receive back pay for the times/days of suspension.

Assistance

CC recognizes that alcohol and drug abuse and addiction are treatable illnesses. We also realize that early intervention and support improve the success of rehabilitation. To support our employees, our substance abuse policy:

- Encourages employees to seek help if they are concerned that they or their family members may have a drug and/or alcohol problem.
- Encourages employees to utilize the services of qualified professionals in the community to assess the seriousness of suspected drug or alcohol problems and identify appropriate sources of help.

Treatment for alcoholism and/or other drug use disorders may be covered by the employee's benefit plan. However, the ultimate financial responsibility for recommended treatment belongs to the employee.

Shared Responsibility

A safe and productive drug free workplace is achieved through cooperation and shared responsibility. Employees, contractors, volunteers and management have important roles to play. Each are required to not report to work or be subject to duty while their ability to perform job duties is impaired due to use of alcohol or other drugs.

In addition, all employees, volunteers and contractors are encouraged to:

- Be concerned about working in a safe environment.
- Support fellow workers in seeking help.
- Report dangerous behavior to a supervisor.

Thresholds for determining a positive test are listed below.

NOTE: Screening levels differ from confirmation levels because they are different tests. Screening tests identify classes of drugs, if present. Confirmation tests identify specific drugs.

Urinalysis (Drug Test) Cutoff Levels (Same as DOT)		
Drug	Screening Level (Nanograms per milliliter)	Confirmation Level (Nanograms per milliliter)
Cocaine	150 NG/ML	100 NG/ML
Opiates:		
Morphine	2000 NG/ML	2000 NG/ML
Codeine	2000 NG/ML	2000 NG/ML
Heroin (6 MAM)	300 NG/ML	10 NG/NL
Amphetamines		
Methamphetamine	500 NG/ML	250 NG/ML
MDA/MDMA (Ecstasy)	500 NG/ML	250 NG/ML
Barbiturates (Amobarbital, butalbital, Pentobarbital, Secobarbital)	200 NG/ML	200 NG/ML
PCP	25 NG/ML	25 NG/ML
LSD	.5 NG/ML	0.2 NG/ML

Alcohol: .08% (same as New Mexico DWI threshold for 21 years and older)

Dress Code:

This dress code policy applies to staff. Children’s Choice expects dress and grooming to reflect high standards of personal and professional conduct so that everyone’s attire promotes belonging, and a positive, safe, and healthy atmosphere within the program. Staff must wear clothing that is commensurate with the child care profession by making it easy to play, move around, and care for children indoors and outdoors, during all seasons. Dress may not present a health or safety hazard, violate municipal or state law, or present a potential for disruption to the program. Clothing must be adequate to cover cleavage, midriffs, and buttocks during all program activities. Attire or accessories that advertise, display or promote any drug (including alcohol or tobacco), sexual activity, gang-related activity, violence, disrespect and/or bigotry towards any group are not acceptable.

Employee Benefits:

1. Eligibility of Benefits:

All employees (exempt and non-exempt) are eligible to enroll in benefit programs at the time of employment. However, full participation may be subject to meeting the plan requirements of specific benefits coverage or restrictions, detailed in other parts of these guidelines.

2. Categories of Benefits:

Legally Mandated Benefits: Children's Choice complies with all applicable laws, regarding employee benefits, such as:

- Social Security Program (FICA): All employees are required to participate jointly with Children's Choice in the Federal Social Security.
- Worker Compensation Program: Employees are covered against the hazards of occupational accidents and illness on the job through compensation insurance in a manner and to the extent, required by the state worker's compensation laws.
- Unemployment Insurance (FUTA): Children's Choice 's practice shall be consistent with federal and state laws.

Benefits for all Employees

- Holidays: The following holidays shall be granted all employees with pay: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas, Christmas Eve.
- Part-time employees are paid 6 hours for each holiday and full-time employees are paid 8 hours for each holiday.
- Employees shall accrue Healthy Workplace Leave at the following rates to begin to accrue upon commencement of the employee's employment and may be used at any time.

Longevity	Full Time: paid time off hours accrued per one hour worked	Part Time: paid time off hours accrued per one hour of work.
1 day - 5 years	.05 = 104 hours (13 days)	.0333 = 46.8 hours
6-10 years	.058 = 120 hours	.0419 = 58.8 hours
11-15 years	.063 = 132 hours	.0504 = 70.8 hours
16-20 years	.07 = 146 hours	.0618 = 86.8 hours
21+ years	.078 = 162 hours	.0732 = 102.8

An employee may use earned Healthy Workplace leave:

- (1) for the employee's: (a) mental or physical illness, injury or health condition; (b) medical diagnosis, care or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition; or (c) preventive medical care;
- (2) for the employee's overall emotional and spiritual wellness (a) unspecified vacation time; (b) extended mental health breaks; (c) rehabilitation;
- (3) for care of family members of the employee for: (a) mental or physical illness, injury or health condition; (b) medical diagnosis, care or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition; or (c) preventive medical care;
- (4) for care of pets of the employee for medical diagnosis, care or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition;
- (5) for meetings at the employee's child's school or place of care related to the child's health or disability; or
- (6) for absence necessary due to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking suffered by the employee or a family member of the employee; provided that the leave is for the employee to: (a) obtain medical or psychological treatment or other counseling; (b) relocate; (c) prepare for or participate in legal proceedings; or (d) obtain services or assist a family member of the employee with any of the activities set forth in Subparagraphs (a) through (c) of this paragraph.

- Earned Healthy Workplace leave shall be provided upon the oral or written request of an employee or an individual acting on the employee's behalf. When possible, the request shall include the expected duration of the Healthy Workplace leave absence. The employee does not need to include the specific reason to request to take Healthy Workplace leave. When the use of earned Healthy Workplace leave is foreseeable, the employee shall make a reasonable effort to provide oral or written notice of the need for such Healthy Workplace leave to the employer in advance of the use of the earned Healthy Workplace leave and shall make a reasonable effort to schedule the use of earned Healthy Workplace leave in a manner that does not unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. When the use of earned Healthy

Workplace leave is not foreseeable, the employee shall notify the employer orally or in writing as soon as practicable. The employee is not required to find a replacement worker to cover the hours during which the employee is using earned Healthy Workplace leave.

- During the second and subsequent year of employment, staff receive an additional holiday per year.
- Training Fees: Children's Choice will pay the fees for attendance at approved training events.
- All employees have the option of participating in the AFLAC insurance program.

Benefits for Full-Time Employees

- Health Insurance: Children's Choice pays a portion of the current health insurance plan premium eligible to full-time employees.
- Retirement Plan: Children's Choice pays the administrative fees for management of a retirement plan. Children's Choice provides matching funds for employee contributions into the plan up to 7%. The vesting plan allows for 20% vesting after one year of employment, 40% vesting after two years, 60% vesting after three years, 80% vesting after four years, and 100% vesting after four years.

Procedures for Performance Evaluations, and Pay Adjustments:

- On the approximate anniversary date of each employee's date of hire, they will receive a Performance Review Focus Person Preparation Form, an invitation to prepare a Performance Review Circle together with their supervisor.
- The employee will invite between two and seven people including the supervisor to help them provide feedback about personal performance and to create an improvement plan to help facilitate their personal positive development at Children's Choice.
- The employee will have thirty (30) days from the date of receiving the invitation to hold a Performance Review Circle.
- Following the completion of the Performance Review Circle, they will receive an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) as determined annually by the Mission Circle/Board of Directors.
- If the employee does not hold a Performance Review Circle, within the thirty (30) days allotted, they will not receive the COLA adjustment.
- Optional: employees may complete the Merit Raise Request form after the completion of the Performance Review Circle and submit this to the Performance Review facilitator for consideration of an additional merit-based pay increase for exceeding their performance standards.

Staff Professional Development & Training Requirements Policy:

Children's Choice adheres to the most current training and documentation requirements of ECECD. Though professional development is the primary responsibility of the individual, the Children's Choice Directors provide such opportunities for the staff, as a part of their management functions. Children's Choice recognizes that the quality of its work is directly related to the training provided to its employees. Periodic consultations between employees and their supervisors to identify training and career development needs will be conducted, and an annual professional development plan for each will be prepared. Expenses related to training will be paid in full by Children's Choice when such requests are submitted in advance and approved by the Children's Choice Directors.

In addition to the preceding training requirements of Programs Coordinators, Site Directors, and Associate Directors must have training in leadership. Administrators may count hours in personnel and business training toward this training requirement.

Several training events during the year are mandatory for all staff. In addition to these scheduled mandatory training events, we may make any and all training events mandatory, including a repeat of the orientation - based on the performance and training log of individual staff. This decision is made at the discretion of the individual's supervisor.

Policies on Absence from Work/Absentee Procedures/Staff Coverage during emergencies:

1. If ANY staff member, who is scheduled to work in the child-adult ratios, desires to take a day off for vacation, to work on schoolwork, or for rest/relaxation, he/she must find a substitute and schedule the day off in advance with the site director.
 - a. Since we staff on a 10:1 minimum ratio, we have a cushion, so that one person can be absent and our ratio will still be below the 15:1 maximum ratio.
 - b. If other staff members have already scheduled a day off and an additional staff member requests the day off, which would make our child-staff ratio higher than 15:1, the additional staff member may not take the day off.
 - c. Many of our staff members are able to work during shifts in which they are not normally scheduled and are available as substitutes.
 - d. If after asking all staff if they are able to substitute teach, none are available, go to the site director and ask for further guidance.
 - e. The next line of defense is calling the other SAC site director to ask if they can spare an extra teacher.
 - f. As a last line of defense, the agency leaders may be able to substitute teach and be in the ratios in order to maintain a 15:1 ratio.
2. If any staff member who is scheduled to work in the child-adult ratios is unable to work because of an emergency, tragedy or illness, he/she must notify the site director.
 - a. Call the program site, the director's home, the CC office, the school office, etc.
 - b. Leave a message at any number you call, but do not stop trying different numbers until you actually talk to the site director.
3. Not showing up for work, not contacting the site director directly, and not attempting to find a substitute (or showing up for work late) puts our children at risk, and is therefore grounds for dismissal. If a staff person simply does not show up for work, we will assume that either an extreme emergency or tragedy has occurred or the person has resigned and will not be back to work.

Leaves of Absence:

- Sick Leave: An employee may be granted up to ten days of sick leave per year without pay. Employees may elect to use accrued annual leave in order to receive pay during sick leave.
- Short Leave: A leave of absence for up to twenty (20) working days without pay may be granted with advance approval by the Children's Choice Directors.
- Emergency and Bereavement Leave: In the event of death, serious injury or illness of a parent, spouse, child or sibling of an employee, an employee may be granted emergency annual leave with pay not to exceed three working days per occurrence.
- Personal Leave: Leave without pay, not exceeding three working days per calendar year, shall be granted for urgent business. Such leaves are subject to the approval of the Children's Choice Directors.
- Jury Duty: Employees who are called for jury duty will be granted leave without pay, and will retain any fees paid to them for their duty.
- Military Service: When an employee is called or recalled for active duty in the military, Children's Choice will grant an official leave-of-absence without pay. A total of fifteen (15) days is allowed per year.
- Parental Leave: If an employee submits a written request to the Children's Choice Directors, a leave of absence in conjunction with the birth or adoption of a child will be granted. Such requests must be made at least one month before the leave is to begin. Parental leaves of absence may not begin more than six weeks after the birth or adoption. The maximum length of the leave shall be for twelve weeks. Employees do not accrue leave or benefits while on leave of absence without pay. Upon return to work, the employee is entitled to reinstatement of the former position or a comparable one, at the same rate of pay.
- Extended Leave: Extended leaves of absence (up to 6 months) without pay may be granted to employees for unusual circumstances, including personal reasons. Requests for extended leave, providing a full explanation and projected schedule must be made in writing and submitted to the Children's Choice

Directors with whom the final decision rests. Upon return from an extended leave, every effort shall be made to place the employee in the same or comparable position to the one held before the leave began. Should a position not be available upon the employee's return, the leave shall expire and the employee's employment terminated.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Children's Choice will provide Family and Medical Leave to its eligible employees. The company posts the mandatory FMLA Notice and upon hire provides all new employees with notices required by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) on Employee Rights and Responsibilities under the Family and Medical Leave Act in New Mexico. The function of this policy is to provide employees with a general description of their FMLA rights. In the event of any conflict between this policy and the applicable law, employees will be afforded all rights required by law.

The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave. Eligible employees are entitled to twelve workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for:

- the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth;
- the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement;
- to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job;
- any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;" or
- Twenty-six workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the eligible employee is the service member's spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave).

Separations/Procedures for resignation or termination:

For purposes of this policy the term "separation" shall refer to any and all terminations of the relationship between the employee and employer (regardless of the reason for such termination). Separations are to be categorized as either voluntary or involuntary.

1. Voluntary Separation/Resignation: A decision freely made by an employee to terminate his/her working relationship with Children's Choice. Although employment is "at will", we request written notice of the resignation at least thirty (30) days prior to the last day of employment if possible.
2. Involuntary Separations: a decision made by Children's Choice to end the work relationship between the employee and Children's Choice.
 - A. Reduction in Work Force: Involuntary separation may be imposed upon employees as a result of economic necessity, operational and/or programmatic changes, reorganization or any other reason which requires a layoff in the present work force.
 - B. Dismissal: An employee may be involuntarily separated, with or without cause.
 - C. Unsatisfactory Performance: Dismissal may be imposed by Children's Choice upon employees for their failure or inability to meet job performance standards or expectations. In particular, the following types of conduct will not be tolerated: Insubordination: defiance or disobedience of proper direction from supervisor. Ethical misconduct: On-duty, or off-duty misconduct, which is job-related or will adversely affect the employee's effectiveness on the job. Falsification of Information: Including time records, incident reports or other Children's Choice Reports. Substance abuse: Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or being arrested for a drug related crime. Child abuse: Inappropriate physical punishment/restraint/contact, sexual abuse, verbal abuse or neglect.

Annual Report:

The Directors of Children's Choice will produce an annual report. This report will be available to all employees upon request.

Zipper Clause:

All other policies, whether written or oral, are declared null and void, ceasing to have any effect whatsoever by the publication and dissemination of these policies. This current set of policies supersedes all prior policies.

Amendments

Equal Employment Opportunity Statement/Discrimination/Nepotism Policy: Adopted by the Board the Board of Directors on 5/31/16.

Social Media Policy: Adopted by the Board the Board of Directors on 5/31/16.

Alcohol Consumption at CC Events Policy; Substance Abuse Policy: Adopted by the Board the Board of Directors on 5/31/16.

Child Abuse Identification and Reporting Policy: Adopted by the board 8/21/17.

Discipline Policy: Adopted by the board 8/21/17.

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians: Adopted by the board 8/21/17.

Mission, Values, Vision: Adopted by the board 8/9/22

Anti-Bullying Policy: Adopted by the board 10/18/22

Healthy Workplace Act: Adopted by the board 10/18/22

Recognizing Abuse and Neglect: Adopted by the board 10/18/22

Performance Appraisals: Adopted by the board 10/18/22

ALICE Protocols for Threats on Campus: Adopted by the board 10/18/22

Dress Code: Adopted by the board 4/5/23

Juneteenth as CC Holiday: Adopted by the board 4/5/23

Whistleblower Policy: Adopted by the board 7/10/24