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PARENT HANDBOOK

Thank you for choosing the Dick Howser Center for Childhood Services, Inc. Children have been our business for over three decades and we continue to learn and grow with them! The years from birth to six are without a doubt the most important years in your child's life. The foundation for all growth in cognition, language, and social/emotional development are established in these few early years.

We believe that all children benefit when they are able to play and learn with their first friends in a positive, nurturing and caring environment that emphasizes each child's unique gifts and capabilities. Our child care center provides a variety of services for young children in an inclusive environment for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. All children are challenged with learning experiences based on their own intrinsic and unique gifts. Additional services, including physical, occupational and speech-language therapy are available on-site.

This handbook contains important information that will help make your child's early school experience positive. The director and other staff members are happy to answer any questions you have. We welcome family involvement and encourage you to visit your child's classroom at any time.

Again, thank you for giving DHC the opportunity to be part of this very important time in your child's life.

“Our Mission is to improve the quality of life and acceptance of children with special needs and their families.”

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Dick Howser Center uses a play-based curriculum that emphasizes self worth, capability and school readiness. We focus on assisting children to develop the social and communication skills needed to work and play cooperatively. Our staff members encourage children to be self-directing and to make decisions for themselves. We want each child to realize his or her greatest potential and to gain confidence, skills and independence that will last a lifetime!

For various reasons, many early childhood programs are placing emphasis on formal academic instruction. Many parents fear that their child will not be ready for school, and push for this type of program. However, decades of research shows definitely, that young children learn best through active, concrete, hand-on, child-directed activities – otherwise known as PLAY! Quality environments that promote play are thoughtfully set up and supported by teachers who gradually scaffold in concepts relevant to the young child. Children's choices are supported by positive guidance and direction. These basic principles of PLAY helps a young child transition to Kindergarten and beyond as a confident individual, capable to making good decisions, make friends, focus on learning and much more.

Before children can master formal academic skills, they need to see, touch, smell, hear, taste and experience the world by interacting directly with it. Children learn best through play! Please, don't feel guilty about letting your child play...insist on it!

WHAT MAKES THE DICK HOWSER SO SPECIAL?

The Dick Howser Center was started by a group of parents just like you over 30 years ago! They wanted a good place for their children to go during the day that would challenge their children to be the best they could be, while offering a fun, safe environment.

This group of dedicated parents, worked to develop a high quality center, that provides assessment of each child's development, on-site therapy and a curriculum developed to help prepare your child for life. The Dick Howser Center can offer assistance to your family:

- Parent Meetings, Trainings and information related to Support Groups
- Referrals for various programs for financial assistance, affordable housing, and more.
- On-site therapy services and enhanced and early identification of children with possible special needs.
- Highly qualified staff specifically trained to work with children with special developmental and/or behavioral needs.
- Low staff to child ratios, with extra staff available to assist when needed

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

To fulfill our Educational Philosophy, The Dick Howser Center has adopted the Creative Curriculum, by Teaching Strategies and Conscious Discipline, by Becky Bailey.

Creative Curriculum is a play-based curriculum based on five fundamental principles for young children age birth through kindergarten.

- Positive interactions and relationships
- Social-emotional competence
- Constructive purposeful play
- Quality learning environments
- Teacher-family partnerships

Creative Curriculum builds in daily assessment opportunities using Teaching Strategies Gold so that adults working with young children to assess and scaffold children's development. The research and longitudinal follow-up supporting this curriculum has shown that when children successfully master the stages of play, they are developmentally guided toward success in reading, writing, and math skills.

Our program is a support system for children and their families. Staff are carefully selected based on education, training and experience, and classrooms are individually planned to meet the unique needs of each child. Classrooms provide a multitude of play opportunities through which each child is guided towards his/her optimal developmental level. We use the Creative Curriculum, which is play-based and designed to provide a loving, playful, and stimulating environment. Play environments are organized into centers which are designed, equipped, and arranged to promote the child's development through sensorimotor, dramatic, fluid/messy play and structured construction play experiences.

Staff are focused on each child's development of self-esteem and personal independence. Children are encouraged to make choices, think independently, and to build trusting, cooperative relationships with peers and teachers through an environment that is child initiated, child-directed and teacher- scaffolded.

THEMES & UNITS

August /September: Beginning the Year

Focus: Making friends, learning school rules, getting to know my teachers, being a good friend and special sounds at school.

September /October: Balls

Focus: How balls move, different types of balls and the people who use them, what are balls made from.

November/December: Clothes

Focus: Exploring clothing, taking care of clothes, how are clothes made, where do we get our clothes, special clothes for work.

January/February: Buildings

Focus: Buildings in our neighborhood, who builds buildings, what are buildings made of, what's special about our building, what happens inside buildings.

February/March: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Focus: What do people throw away, where does trash go, how do trash and garbage affect our community, can we reuse junk, can we create less trash

April/May: Trees

Focus: trees in my community, food from trees, who takes care of trees, how do trees change, what can we do with parts of trees.

TELEVISION & VIDEO VIEWING

Current research indicates that for best early development, "screen-time" should be very limited to none at all. Our Infants and 1 year olds never watch television or videos. Teachers of children age 2 and up have the option of showing developmentally appropriate short videos (limited to a maximum of 20 minutes) that relate directly to the curriculum. Periodically, on rainy days, teachers may allow children to watch a G-rated video.

STAFF TO CHILD RATIOS

In order to provide the highest quality educational environment for our children, we strive to keep our staff-to-child ratios as low as possible. Often times, we have several “floating” teachers who are able to assist in classrooms when children need extra help with learning activities. These staff help to further reduce the number of children assigned to a teacher, thereby increasing the quality of care being provided.

For specific staff-to-child ratios, please speak to your child's teacher or the Director.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

ADMISSIONS POLICY

The Dick Howser Center enrolls children from 6 weeks to 6 years, based on available space and specific program eligibility requirements. Equal access is provided to agency services without discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, veteran status, religious practice, age, disability or other categories protected by law.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The Dick Howser Center follows the behavioral management philosophy of Conscious Discipline, by Becky Bailey. The intent is to prevent misbehavior, rather than simply “react” to it. Instead of punishing children after they have misbehaved, the environment should be set up so that children will be less likely to misbehave. This means that certain conditions should be kept in mind: enough toys, enough space, enough activities, enough time, etc. We encourage children to control their world through language and the opportunity to make choices. The program provides a panorama of experiences from which the child can choose in order to give him/her a sense of control.

The environment is structured so that children can make choices of play activities and materials. This ability to choose and plan gives the child power and prevents many conflicts during the school day. When young children are involved in activities that they enjoy, they are less likely to misbehave out of frustration. When they are praised and encouraged for their efforts, they are less likely to misbehave to get attention. When children are taught to play cooperatively, they are less likely to fight among themselves. Verbal and physical aggression is always discouraged and never modeled by staff. Our ultimate goal is to help the child solve problems through language and cooperation with others. In these ways, some potential problems may be anticipated and eliminated.

When misbehavior occurs, Dick Howser Center WILL USE appropriate responses:

- Children are encouraged to develop language skills that help them to communicate their needs and feelings. Language is modeled for them by adults and other children so that they may learn to use language as a problem solving tool. Calm, positive, and developmentally appropriate language will be used to redirect children's behavior when necessary to other activities, toys, or play spaces.
- Children may be reminded of the rules through a restating of the natural consequences of their behavior.
- If a child is experiencing difficulty being self directed and using language to solve problems in one area of play, he/she is offered another play activity. In the event that the child is still unable to control his/her behavior and cannot make appropriate choices for him/herself, using language to get his/her needs met, he/she is removed from the problem area and given a personal space away from others. Time limits are imposed by the child. He/she may return to the group or activity whenever the behavior is under control.

Dick Howser WILL NEVER USE the following inappropriate responses to misbehavior:

- Children shall not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening. This includes harsh language, verbal threats of corporal or excessive punishment, name-calling, derogatory remarks, or any action that could lower the pride, dignity, or self-respect of a child.
- Children shall not be subjected to discipline that is associated with food. A child may not be denied meals, dessert, snacks, treats, party food, etc.
- Children shall not be denied rest as a form of discipline, nor subjected to discipline because they fail to rest at designated times.
- Children shall not be subjected to discipline that is related to toileting.
- Children will not be subjected to discipline involving total isolation (i.e., "time-out") or that denies them participation in special activities (i.e., on-site field trips, parties).
- Children will not be subjected to spanking or any other form of corporal punishment. This includes paddling a child, slapping a child on the hand or any other body part, pulling a child's hair, arm, or other extremity, pinching a child or any other action that is painful or might cause a child bodily harm.

GUIDELINES FOR DISENROLLMENT DUE TO BEHAVIOR

Ever effort will be made to work fairly and consistently with each child and their individual needs. Children identified as having special behavioral needs will have a written behavior management plan developed and approved by the child's teacher, Director and parents. In extreme cases, where excessive, inappropriate behavior, or extreme behavioral outbursts by a child puts their safety, another child's safety or a staff member at risk other alternative strategies, including resources and referrals to help in finding more appropriate and/or medically necessary care will be provided to parents.

Children, especially toddlers, due to limited communication and social/emotional skills, will sometimes hit or bite other children or teachers, throw toys, cry/scream, etc. These are all part of normal development. DHC has proven strategies in working with toddlers going through this developmental stage. DHC will not dis-enroll a child due to these or other behaviors. If you'd like more information on typical behavior of toddlers, especially biting, please make a request to your child's teacher or a member of the DHC Administrative Team.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT POLICY

All parents and guardians should be aware that Florida Statutes require all child care personnel to receive training on child abuse and neglect. The law also requires child care personnel to immediately report suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the appropriate authorities. If you suspect the abuse or neglect of a child, please call the Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96ABUSE (22873).

BACK TO SLEEP POLICY

Since the Back to Sleep campaign was initiated in 1994, infant deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) have decreased by 40 percent. **It is our policy that all infants, even those who have the ability to roll over, will be placed to sleep on their backs.** The only way that an exception to this policy will be made is with written documentation from the child's physical indicating that the child must be placed on his or her stomach to sleep due to a medical necessity.

VEHICLE RESTRAINT FOR CHILDREN POLICY

Florida law requires that children be placed in appropriate vehicle restraints (car seats, boosters, etc) when transported in an automobile. We strongly encourage all parents to abide by this law for the safety of their children. Our staff members have been instructed to telephone the Florida Highway Patrol when they see a child arriving or departing the school not restrained as required by law.

OUTSIDE PLAY POLICY

We firmly believe in the importance of outside play. Children must have outside playtime daily, weather permitting. Outside time is important to every child's development and licensing regulations and program standards require us to offer children the opportunity. Our classroom schedules reflect the times when each classroom will be outside. Children will not be outside for longer than 1 hour period of time. You will need to dress your child appropriately for outside play, jackets, hats, etc. Children will not play outside in inclement weather, such as rain, thunder, during heat advisories or other health alerts or if it is less than 40 degrees. In order to provide adequate staff supervision for all children, we are not able to keep some children inside while the rest go out. If your child is too ill to go outside, he or she is probably too ill to be at the center. Exceptions will be made only for children who have a note from the child's physician stating that the child has a medical condition that prevents him or her from going outside.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

We have an emergency preparedness plan for natural disasters. Each month, DHC practices fire drills with the children and staff at various times of the day, including naptime. Each year, DHC practices for other types of emergencies, such as tornado/severe weather, lock down and missing child.

For medical emergencies, the Administrator In-Charge will call 911 immediately. A staff member trained in First Aid and CPR will begin emergency intervention, if necessary. Other staff will ensure the safety of all other children, away from the medical emergency. The Director and child's parents will be notified. The child's folder will be made available to medical personnel. The Director or Administrator In-Charge will accompany the child to the hospital and wait there until parents arrive.

UNUSUAL INCIDENT

In the case of an injury or incident that does not require emergency care, the teacher will complete a DHC Unusual Incident Report. This report will be given to the parent at pick up to review and sign. Copies of completed forms are available upon request. This form will also be used to document unusual injuries noticed upon arrival.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

You will receive information about what your child did at child care on a regular basis. For infants and Wobblers (1s and young 2s), you will receive a daily sheet sharing diapering, feeding, napping, as well as any other things that happened while in care. For children age 2 and older, you will receive weekly notes detailing what the current curriculum these is so that you can encourage learning experiences at home.

Lesson plans, menus and other information is located on the classroom bulletin board.

Each year, typically in August, the Dick Howser Center schedules an Open House. This is an opportunity for you to meet with your child's teacher and discuss your child's progress, concerns about your child's development, and more.

There is a Parent Resource Library located in the lobby entrance. These books are for you to browse and check-out. Topics range from bringing home another baby, breastfeeding, raising boys, divorce and basic child development.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Child care is a highly regulated industry. Because of this, the Department of Children and Families, Child Care Food Program, Accrediting Agencies, the Early Learning Coalition and other community partners require specific paperwork, policies and health requirements.

INITIAL ENROLLMENT / PARENT ORIENTATION

Before your child can be fully enrolled at The Dick Howser Center, parents or guardians must make an appointment with the Center Coordinator or other DHC Administrator to review all required paperwork, discuss concerns and expectations and ensure a smooth transition.

CHILD CARE APPLICATION FOR ENROLLMENT

The Child Care Application for Enrollment must be completed at enrollment and each August/September thereafter. Updates to the form should be made in a timely manner as this form is used during emergencies. Dick Howser staff will always attempt to contact parents first. Staff will leave a message, however, if appropriate, staff will call the emergency contacts included on the enrollment form.

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT FEE

Along with the Child Care Application for Enrollment, DHC also requires an annual registration fee of \$75 for the first child and \$25 for each additional child. At the time of initial enrollment, the Enrollment Fee must be received in order to secure a spot for your child.

VPK SUPPLY FEE

Children enrolled in School Year or Summer VPK are required to pay the \$50 Supply Fee at the time of enrollment in VPK.

HEALTH RECORDS

Per Department of Children & Families requirements, a child may not begin care at a child care until a current Immunization record (DOH form 680-blue form) and a current Physical Record (DOH form 3040-yellow form) is on file. The Immunization record must have an expiration date, unless immunizations are complete. The Physical record expires every 2 years.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Dick Howser Center is open from 7:00am until 6:00pm for full-day child care. There are part-time limited spaces for children age 3 and older. These part-time options include 5 days per week from 7am – 12n or 1pm – 6pm or 3 days per week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday or 2 days per week on Tuesday and Thursday.

DHC also provides Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services at no additional tuition fees, from 9:00am until 12:00n. Wrap-around care is available during operational hours for an additional fee.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

We welcome your involvement. Parents may visit the center at any time. If you plan to stay for a while, please get involved in class activities. The Open Door Policy applies to all individuals approved by parents and listed on the Enrollment and All About Me forms.

NUTRITION

The Dick Howser Center participates in the Child Care Food Program (CCFP). The CCFP is a child nutrition program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service. The purpose of the CCFP is to provide reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to children while at school. The program is administered by the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Childcare Food Programs. All meals and snacks served to children at DHC meet specific USDA meal pattern requirements. The meal pattern includes milk, fruits and vegetables, meat or meat alternatives and grains or breads in amounts specified by age. Weekly menus are posted on the parent board in the entrance lobby, on classroom bulletin boards and distributed to parents via email.

As part of enrollment, ALL parents must fill out the Child Care Food Program Eligibility form. DHC is reimbursed for ALL children enrolled. However, if your child requires an item on the menu to be substituted due to a food allergy, please complete a Child Care Food Program Medical Statement for Children with Disabilities and Special Dietary Conditions. These forms are typically completed at enrollment, but can be completed at any time. If you need to update your child's CCFP forms, please speak to a DHC Administrator.

If you have a child with special dietary needs (vegetarian, only eats organic food or requires Almond Milk), or a food issue that DHC is not able to accommodate and provide, you will be asked to bring food for your child and a note from your child's physician. In an effort to maintain consistency, DHC approves these requests on an extremely limited basis. For more information regarding children with special dietary needs, please speak to a DHC Administrator.

DHC is a PEANUT-FREE school. Peanuts or other peanut products are never served for any reason.

TRANSPORTATION

The Dick Howser Center does **NOT** provide transportation for any reason. Because our children do not participate in field trips off campus, DHC schedules presentations related to the curriculum theme and/or children's interests to be held at the preschool. Parents are notified about on-site field trips via email, notices on classroom doors and verbal and written communication with teachers and other staff.

PHOTOS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Because the Dick Howser Center receives funding from the Community Human Service Partnership (CHSP) grant, we are required to submit an informational portfolio, report and video about the services offered. By enrolling your child at the Dick Howser Center, you agree to allow your child to be photographed for the purpose of securing United Way or other grant funding or donations.

DHC also uses social media and television to communicate with parents and the public at large. Parents must complete the Photo Permission and Release Form and either agree to give consent or deny permission to participate in photos posted to social media or video segments specifically for television. Children's names are never used in any type of communication either internal or external. Children without permission to photograph may still have photos posted to social media or television, however their face will be obscured, not visible or blurred.

ILLNESS AND MEDICATION POLICIES

EXCLUSION POLICY FOR ILL CHILDREN

A child who is displaying possible signs of illness, must be picked up from the center as soon as possible (within 1 hour maximum). When children are sick, every effort will be made to exclude them from direct contact or activity with other children. Parents will be called immediately. If parents cannot be reached, staff will call emergency contacts.

Possible Signs of Illness Include: a fever of 101 degrees or high, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy or who have suspected untreated infectious conditions such as ringworm, pink eye, lice, impetigo, etc.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER AN ILLNESS

Children who are sent home due to a suspected illness must be symptom free for at least 24 hours (without the aid of fever reducing medication). Children, whose illness requires medication, must have taken the medication for at least 24 hours prior to returning to school. Children sent home with suspected infectious conditions, must have a doctor's note indicating the child may return to care. There is NO EXCEPTION to this policy. DHC will not put other children or our staff at risk of becoming ill. Because young children have an under-developed immune system, parents should have a sick child care plan or alternative person if the parent is unavailable or unable to take time away from work.

PRESCRIPTION AND NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

If your child requires medication, ointment, lotion or teething aides, parents must complete a Medication Authorization form. Your child's teacher or a DHC Administrator can assist you with filling out this form. The form must be complete, including specific written instructions regarding time to give medication, dosage, beginning and ending dates, etc. All medications MUST be in original containers. Old or expired medication will not be given to a child and will be returned to the parent or guardian.

Prescription Medication

Prescription medication must contain the pharmacy label with the child's name and clear instructions.

Non-Prescription Medication

Non-prescription medications, such as cough syrups and pain relievers can only be given with a doctor's note. Fever reducers will NEVER be given at school. Children with fevers cannot be at school, even with a doctor's note.

Diaper Ointments, Lotions and Teething Aides

As with other medication, any ointment, lotion or other type of "over-the-counter medication, parents must complete a Medication Authorization form. Diaper Ointments, such as Desitin, A&D Ointment, etc, can be brought in by parents without a doctor's note. Other ointments, such as Neosporin, must be accompanied by a doctor's note or after-care instructions. Teething Aides, such as Oragel, teething tablets, etc, must be accompanied by a doctor's note.

Allergies

If your child has a known allergy, please document all pertinent information on the Enrollment form. If medication, such as an EpiPen is required, parents must complete a Medication Authorization Form and the EpiPen must have the pharmacy prescription label.

CLOSURES AND HOLIDAYS

2015-2016 INSERVICE AND HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

ALL CHILDREN [Including VPK]

Friday, August 14, 2015	Teacher Inservice – CLOSED School Wide Open House @ 6pm
Monday, August 17, 2015	2015-16 VPK First Day of School
Monday, September 7, 2015	Labor Day - CLOSED
Thurs, Nov 26 – Fri, Nov 27, 2015	Thanksgiving Holiday - CLOSED
Wed, Dec 24 – Thurs, Dec 31, 2015	Winter Holiday - CLOSED
Friday, January 1, 2016	New Year's Day - CLOSED
Monday, January 18, 2016	Martin Luther King Day - CLOSED
Monday, March 21, 2016	Teacher Inservice - CLOSED
Monday, May 30, 2016	Memorial Day - CLOSED
Monday, July 4, 2016	Independence Day Holiday - CLOSED

VPK ONLY Closure

(includes all holiday/closure days listed above)

Mon, Mar 16 – Fri, Mar 20, 2015	2015-2016 VPK Spring Break
Wednesday, September 23, 2015	LCS Fall Holiday
Friday, October 16, 2015	LCS Teacher Inservice Day
Wednesday, November 11, 2015	Veteran's Day Holiday
Wednesday, November 25, 2015	LCS Thanksgiving Holiday
Mon, Dec 21 – Wed, Dec 23, 2016	LCS VPK Winter Holiday Break
Monday, January 4, 2016	LCS Inservice
Mon, Mar 14 – Fri, Mar 18, 2016	VPK Spring Break

If you'd like for your VPK child to attend school during VPK ONLY holiday/closure days and receive funding through ELC or pay the Full-Time Wrap Around Fee, there is no extra charge. However, if your child attends for VPK Only, and you'd like them to attend during this time, the fee is \$35 per day.

Emergency Closing

Emergencies, due to weather or other unforeseen events may require DHC to close. When Leon County Schools, State of Florida and/or local emergency management officials recommend closure, DHC will be closed. The decision to close the center will be made by the Director. In the event that an emergency closing is necessary, parents or individuals designated as emergency contacts will be called and asked to pick up children immediately. In the event that an emergency occurs during a time when the preschool is closed, every effort will be made to notify parents through broadcasts on local television stations, email or FaceBook.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS OR GUARDIANS

SIGN IN AND OUT DAILY

The Department of Children & Families requires that parents/guardians sign their children in and out each day. This also helps us keep track of the number of children who are at school. Parents use the ProCare fingerprint recognition system. Upon registration, the Center Coordinator or other Administrative Staff will assign a ProCare log-in. If you have any trouble using the ProCare fingerprint system, please see the Administrator In-Charge so that they can assist you.

PICK-UP AND DROP OFF

Parents, guardians or other authorized persons (18 years of age or older) must come into the building to pick up their child. They are responsible for ensuring that the child is escorted to the vehicle and safely secured within the vehicle. Families must notify the center if someone other than the parent or guardian is picking up the child. Children will not be released into the custody of unauthorized individuals. State issued Photo ID is required when individuals who are not personally known to the staff are picking up children. You may add and delete authorized persons to your emergency contact form at any time.

Never leave children unattended in vehicles while picking up. If you require assistance at pick up or drop off, please call the center. A staff member will assist you as soon as possible.

Parking

Please use the designated parking spots when picking up or dropping off. Do not park along curbs, or at the front entrance overhang. Only those with current handicap parking permits may park in the handicap spots.

Inclement Weather

When picking up or dropping off during inclement weather or when you have a sleeping infant in the car, our staff is happy to assist you by bringing your child to your car. Simply call the center and a staff member will promptly bring your child to you.

Intoxicated or Impaired Driving

If a parent or other authorized driver arriving to retrieve a child is considered by at least two staff to possibly be in an intoxicated or otherwise unfit condition to transport children safely, the driver will be asked to seek alternative transportation home for both themselves and the child. DHC staff will assist in any way possible, by calling a designated friend, relative or taxi to take the impaired driver and child home at the parent's expense. In the event the parent or authorized driver does not accept the staff recommendations to obtain alternate transportation, the staff have been instructed by Child Protective Services to call Tallahassee Police Department and request assistance to prevent the parent or authorized driver from attempting to transport.

LATE PICK UP AND FEES

Our staff scheduling is based on the hours of operation of the program **and** full, part-time or VKP enrollment options. DHC is unable to provide unexpected staff coverage when children are not picked up on time. When staff must stay late with children, DHC must pay overtime that has not been budgeted for. Because of this, **a late fee of \$1 per minute** is required at pickup. Please remember that this fee goes into effect when your child's program hours are over, not necessarily only when the center closes. Care will not be provided until the late fee is received.

If you are going to be late, please contact the center. Staff will make every effort to locate parents or emergency contacts, but if someone cannot be located, the Dick Howser Staff will contact the Tallahassee Police or Leon County Sheriff's Department. Staff will give the responding law enforcement officers enrollment and emergency contact information. The child will be placed in the care and supervision of law enforcement.

Picking up children late from care is grounds for termination of child care services.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

Seasonally Appropriate Attire

Please dress your child appropriately for the season. All children must have at least one complete change of clothes (shorts/pants, shirt, socks, underwear) to be kept in his or her cubbie. We are a Messy Play school. This means that your child will have access to water play, paint, play dough and much more each day. Staff will make every effort to balance your child's need to explore and learn and getting messy while engaged in learning activities. It is recommended that children come to school ready to play with the anticipation that they will probably get messy. Most messy play will not stain, but it can happen. DHC will NOT reimburse or replace stained clothes, so please keep your keepsake or favorite outfits at home.

Footwear

All children who are walking must wear closed toe shoes with backs. **Sandals and flip-flops are strictly prohibited due to safety.** Children arriving with improper footwear will be sent home. The only exceptions, is during Spirit Week or other special event, alternate footwear may be permitted.

Jewelry

Also, because we are a messy and active play preschool, you are encouraged to leave jewelry, such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc at home. DHC is not responsible for lost or missing jewelry.

Fingernails

It is also helpful to keep your child's nails trimmed. Often times, due to lack of language skills, young children will hit or scratch other children in an attempt to communicate their dislike. Children with long nails can leave scratch marks or otherwise injure another child. Keeping your child's nails trimmed will help avoid unintended injury.

School Shirts

Each year, usually in late August or Early September, parents are asked to bring in a plain white t-shirt for their child. Your child's teacher will help your child tie-dye the shirt. This is your child's "school shirt". DHC will have several Spirit Weeks throughout the year, where your child will be encouraged to show school spirit by wearing their shirt.

DIAPERS AND PULL-UPS

If your child wears diapers or pull-ups, it is your responsibility to bring an adequate supply each day (usually between 4 – 6 per day). You are encouraged to bring a larger supply that can be stored in the classroom. Teachers will let you know to bring more diapers or pull-ups in writing on the Infant or Toddlergram daily reports. Teachers are not always able to verbally remind you to bring supplies, so it is your responsibility to review the daily reports and bring requested supplies in a timely manner. If your child doesn't have an adequate supply of diapers or pull-ups, Administrative staff will contact you to bring more immediately. DHC does keep a limited emergency supply of diapers. If your child is out of diapers, staff will use these diapers and a charge of \$1.00 per diaper will be charged.

TOYS FROM HOME

Toys from home are prohibited. Please DO NOT allow your child to bring toys from home unless it is a special request (Show & Tell) by your child's teacher or a special event. It always causes problems when other children want to play with toys brought from home. It is extremely difficult for staff to keep track of personal toys and DHC is not responsible for toys brought from home and misplaced or broken.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AND FESTIVALS

Birthdays

We love being a part of your child's birthday celebration! Please let your child's teacher know at least two weeks prior to the date you'd like to have your child's "school" party, so that we can plan a cooking activity with the children to make cupcakes at school. The children will have a great time and learn so much from making the cupcakes and will enjoy them even more!

All birthday parties are held at 3:00pm (Snack Time) unless otherwise scheduled by the teacher. In addition to the child-made cupcakes, DHC will serve the afternoon snack scheduled for that day, so no other food is necessary. If you would like to bring party favors or other food, please feel free to bring party hats, stickers, kazoo's, etc and/or healthy food options, such as fresh fruit, yogurt, raisins, etc. We cannot serve soda, cake, chips, ice cream, candy, etc. Of course, you and other family members are welcome to come!

School-Wide Festivals

DHC schedules several festivals and parent involvement opportunities throughout the year, including a Fall Festival, Thanksgiving Feast, Spring Fling and Back to School Open House. From time to time, parents are encouraged to volunteer to bring food for these events. Please look for sign-up sheets next to the ProCare thumb print scan where you sign in and out to sign up for volunteer opportunities.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers must be registered through the ProCare fingerprint system and sign-in and out during each visit. They must also check in with the Administrator In-Charge.

Any volunteer who exhibits inappropriate behavior or violates our Confidentiality or Disciplinary Policies, will be prohibited from continuing the volunteer work with DHC.

Parent volunteers

Parents are encouraged to volunteer throughout the center – classrooms, kitchen, resource room, garden, etc. Volunteer opportunities range from special events and festivals to daily classroom helpers. Please see a DHC Administrator or your child's teacher to volunteer.

Volunteers from the Community

First time volunteers must complete a Volunteer Orientation and all required paperwork with the Program Director before they are permitted to volunteer during operational hours. Any individual who volunteers more than once, must have a background check completed before being permitted to perform any additional volunteer work.

Volunteers must provide State Issued identification. The volunteer must wear a volunteer ID badge at all times during their visit and return upon departure.

TUITION PAYMENT AND FEES

PAYMENTS

Tuition and fees can be made by check, money order, debit or credit cards. Cash is not accepted. Money orders and checks can be mailed to 3519 Easter Stanley Court, Tallahassee, Florida 32308 or payments can be accepted in the Tuition Drop Box located at the Reception Desk. Debit and credit cards can be made while at the center or by phone at 850-921-KIDS(5437) during normal operational hours (7:00am – 6:00pm).

When mailing your payment, be sure to indicate the responsible party for payment as listed on your signed tuition agreement as well as your child's first and last name on your check or money order. This helps to ensure accuracy in posting payments to the correct account. Mailed payments must be received on or before the 5th of the month to avoid the \$25.00 late fee.

LATE PAYMENT FEES

Tuition and parent fees are due on or before the first day of each month. We depend on prompt payment of tuition in order to pay our staff salaries and meet our operating expenses. A \$25 late payment fee will be charged for any tuition that is paid after the 5th of the month. **If tuition has not been paid by the 10th of the month, services will be suspended.**

TUITION DISCOUNTS

Sibling Discounts

DHC offers a 10% discount for enrolling more than one child. Goodwill employees are eligible for 25% discount.

Vacations, Holidays and/or Center Closures

Tuition rates are based on an annual average, therefore, there are no discounts for vacations, holidays and/or emergency center closures.

QUESTIONS REGARDING TUITION

If you have any concerns regarding payment of tuition, contact the Accounting Clerk or Program Director at 850-921-KIDS(5437) or dhcpaccounting@goodwillbigbend.com.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

We welcome suggestions on how to make our services better. All parents are encouraged to complete a Satisfaction Survey on a regular basis. These surveys are reviewed by DHC Administration and suggestions and improvements are implemented as appropriate.

When a problem cannot be resolved through informal means, such as meetings with staff members, please request a meeting with the Director. The Director can be reached at 850-921-KIDS(5437) or email at ksineath@goodwillbigbend.com. Formal complaints or grievances regarding the center's alleged non-compliance with applicable civil or human rights laws, or regarding the center's delivery of services should be directed in writing to:

Vice President of Human Services,
The Dick Howser Center for Childhood Services, Inc.
3519 Easter Stanley Court
Tallahassee, Florida 32308

Please make sure to include as much specific information regarding the issue as possible and include a current mailing address and daytime phone number. The Vice President will respond to the in writing within 10 business days of receipt of the grievance and a meeting will be scheduled to attempt to resolve any issues.

If the issue is still not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, a written request should be made for review by the Board of Directors, which will act as a Grievance Committee. This request should be directed to:

Chairman of the Board of Directors
The Dick Howser Center for Childhood Services, Inc.
3519 Easter Stanley Court
Tallahassee, Florida 32308

Within 30 days of receiving the complaint, the Board of Directors will respond in writing and a meeting will be scheduled to attempt a resolution.

PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Parent Handbook describes important information about The Dick Howser Center and I acknowledge the receipt of this handbook. Further, I acknowledge that a member of the DHC Administrative Team has reviewed important information with me and that I understand the contents of the handbook. I understand that I am free to complete a satisfaction survey at any time, that I am welcome at the school and that I may ask questions of DHC Administration regarding all aspects of care provided at The Dick Howser Center.

Since the information and policies described are subject to change, I understand that revisions to the handbook may occur. All such changes will be communicated through notices, flyers, and/or email and I understand that the Program Director has the ability to adopt any revisions to the policies in this handbook.

The version of the Parent Handbook I have reviewed was updated 7/2015. A signed acknowledgement will be maintained in your child's file.