



# Parent Handbook 2024-2025

**Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center at its option, may change, delete, suspend, or discontinue parts or the policy in its entirety, at any time without prior notice. In the event of a policy change, families will be notified. Any such action shall apply to existing as well as to future families.**

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## **WELCOME FROM PASTOR BRAD**

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.” - Proverbs 22:6

My friends,

Welcome to the Abiding Love Lutheran Church Children’s Center! Partnering with parents in loving, caring for and nurturing the growth of children is a central part of our congregational life. Our Children’s Center has been a primary expression of that ministry since 1986.

Our mission is to provide a safe and creative place for learning and play for the wider Austin community where children and parents can experience the love and grace of God as we grow together. Our great Center leadership and gifted teachers are devoted to the best practices in early childhood education even as they innovate to provide the right environments, activities, and contexts for learning in new ways. I love celebrating with all your kids in Chapel every Thursday morning!

You share a sacred trust with us, in these vital early years, to help your children step forward down the path toward healthy, happy, fulfilling lives. We work each day to be faithful to that trust and are here to assist you and your family in every way can, now and in the time to come.

Yours in abiding love,

Pastor Brad Highum

## **WELCOME FROM OUR DIRECTOR**

Dear Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center Families,

We are blessed you have chosen our Center to be part of your child's early education and care during these precious preschool years. ALLCC is a place of nurturing the whole child - socially, spiritually, cognitively, emotionally, and physically. Great and exciting things are happening at ALLCC, and we want you to be sure that you have chosen an amazing place for your child to thrive. Along with our leadership team and staff, I am excited about both the challenges and rewards of being a critical part of your child's future. I look forward to working with all parents/guardians and establishing positive relationships. Trust, communication, and understanding are vital parts of these relationships. I am a strong proponent of an open-door policy and I welcome conversations regarding your child/children to ensure a successful school year. I am blessed beyond measures to be given this opportunity to serve your child and family. I am fully committed to this position as Director, and I will work collaboratively with our staff to ensure each family and child has a positive experience. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to lead a remarkable group of caring, creative, and gifted teachers and staff. We are all here because we are passionate about having a positive impact on young lives. We look forward to being a part of your child's growth and development. I will be praying for all our families and children as we all prepare for this school year at ALLCC.

Blessings to you and your family,

Ana Winston  
Director  
Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center

## **MISSION**

Abiding Love Lutheran Church Children's Center (aka Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center, Abiding Love Children's Center, Children's Center, Center, and ALLCC) offers a full-time program that was established to care for young children in a way that tells them and their family the story of God's love through Jesus Christ.

Birth through 5 years are a child's formative years. It is important that children of this age be given a stimulating environment that allows for creative play and sensory experiences. Learning centers (Bible, Dramatic Play, Blocks, Books, Manipulative, Art, Science, and Outside Play) are used to help develop the child's spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs.

## **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

Our Center was founded as an integral ministry of Abiding Love Lutheran Church (aka Abiding Love, Church). The church believes that it is of utmost importance to provide a safe and loving place for families to bring their young children, nurturing them in the love of Jesus Christ each day.

The goal of ALLCC is to provide teaching, training, and loving care that will foster a pleasant environment where children will feel loved and secure. The Children's Center strives to provide an enriched environment where children can grow in the following developmental areas:

### **A. Spiritual**

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Develop awareness that the Bible is a special book that talks about God's love through Jesus Christ.
- Participate in worship experiences on individual developmental levels.
- Witness positive examples (sharing, kindness, helping, loving, etc.)
- Develop a habit of giving thanks through prayer for things that God gives us to enjoy.
- Increase their ability to make positive choices and understand the consequences of choices made.

### **B. Intellectual**

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Understand that God gives us a mind to learn about all aspects of creation
- Participate in math readiness experiences (numbers, concepts, shapes, etc.)
- Explore science concepts (nature, senses, etc.)
- Immerse themselves in reading readiness and oral language experiences at appropriate developmental levels

- Express themselves in art and music

**C. Social**

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Understand that God gives us other people and a way to live with them in harmony
- Demonstrate acceptance of all people; people of all ethnic groups, those who are differently abled, and people of all ages
- Learn in small and large grouping arrangements
- Develop a sense of sharing, caring, loving, and kindness
- Participate in individual play experiences
- Give and receive approval, encouragement, and affection
- Set limits and boundaries
- Use interpersonal skills
- Choose "free choice" materials and activities regardless of gender
- Model language that is gender inclusive

**D. Emotional**

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Understand that God has given us our feelings and that there are acceptable ways to express them
- Recognize different expressions of feelings
- Feel secure and stable in this Center's environment
- Respond to different expressions of feelings
- Express themselves verbally
- Understand that other children have rights
- Develop awareness that body language expresses emotions (smiling, frowning, worrying, surprising, clapping, etc.)

**E. Physical**

All children will be given opportunities to...

- Accept that each child is one of God's individual creations
- Develop an awareness that each of us grow and develop at different rates
- Learn good hygiene habits



- Develop special awareness and adapt to spaces provided for specific activities
- Use books, toys, material, and activities that are age appropriate and inclusive of other cultures
- Keep rooms clean and organized
- Participate in both quiet and active activities
- Eat nutritious, appealing snacks
- Increase stimulation through changes in instructional environments (indoor/outdoor, walks, etc.)

### **Faith Based**

Christian teaching and learning experiences are interwoven into all areas of the ALLCC operation to convey knowledge of God in every aspect of a child's world. Our Christian foundations can be seen in the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth of our children. Our goal is to weave faith development into all areas of development, giving us a whole child approach. We pray, sing songs, hear Bible stories, and use real objects to interact with the stories. At this young age, faith is a practical expression of feeling safe, loving one another, helping each other, and treating each other with respect. We want children to know that God loves them and so do we, and that they can love God and others as well.

### **Emergent Curriculum**

We follow the interests of the children as well as the seasons and holidays that are a natural part of their lives. We utilize philosophies from many of the pioneers in early childhood education, including Reggio Emilia, Maria Montessori, Piaget, and Vygotsky. We do not believe in having a "store-bought" curriculum that is supposed to work for all children every year. We base our themes upon the interests, developmental levels, personalities, and gifts of all the children in the classroom.

### **Conscious Discipline**

ALLCC encourages children through Conscious Discipline techniques to solve minor conflicts in a peaceful way. Conscious Discipline is a community model that promotes connection and contribution, problem solving, internal self-regulation, and acceptance. It provides the problem-solving skills necessary to transform everyday discipline issues into teaching moments. These moments are our opportunity to teach children the social-emotional and communication skills necessary to manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop pro-social behaviors.

You can find more information about what Conscious Discipline is on the link below:  
<https://consciousdiscipline.com/about/becky-bailey/>

## **LICENSING INFORMATION**

### **Board of Directors**

The Children's Outreach Ministry Board, a standing committee of the council of Abiding Love Lutheran Church, formed in 1986, establishes policies.

Parents may address the Board according to the following procedures:

- a. Discuss the issue with the teacher or aides as appropriate.
- b. Discuss the issue with the Director.
- c. Request in writing to be on the agenda for the next Children's Outreach Ministry Board meeting. The request should include the reason you wish to address the Board. Requests should be received by the Director of the Center 72 hours prior to the meeting.
- d. Bring your request/concern in writing to the Board meeting.

### **Governmental Licensing Information**

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center is licensed by the State of Texas and receives periodic reviews by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) . Parents may view a copy of the minimum standards and the most recent Licensing inspection report at any time. Copies of the minimum standards are available in each classroom or the Children's Center office. The most recent Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) inspection hangs on the bulletin board near the kitchen.

You may contact the local Licensing office at 512-834-3195. The HHSC child-abuse hotline number is 1-800-252-5400. The HHSC website is [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us).

### **Our Staff**

The Abiding Love Children's Center staff consists of a Director, an Assistant Director, Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Floaters, Kitchen Staff and Janitorial Staff.

All staff must pass criminal background history checks and FBI fingerprints screening as required by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. All staff hold a current CPR and First Aid certification. Our teachers are required to complete a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education each year. Our director is required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education each year.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

Abiding Love Children's Center is committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Embracing these principles empowers children to engage their world with curiosity, confidence, and kindness. Diversity, equity, and inclusion help children learn to empathize with people who are different from them. At Abiding Love Children's Center, we celebrate our commonalities and differences. You will find that our Center employs teachers of different ages, cultural backgrounds, physical abilities, genders, personalities, skill sets and more.

## **ENROLLMENT POLICIES**

### **Enrollment**

Upon selecting our Center for your childcare needs, all enrollment paperwork is required before your child can start in our program. Incomplete paperwork will not be accepted. A child is enrolled in our Center after you have attended a tour of the center, the enrollment packet has been completed and turned in, including the physician's statement, and the registration fee has been paid.

A copy of your child's current immunization records must be submitted to the Children's Center office at least 5 days before your child's first day. For the safety and health of all the children enrolled at our Center, it is imperative your child is up to date with his/her immunizations.

Affidavits for exemption from immunizations for reasons of conscience are not accepted.

### **Waiting List**

Classes at Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center tend to remain full throughout the year. Our Center keeps waiting lists, divided by age and program. There is no fee for our waiting list, but we do ask that families contact us monthly to let us know that they still desire a spot in the Children's Center.

Children are considered for admission based on the following priorities:

- 1st: Current students
- 2nd: Siblings of current students
- 3rd: Abiding Love Church members
- 4th: Community at-large

### **Hours, Days and Months of Operation**

Our Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. We operate year-round except for about 30/34 holidays observed in our calendar.

## **TUITION & FEE POLICIES**

### **Tuition**

Tuition is due on the 1st day of each month and is considered late on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of each month. Tuition paid after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month will accrue a \$35 late fee that will be added to your next month's tuition. Tuition is based on continuous enrollment. Family vacations and time at home are wonderful and amazing gifts to provide your child. We require that tuition be paid in full during children's absences.

There is a \$25.00 charge for each returned check. Tuition may be paid by check or Zelle to awinston@abidinglove.org

Tuition rates for the following school year will be announced every Spring.

Tuition does not include fees for extracurricular activities (if any are offered).

### **Withdrawal**

The Center requires that parents give a minimum of thirty days written notice of withdrawal so that the Center may advise others who are seeking admission. If less than thirty days' notice is given, tuition is required whether your child is in attendance or not.

### **Childcare Assistance**

We never want a lack of funds to prevent a child from attending our Center. We offer partial scholarships through the Mary Fetter Scholarship Fund for families in need. If your family is going through financial hardship, please contact the office for an application.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

Within Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees who have a "need to know" to care for your child most appropriately and safely. Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents, and/or children will not be shared with parents, as the Children's Center strives to protect everyone's right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and health related information of anyone associated with the Center.

Outside of Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise stipulated by law.

Any parent who violates the confidentiality policy will not be permitted in the Children's Center thereafter.

You may observe children at our Center who are differently abled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e., biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child, but our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy.

## **MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT**

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities within 48 hours. The employees of Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center are considered mandated reporters, under this law. Our staff members are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities. Nor are staff required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at the Children's Center take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of the Center cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services that are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Each member of our teaching staff receives at least three hours of annual training regarding the prevention, recognition, and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

The Director is available to help find resources for parents of children who have been victims of abuse or neglect. Our community has a variety of public and private resources to help children cope with the results of abuse.

## **PARENT'S RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS**

Per Texas state laws, parents have the right to access their children at any time while in our care. However, we strongly encourage parents to not pick up their children during naptime so that we do not disrupt the classrooms while children are asleep.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center must be provided with a certified copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

Should a situation arise where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, our Center suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Children's Center staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

## **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES**

Upon arrival, all parents may drop off at the classroom door. Children are encouraged to walk into the building and carry their own belongings. Drop off is between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Children may not be dropped off after 9:00 a.m. Dropping off after the drop off time is disruptive to your child's routine, your child's friends, and your child's teachers. We understand that occasions come up when it may feel that a late drop-off is necessary, please

do your best to schedule appointments within these parameters. A late drop-off will be permitted for a medical appointment and with clear communication and authorization from the Director. No child may be dropped off for ANY reason after 10:00 a.m.

Separation anxiety is normal for children of all ages and can change throughout the year. One day may be easier, and the next may be more difficult. We are here to support you and your child through it. Parents can make the process smoother for the child by allowing the child to be as independent as their age allows (which may be earlier than you think) and having a quick, positive drop off. When you linger at drop-off you are sending a message to your child that you do not feel comfortable, which they will absolutely pick up on. This makes the transition to the classroom very difficult. A swift drop-off with a good routine is best. We will be glad to help with setting up a drop-off routine if needed.

Parents are required to notify the staff of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. These special instructions include but are not limited to early pick up, alternative pick-up person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the childcare providers should be aware of to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

Our Center does not serve breakfast. We ask that parents feed their child a nutritious and filling breakfast prior to arriving at the Children's Center. We understand that some children may not feel like eating breakfast so early in the morning. If your child did not have breakfast, you can provide a breakfast that does not need to be warmed up and can be eaten at morning snack time.

### **Notification of Absence**

Consistent and prompt attendance is advised. If a child is absent, the parent should notify the child's teacher or the office, at their earliest convenience. It is best practice to message your child's teacher on Procure if your child will not be attending school that day. The Center will make no refunds for any days missed.

## **PICK-UP PROCEDURES**

### **Safe Departure Policy**

Children will only be released to parents/guardians and those individuals authorized by the parents/guardians in the enrollment packet. There must be at least two alternate pick-up people on the form if you are unable to pick up your child.

Special arrangements must be made for any unauthorized adult to pick up your child. Send both the Director and Assistant Director an email to let them know who will be picking up your child. Upon arrival of the designated adult, the teacher and/or Director will ask for the adult's name and to see a picture ID to be copied for the child's file. Children will not be released to anyone under the age of 18 years or to anyone appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

### **Late Pick-Up**

Our Center closes at 5:30 p.m. We realize that traffic can be difficult, however, we are only licensed until 5:30 p.m. Please plan accordingly. Our teachers are also going home to their

families and need to leave on time. There is a late pick-up charge per child for anyone who is still in the building after 5:30 p.m.

First time each school year the grace period is up to 5 minutes; after 5 minutes \$1 per minute per child will be charged.

Each subsequent time we will add a \$35.00 charge plus \$1.00 per minute per child. This charge will be based on when your child exits the building. This fee is charged to your account with payment due no later than the next scheduled tuition payment. If your child is picked up late more than five times over the course of the school year, our Center reserves the right to disenroll your child from the program. Families will be given written warning a month prior to disenrollment.

### **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS AND INCLEMENT WEATHER**

The Children's Center will follow AISD in the event of a delayed start or weather closure. In the event of a delayed start, the delay will begin at 7:30 a.m. (e.g., 2-hour delay- ALLCC begins at 9:30 a.m.). Tuition will not be adjusted for bad weather days.

In the event of a COVID-19 or other health related closure, as mandated by Austin Public Health or other government organizations, we will notify everyone as soon as possible via the Facebook group and through email. Closures could be due to a case amongst the staff or children, government orders restricting attendance, or other unforeseen public health circumstances. Tuition will not be adjusted.

### **DAILY ACTIVITIES**

A variety of learning experiences occur during the day at our Center, including but not limited to:

- \* Cooperative and independent play.
- \* A variety of planned learning experiences as well as the provision for unplanned and spontaneous activities.
- \* A balance of indoor, outdoor, quiet, active, large and small group, individual child-initiated and adult-led activities.
- \* Structured group activity and explicit teaching opportunities.
- \* Opportunities for the development of personal, social, and emotional skills.
- \* Use of a variety of developmentally appropriate resources, materials, and equipment.
- \* Activities and language that is unbiased, non-sexist, avoids stereotypes, and reflects a multicultural perspective.

## **Physical Activity**

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center strongly believes in and supports the need for physical activity each day.

All children will participate each day in:

- At least two occasions of active play outdoors when weather permits.
- Continuous opportunities to develop and practice age-appropriate gross motor and movement skills.

Outdoor play is an essential element of our curriculum that supports children's growth in many areas. Except in extreme weather conditions, children go outside every day. If a child is well enough to be at school, the child is assumed to be well enough to go outside. If you have questions about whether your child can participate in outdoor play, you may want to consider keeping your child home until you feel they are ready to fully participate in our daily program, both inside and outside.

Outdoor air quality is checked daily. In the event of unhealthy air quality, outdoor time will be adjusted to limit the amount of time spent outside. Extreme weather will include a wind chill at or below 30° F and heat index at or above 100° F.

During cold weather, children need to be dressed in warm clothing. Layered clothing allows children to adapt to changing weather throughout the day. Please keep extra clothes for your child at the center to help teachers adapt your child's attire to the weather.

During summer months, we ask parents to apply sunscreen (SPF-35 or higher) prior to arrival in the morning. School staff will reapply again mid-morning and afternoon. Insect repellent will be used when necessary.

When weather conditions prohibit outdoor play, physical activities will occur in the classroom during the scheduled outside time.

## **Appropriate Clothing**

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing that is suitable for active and messy play. Please make sure your child has at least one complete change of clothes (seasonally appropriate) at school in case accidents or spills occur.

Children go outside every day unless there is lightning. We ask that you dress your child appropriately for the seasonal weather (e.g., cool, light clothing for summer; jackets, mittens, hats, and layers during colder months). Sturdy footwear will ensure the safety of your child both inside and outside. Shoes should allow children to participate comfortably in indoor and outdoor play. Children's shoes must be closed-toed with a rubber or other non-slip, flexible soles. Crocs and flip-flops, while cute, are not safe for outdoor play. If a child's shoes appear to present a developmental issue or safety hazard, we will ask you to substitute with another pair of shoes.

We ask that parents do not dress children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures as they are a hindrance to diaper changing and toilet learning.



In addition, there will be no Pull-Ups used at the center. Pull-ups add an unnecessary step on the way to toilet learning and are also more difficult at diaper changes. If Pull Ups are sent with your child, they will be sent home.

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's last name and first initial. This includes coats, hats, and gloves. The Children's Center is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

### **Getting Messy**

Keep in mind that children use paint and glue, and other messy materials. They also spend a great amount of time outdoors. Dress your child in clothing that can be worn during messy play. Children need to feel free to use all materials. We offer smocks, but even with a smock, clothes may inadvertently become wet, dirty, or stained. Although we purchase washable paint, it may cause permanent stains.

### **Nap/Rest Time**

Younger infants sleep on an individualized and as needed basis. As they grow older, they will move to two naps a day. Parents may provide a sleep sack/wearable blanket for their child. Nothing else may be placed in the crib. Infants will be placed on their back to sleep until they have demonstrated the ability to consistently roll both back to stomach and stomach to back.

The infant (Caterpillar) and young toddler (Duck) rooms have a designated rest period of 2 to 3 hours as part of their schedule. Per Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, all children must have a rest period of at least one hour. While we understand that some parents may not want their child to nap, that is not something we can accommodate. Children who rise early are offered alternative quiet activities after one hour of rest time. Parents are responsible for taking home all nap items at the end of each week and returning them clean at the beginning of each week. All nap items must be labeled with the child's name.

### **Diapering and Potty Training**

For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, parents should only bring disposable diapers as there is not a sanitary way for us to store used cloth diapers in the classroom. Our staff members check children for signs that diapers are wet or dirty at least every two hours when children are awake and upon waking from nap. Diapers are always changed when wet or soiled.

Our Center works with parents to assist in potty-training. When parents feel their child is ready for potty training, we ask that parents begin this process at home. We will follow through and encourage the child while in our care (they must be showing signs of readiness). Teachers will remain in communication with parents throughout the process to ensure consistency from home to school. The child must be kept in underwear throughout the school day unless the child needs to wear a diaper during naptime. Switching back and forth between diapers and underwear can be confusing and may delay the process; therefore, we do not permit Pull-Ups.

## **Birthday and Holiday Celebrations**

All children's birthdays are celebrated at school. We do not make food the focus of any birthday. Instead, we choose to promote special activities such as games, crafts or singing. We want to ensure that we adhere to our healthy food guidelines. Recognition of the child's special day varies by classroom, but usually includes a birthday crown or card and the singing of "Happy Birthday". Teachers will make sure your child feels special and celebrate their birthday.

If you are having an outside party, to prevent hurt feelings, please do not send party invitations to school unless you are inviting the entire class.

ALLCC believes in the importance of sharing the love of Jesus with children through many avenues, including times of celebration within the church year, particularly Christmas and Easter. Our society has many ways to celebrate, in both religious and secular ways. While we want to emphasize Jesus as the focus of these holidays, we do welcome expressions of the holidays that are not religious.

## **Child Assessments / Parent-Teacher Conferences**

It is important to us that all children are part of an ongoing developmental assessment. All our staff members have been trained to use our assessment procedures and interpret results as well as the conditions under which children will be assessed. The details of our process are outlined below.

- **Instruments We Use:** We assess children using the ASQ questionnaire as well as age-appropriate developmental checklists, parent conversations, self-portraits, work samples, photos/videos, and anecdotal observations.
- **Use of Results:** Assessment results are used for arranging for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated, identifying children's interests and needs, describing the developmental progress, and learning of children, improving curriculum, and adapting teaching practices and the environment, planning program improvement, and communicating with families.
- **Confidentiality:** Our staff members keep assessment information confidential. We do not share any information with other families. We ask that families not request information regarding other children's development, special needs, or behavior.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences:** Basic assessment information is shared with the parents twice a year during conferences. At that time, parents will also receive a written developmental summary. Teachers and parents collaborate on goals and plans for the individual child's learning and continued assessment in accordance with each family's values, culture, identity, and home language.

## **Parent Communication and Participation**

All parents must download the ProCare App. Teachers communicate through this app and keep parents updated on things happening in the classrooms. Parents will be signing their children in and out on this app too.

Open parent-staff communication is one of the cornerstones of quality childcare because it is only through open communication that we can work as partners to provide children with the highest quality care possible. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions and/or share any concerns.

Parents are encouraged to be active participants in their child's experience at ALLCC. Throughout the year there will be opportunities for parents to attend parent meetings, family get-togethers, and participate in special school activities.

Picnics, fundraisers, potlucks, and other gatherings are planned to provide an opportunity for families to come together to socialize and sometimes focus on a specific topic of interest.

All parents may set up a meeting to speak with the Director to review or discuss any questions or concerns. The Director is always willing to discuss policy or help resolve concerns about your child.

Good communication is a vital element in a successful school experience. We will use a variety of methods to keep you informed about your child and anything new happening at our Center.

- Teachers are your primary point of communication, although you are always welcome to bring questions to the Director.
- Sharing information can help teachers relate to your child appropriately. You may email (with respect to the teacher's email office hours) or send a note on ProCare. Zoom conferences may be scheduled with your child's teacher or the Director.
- Teachers will send messages on the App or emails to communicate any happenings in their classrooms.
- Important dates will be sent quarterly via email by the Director.
- Reminders, announcements, and events will be publicized primarily on the Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center Facebook group. Follow-up emails may also be utilized.
- Some teachers may utilize either parent/teacher communication sheets or daily sheets in the classrooms.
- Snack menus are available at the check-in table towards the beginning of each month.
- Reading classroom communication and making sure children are ready for whatever is planned is the responsibility of each family, not the teacher.

## **Pre-K Graduation Celebration**

At the end of the school year, students enrolled in the Pre-K program will participate in a special celebration to commemorate their move to kindergarten. The graduation program is held in the main sanctuary of the church. All family members are welcome. The program

includes a performance, class recognition, and sometimes a special slide show. We look forward to sharing this very special occasion with you and your child.

### **Guidance and Discipline**

Our staff will only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include:

- identifying and accepting children's feelings while encouraging emotional expression of those feelings
- encouraging positive behavior by acknowledging appropriate behavior rather than focusing on the unwelcome behavior
- anticipating children's behavior and gently reinforcing appropriate choices
- reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- redirecting children's inappropriate behaviors to a more acceptable alternative
- encouraging problem solving with peers by modeling and assisting when needed

Behavior issues are normal and are dealt with at the Children's Center rather than parents being asked to discipline their child for events that occur at school. When behaviors continue to be a concern, parents will be involved in creating a guidance plan that will be implemented and evaluated over time.

All adults are expected to follow the above guidelines while in the Children's Center. This includes staff, administration, parents, family members and others authorized to drop off or pick up a child.

### **Parent Code of Conduct**

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the staff of the Children's Center but is the responsibility of each parent or adult who enters the center. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct may result in their child's disenrollment.

Swearing/cursing: No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language in the earshot of children, including one's own. Such language is considered offensive by many people and is not part of what we want to teach in our program. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff, their own child, or another child in the Center.

Aggressive behavior toward employees, children, other parents, or adults: Aggressive or derogatory behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes written as well as verbal and physical. Making threats is not an appropriate means of negotiation and will not be permitted at any time.

Instruction of other children: If a parent should witness another child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Center Director. Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior.

Safety: Parents are required to always follow all safety procedures. This includes being fully present and phone-free when on campus. These procedures are designed to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees, children, and associates of our Center. Immediately report any concerns to the Center Director. Children should not be allowed to enter parking areas without being within arm's length of an adult. Parents must drive cautiously and slowly in our parking areas.

Confrontational interactions with employees, other parents, or associates: While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the staff or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. It is the responsibility of the adults involved to model appropriate behavior for the children. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited and grounds for immediate dismissal. Should a confrontation occur on school property, ALLCC reserves the right to contact the proper authorities.

Violations of the confidentiality policy: Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the center. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with the Children's Center.

## **SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION**

Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center desires to have an inclusive environment, where we can meet the needs of all children and to help all children successfully negotiate their classroom environments. When there are developmental or behavioral differences, we will make every effort to help families find resources to help meet the child's needs. It is never our desire to dismiss a child, and we will only do so when all other avenues have been explored. Children may be dismissed if:

- Behaviors endanger the safety of other children and staff. This would not include developmentally appropriate behaviors.
- Parents do not secure additional assistance and appropriate professional evaluations, including but not limited to occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and/or counseling, when a need is expressed by the staff of the Children's Center.

In addition, a family may be dismissed if the parents exhibit behaviors that are not in accordance with the Children's Center values, including, but not limited to:

- Disrespectful communication with any staff member.
- Damaging or allowing children to damage Abiding Love property.
- Requesting confidential information about other children or staff.

- Habitual or excessively late pick-up.

### **TOYS FROM HOME**

Children may bring one small lovey for naptime. This will be carried in the backpack and kept in their cubby until naptime. Other toys may not be brought to the Center except when requested by a teacher for special occasions. Weapon toys are not allowed. It is the parent's responsibility to set the boundary and ask children to leave toys in the car.

PLEASE LABEL ALL OF YOUR CHILD'S ITEMS. The Children's Center will not assume responsibility for any lost or broken items.

### **FIELD TRIPS, WATER PLAY & SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### **Field Trips**

Currently, ALLCC does not have field trips. Should a classroom decide to go on a field trip, you will receive at least 48 hours' notice; and a permission slip will need to be signed. We do not own transportation vehicles so field trips will most likely involve walking to somewhere nearby.

#### **Water Play**

During summer months, water play will be allowed which includes sprinklers, splash tables, spray bottles, and other creative ways to stay wet. At no time do we allow wading pools that the children would be immersed in. At the beginning of each summer teachers will announce, through their monthly classroom newsletters or additional memos in children's folders, their class water day schedules.

#### **Social Media**

The Center respects the rights of the families of the children in our care to use social media. However, because of the public nature of these sites, we request that you help us protect the safety and identity of children in our care by using good judgment and discretion online. Please do not:

- Disclose confidential or proprietary information about the Center employees, the children in our care or their families, or the Children's Center in general including financial, health, or contact information.
- Post photographs or videos of the Center employees, the children in our care (who are not your own) or their families to your social media site (and any sites that you contribute to) without prior written permission. This includes classroom activities, parties, field trips, graduation, etc.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Pre-Enrollment Requirements**

Parents are required to provide us with the most up to date health and immunization related information. Information is kept confidential and is only shared on a "need to know" basis. Classroom teachers are always given copies of emergency contacts, emergency releases, and allergy information.

All children are required to have a health statement signed by a licensed medical professional to attend our Center. The health statement, indicating the child's capacity to attend Abiding Love Children's Center, must be completed by a licensed healthcare professional and returned to the Center before enrollment.

### **Hand Washing**

Hand washing is one of the best ways to cut down on transmission of viruses. Teachers in the classrooms follow proper hand washing protocols throughout the day including but not limited to before and after eating or handling food; before and after feeding a child; before and after diapering; after handling or cleaning body fluids - wiping noses, mouths, bottoms; after outdoor activities; upon entering the classroom.

### **General Disinfecting**

Toys that have been mouthed in the infant/toddler classrooms are disinfected throughout the day. Teachers will place a toy into a container after a child has put it in their mouth to be cleaned. At the end of the day, all equipment and materials will be cleaned as well. Our diaper changing areas are disinfected after each use.

### **Medication**

For medication to be given at school:

- The parent or guardian must complete and sign the Authorization for Dispensing Medication form.
- Medication must be in its original container, labeled with the child's full name and the date the medication is brought to the center. Parents may want to ask for two separate containers, one for school and one for home.
- All medication must be given directly to a staff member upon arrival at the center.
- Medication can only be given in the doses recommended on the label. If no dosage is listed for a particular age or weight, the parent must request written instructions from the physician (for example, most medication states "for children 2 and under see a doctor").
- An accurate measuring device that measures the dosage specified on the instructions must be provided by the parent and labeled with the child's name.
- The Children's Center will not accept primary responsibility for administering medication. Parents are encouraged to request medications that are only required twice daily and therefore are administered at home.
- A standing order, available in the office, authorizing medication for chronic medical conditions may be completed in special situations.

- Under no circumstances may medication be kept in a child's cubby. Medication boxes are provided for each room for the safe storage of any and all medications.

### **Vision and Hearing Screening**

All children who are 4 years old by September 1st of the school year must provide documentation, signed, and dated by the physician, of vision and hearing screening within 90 days of the beginning of the school year. If the child refuses to cooperate with the test, the physician must provide documentation to that effect.

### **Children with Severe Allergies**

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed statement detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be signed by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every twelve months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child's allergy and must fill out an allergy action plan to be kept in their file as well as shared with staff.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

There will be times when you may prefer your child to follow a specific diet (i.e. no gluten, dairy, etc). Without a physician's report, the Center cannot guarantee that your child will not be exposed to these foods, but we will do our very best.

### **Communicable Diseases**

Our Center follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined by the Texas Childcare Licensing and the Texas Administrative Code.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of illness. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Abiding Love Lutheran Children's Center reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the Director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program. If a parent is called to pick up a child who is exhibiting symptoms of illness, the child must stay home a minimum of **2 full school days**.

Children excluded from the program due to a fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for **2 full school days**. A fever is defined as an underarm temperature of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more.

Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occurs two or more times in a 24-hour period. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume and have been diarrhea free for **2 full school days**. Children are required to be excluded from the program for vomiting two or more times in a 24-hour period. They must be vomit free for **2 full school days** and eating normally before returning.



If a child exhibits signs of illness, which includes but is not limited to lethargy, suspicious rash, or consistent crying where your child is needing one on one care, parents will be called to pick up their child. Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. It is the parent's responsibility to answer the phone when called. If a parent cannot pick the child up within 45 minutes, it is the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form within the 45-minute window.

If a child is sent home for any reason pertaining to illness, they may return after 2 full school days only if symptoms have abated.

### **Covid-19 Policy**

Because vaccines are now readily available to children 6 months and older, we will no longer quarantine classrooms when there is a single positive case in the group. We will notify families right away and allow individuals to decide whether they choose to attend. We will ask everyone in the specific group to test before returning as Covid remains very contagious and we'd like to keep our adults and caregiving staff well. We can't operate without them!

In the event of an outbreak, closure is still possible and will be assessed at that time.

If a child or staff member tests positive, they must be out for at least 5 days. On days 5,7 and 10, we will assess return based on symptoms and wellness. This would mean an abatement of symptoms and no fever (with no fever reducing medication). Asymptomatic positives will also be required to be absent for at least 5 days. We don't require a negative test to return after a positive case, as tests can show positive for longer than 7-10 days. We will, however, require an absence of symptoms and fever for 5 days.

\*This protocol is subject to change based on CDC and state and local guidelines.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the Children's Center. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the Center, so that the parents of the children in the preschool may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Abiding Love will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school.

We do not currently require specific immunizations for staff.

### **Biting**

Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through, and it is usually temporary. The safety of the children at the Center is our primary concern. Children bite for many different reasons. A child might be teething or overly tired and frustrated. Children might be experimenting or trying to get the attention of the teacher and their classmates. Other reasons for biting include:

- **Teething:** Toddlers are often cutting teeth, and it hurts. Chewing on something relieves the itch and stops the pain for a moment.
- **Sensory Exploration:** Toddlers are very good at using all their senses to learn about the world. The “oral mode,” an important style of learning for infants, continues into toddlerhood. They bite everything, not just their playmates.
- **Cause and Effect:** Toddlers are eager explorers. They are constantly studying cause and effect. Biting produces a predictable response. Often, the response is dramatic: there is a lot of noise and attention from adults.
- **Pre-language Self-Assertion:** This is probably the most common reason a toddler bites. It is a way to express frustration when they do not yet have the language skills to do so.

Our staff acts to reduce the number of biting incidents, including providing access to teething toys, providing numerous sensory exploration activities, providing opportunity to explore cause and effect, and offering toddler’s options and alternatives to reduce frustrations.

When a child receives a bite, that child is immediately comforted, and the bite is washed with soap and a Band-Aid applied if the skin is broken. The teacher says firmly, “Your teeth are for food. Biting hurts!” If possible, the teacher will try to encourage the bitten child to express his/her feelings. “It hurts” or “I don’t like that” are sentences teachers will model for the child to repeat.

Consistent with Minimum Standards and the Abiding Love Children’s Center policy, parents will not be told the name of the child who bit their child. Parents of the child who bit are informed and work together with the teachers in hopes of preventing further incidents of biting. We recognize how upset parents may be when they learn their child received a bite; however, we also recognize that biting is a normal component of child development. Despite our many concerted efforts to prevent biting incidents, they are bound to occur. Our program does not exclude children because of biting alone.

### **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

Abiding Love Lutheran Children’s Center places a high priority on safety. Emergency evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. We also conduct monthly fire drills and quarterly severe weather and shelter in place drills. Drills are essential in preparing our Center for an emergency.

### **Alternate Safe Location**

Should the administration of Abiding Love or any emergency services personnel determine that any of the buildings that houses the Children’s Center to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to the main church building or St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, located at 4800 Convict Hill Rd. Once the children are assembled there, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call.

### **Medical Emergencies**

In case of critical illness or injury during school hours, appropriate first aid or CPR will be given immediately, and the appropriate emergency personnel will be contacted. Parents will also be notified immediately. Please save our Center phone number in your contacts.

### **Surgery**

Children may not attend school the same day that they have surgery. This includes dental surgery. Young children recover quickly, but there is always a risk of reactions to anesthetics. This is not a risk we are comfortable taking.

### **SIDS Prevention**

In accordance with commonly recognized SIDS prevention techniques and TDPRS requirements, we put all infants under one year of age to sleep on their backs. We will only make exceptions if you provide us with documentation from your pediatrician.

In accordance with best practices and the law, children must sleep in a "naked crib"; they may only have a flat, firm fitting crib mattress and a well-fitting crib sheet. Nothing else may be in or on the crib. If children need to have a wedge put under the mattress, the pediatrician must provide formal documentation and a waiver must be granted by Childcare Licensing.

### **Incident/Accident Reports**

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. The incident/accident report will be available to sign at pick up and will also be communicated via ProCare.

### **Gang-Free Zone/Firearms and Weapons**

Any area within 1000 feet of the Children's Center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties.

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of firearm, ammunition, and/or weapon on Abiding Love Children's Center property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

## **FOOD POLICY**

ALLCC provides a morning and an afternoon snack. Children should bring their own lunch. In each classroom, lunch is enjoyed together as a group. The teacher sits with the children to model table manners and converse with the children. Children are encouraged to get their own lunch boxes, open containers, and eat independently, as they are ready. Older infants and toddlers will use their water bottle or open-face cup at lunch. We are committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the early childhood experience. Not only do children benefit physically, but they are also learning the principles of good nutrition. In addition to good nutrition, we practice grace, courtesy, and refrain from inconsiderate comments about other people's food.

ALLCC does not allow candy or sugary treats, including pudding or cookies, in a child's lunch. Please send a nutritious and healthy lunch for children.

All lunch containers must be labeled with your child's name. Due to possible allergies, ALLCC does not permit children to share or exchange food items.

Parents are required to provide written notification of any food/dietary restrictions (i.e., lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat free/gluten free diets). Children with diagnosed food allergies must have a physician's plan on file with us to be in care.

Our Center never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in lunch or snack time for behavioral reasons. Nor will food be used to reward good behavior, as this sends an unhealthy message about the role of food in our lives.

\*Teachers may sometimes use food for classroom lessons. Parents/Guardians will be notified in advance.

### **Infant Classroom**

Children enrolled in the Caterpillar classroom must have all food items for consumption prepared and labeled each day the child is in attendance. This includes formula/breast milk bottles, baby food, snacks, and juice bottles. Be sure to prepare one more bottle than you think your child will consume in a day to assure that your child will not run out. Prepared bottles must be stored in the designated refrigerator and will be warmed in a water bath prior to feeding. No bottles will be microwaved. All bottles must be taken home by the parents each night to be washed.

Parents are required to complete a feeding schedule for their child monthly, and as the child's feeding requirements change. Staff will complete a daily chart for each child detailing for the parents what the child ate, when, and how much.

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the classroom teacher.

### **Toddler and Preschool Classrooms**

The Children's Center does not allow candy or sugary treats, including pudding or cookies, in a child's lunch. Children this age often eat small amounts at one sitting, and we want to be sure they are getting the most nutrition they can.

We are also not allowed to serve any beverages other than water, milk, and 100% juice in your child's lunch. If you wish for other foods to be a part of your child's diet, please give them to your child at home.

All food containers provided in your child's lunch must be labeled with your child's name. Simply labeling the child's lunch box/bag is not sufficient as we are all eating together, and individual items can get disrupted.

### **Pizza Days**

Our Center has pizza on Fridays. If you purchase a pizza card, we strongly encourage families to send healthy snacks such as yogurt, fruit and/or vegetables to go with the pizza. Pizza day is offered to all classes except the Caterpillar room.

Each pizza card is \$20 and is worth five pizza days. We will email you when your child runs out of pizza punches.

### **Snack/Lunch Handbook**

We have created a Snack/Lunch Handbook to give parents and guardians some ideas of healthy snacks and lunches.

## **SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE SERVICES**

Abiding Love Lutheran Children’s Center will provide special care needs with accommodation recommended by a health care professional, or a qualified professional affiliated with the local school district or early childhood intervention program. We will utilize, as recommended, any adaptive equipment that has been provided to ALLCC for a child’s use. We will ensure that activities at our Center integrate children with and without special care needs. Teachers will adapt equipment and procedures and vary methods as necessary to ensure that we care for a child with special needs in a natural environment.

## **POLICY CHANGES**

The Abiding Love Lutheran Children’s Center reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to change any policies through written communication with families. Due to the high cost of postage, most communication is passed out “in-house” using email or ProCare. Parents are responsible for gathering information and making sure that it is shared within each family regardless of who picks up the child on any day.

## **CHILDREN’S CENTER INFORMATION**

### **For Your Child Related Needs:**

#### **Director**

Ana Winston

Email: [awinston@abidinglove.org](mailto:awinston@abidinglove.org)

#### **Assistant Director**

Terry Carnline

Email: [tcarnline@abidinglove.org](mailto:tcarnline@abidinglove.org)

### **Mailing Address**

7210 Brush Country Rd.

Austin, TX 78749

Phone: (512) 892-2777

### **For Your Spiritual Needs:**

#### **Pastor**

Brad Highum

Email: [bhighum@abidinglove.org](mailto:bhighum@abidinglove.org)

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