**Achievement Center of Texas Operational Policies Parent Handbook**

**Mission:**

**It is the mission of the Achievement Center of Texas to provide quality day care and day habilitation (life skills training), arts exploration, educational assistance, and community inclusion for children and young adults with special needs so they can learn functional living skills and develop self-confidence working toward greater independence and a more satisfying life.**

**Values:**

**The Achievement Center of Texas respects the rights of its students and their families to make their own decisions regarding the types of services they need and want and the Achievement Center staff will support them in those decisions wherever possible. The center uses a person-centered planning model to help students discover their dreams and set goals for the future.**

“It is our unlimited power to care and to love that makes the biggest difference in the quality of our lives” -Anthony Robbins

**Hours of Operation**

The Achievement Center is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., 12 months per year. Parents must sign students in and out upon arrival and departure. Students must be picked up by 6 p.m. There is a grace period from 6 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. after which there is a late charge of $5.00 for every 15 minutes after 6:15 p.m.. Parents who are late more than 10 times in one year will be charged $10.00 for every 15 minutes after the 10th late charge.

The Achievement Center observes 9 holidays as follows: New Year’s Day (the day before or after if New Year’s Day falls on a weekend), Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after, and three days for Christmas. ACT will close two additional days for staff training.

Students are expected to attend year round. One week is permitted for family vacations and one week for camp is permitted without risk of losing your slot at the Achievement Center. In cases of excessive absences if we have a client who can take your child’s slot full time, we will be forced to give your slot to the other student. Of course, since our students are mostly students with special needs, medical emergencies are not counted in the two weeks allotted each year.

**Procedures for the Release of Children**

It is the policy of the Achievement Center of Texas to only release children to parents, guardians, or those listed on the application as designees for pick up. Parents must make sure that the names, addresses, and phone numbers of designees are current and correct. Students will not be released to anyone not on the application without prior approval from parents or guardians.

**Illness and Exclusion Criteria**

One of the most serious challenges facing group care situations is preventing illness. The staff will strive to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness. Proper hand washing procedures are followed and taught to the students. All restrooms and classrooms are cleaned by our staff on a daily basis. One of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease is to have strictly enforced standards regarding the exclusion of ill students. We will need your help for this. *Please read the following information carefully:*

According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, which operates the Child Care Licensing Division, the following Minimum Standards regulations apply to our licensed program:

You must not bring an ill student into the program if one of the following exists:

1. The illness prevents the student from participating comfortably in center activities.
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other students in care.
3. The student has any one of the following:
	1. An oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater
	2. Armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater
	3. Symptoms and signs of possible even severe illness such as lethargy, breathing difficulties, uncontrolled diarrhea, vomiting, two or more episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the student may be severely ill; or
	4. A health care professional has diagnosed the student with a communicable disease.

If a student becomes ill while in our care, we will:

1. Contact the parent to pick up the student within 30 minutes.
2. Care for the student apart from the other students.
3. Give appropriate attention and supervision until the parent picks up the student,
4. Staff and student will give extra attention to hand washing and sanitation if the student has diarrhea or vomiting.

Parents or Guardians are required to pick up the student within 30 minutes of notification of an illness. If a parent or guardian is unable to pick the student up in that time frame, they are responsible for arranging for another person to meet this timeline.

Students may return to the Center after being excused from care, based on one of the following conditions:

1. Student is free of the symptoms, without medication for at least 24 hours
2. A physician approves, in writing, that they are aware of the specific symptoms in question and they have determined that the student is no longer contagious and is able to return and participate in ACT activities.

**\*\* If your student is sent home due to illness, the student will not be admitted to the center the next day because the 24 hour period will not have elapsed\*\***

**Procedures for dispensing medications**

Students requiring medication administration **must bring that medication in its original container** and the prescription **must match** the doctor’s order in the student’s file. The nurse will not administer medications that are not in the original container or ones that do not match the physician’s prescription. If a physician makes a change in a student’s medication, a new medication form must be filled out by that physician. If a student does not take medication at the Achievement Center, the bottom part of the form must be filled out with all the medications the student does take so we have that information in the case of an emergency. This information must be kept current. If a student takes no medication, the medication form should state no medications taken.

**Medical Emergencies**

If a medical emergency occurs, the parent, guardian, or foster parent will be notified immediately. The emergency medical authorization to treat is included in the student’s application and must be filled out, signed, and notarized prior to the student starting services. It is the Achievement Center’s policy to take the student to the family’s choice of hospital, however, depending on the emergency, the Achievement Center will abide by the direction of the physician or paramedics. If the situation is not serious, our nurse will tend to the student’s injury or illness. In either case, we will notify the parent or guardian.

**Parental Notifications**

Information to parents comes in various methods. Incidents will be shared with parents verbally and in a written incident report which requires a parent’s signature. General information is posted on the front doors, comes in the ACT Newsletter, or the ACT website. Other information may be written and placed in envelopes and taped to the glass window at the reception desk. In emergencies, parents will be notified by phone. Program changes will be shared with parents at face to face meetings with the parent, Director, Admissions Coordinator, an agency case worker at a preset meeting time or at the individual student’s annual planning conference.

**Discipline and Guidance Practices**

It is the policy of the Achievement Center of Texas to provide our services in the least restrictive manner possible. We do not permit corporal punishment (the use of force, hitting, striking, binding, secluding students in locked rooms, locking students out of the classroom, etc.) A copy of the discipline and guidance policy is in your student’s application. If discipline becomes necessary, the staff is trained first to use their communication skills to find the cause of the misbehavior, remove the problem if there is something causing irritability, teaching the student to work out problems on his/her own and/or redirect the student to another activity. Staff is trained to watch for stressors which may spark inappropriate behavior such as flashing lights, bright lights, too much commotion, too much noise, students teasing one another, lack of self-esteem, chemical imbalance, potential seizure coming on, not enough sleep, illness or hunger, etc. Staff will use the least restrictive approaches first. If a student becomes violent, staff may hold a student’s hands to keep the student from hurting themselves, hurting others, or destroying property. If the student must be restrained further, staff is trained in the proper procedures for a violent situation to keep all students and staff safe. The training our staff is put through is called crisis intervention. In this case, communication is still used and the staff will gently guide the student to the floor holding his/her arms and legs and calmly continue talking to the student so that the student can calm himself down and return to regular scheduled activities. It is recommended that parents read the Center’s Discipline and Guidance Policy in the application.

**Discipline must be:**

1. Individualized and consistent for each student.
2. Appropriate to the student’s level of understanding, and
3. Directed toward teaching the student acceptable behavior and self-control.

**Methods of discipline and guidance permitted by ACT caregivers:**

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self- control, and will include the following: 1. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon acceptable behavior; 2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements.

**The Achievement Center does NOT permit:**

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
3. Pinching, shaking, or biting a student
4. Putting anything in or on a student’s mouth
5. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a student
6. Subjecting a student to harsh, abusive, or profane language
7. Placing a student in a locked or dark room, bathroom, closet with the door closed
8. Requiring a student to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the student’s age.

**Meals and food service practices**

The Achievement Center of Texas does not serve lunches. Due to the wide variety of special needs of our students, parents are responsible to prepare the student’s lunch and send it with any particular instructions to the student’s teacher. The Achievement Center does provide a snack in the morning and a snack in the afternoon. Students who are tube fed must have the formula sent for them daily. We do not refrigerate anything overnight. If a student has specific allergies or whose diet is restricted from eating regular snack items, it is recommended that parents send these as well; however, we will do our best to provide snack items that are not on any of the allergy lists and provide healthy, nutritious snacks for our students.

**Immunization Requirements**

We must have a copy of current immunizations for each student. Parents are required to provide a copy of the most current immunizations. If there is a reason, due to your child’s special needs, that he or she cannot get certain immunizations, please provide the center with a letter from your physician as to why he or she may not get this particular immunization at this time. Updated immunization records should be provided at the time the student receives the immunization. A list of required immunizations is available from the director, the local health department, or your physician.

**Tuberculin Testing Requirements**

The Achievement Center requires all employees to have a TB test prior to employment. Should the TB test be positive, further testing will be required before the employee can work with the students. This testing often requires an x-ray. A positive TB test does not necessarily mean the employee has TB. The Achievement Center will take precautions to assure the health of its students and staff through these tests.

**Hearing and Vision Screening Requirements**

Hearing and vision screenings are required for any students who are not enrolled in public school. Since public school services are offered for disabled children 0-3, 3-5 years and over, most ACT students will have already had a screening from their public school. Should a child not be enrolled in a public school early childhood program, the Achievement Center of Texas will arrange for these screenings.

**Enrollment Procedures**

Individuals wishing to enroll at the Achievement Center of Texas must first fill out an application and submit it to the Admissions Coordinator with a $25.00 application fee. The enrollment fee is not refundable as the enrollment process will have taken place even if the student or family has a change of plans and does not attend the program here at ACT. Due to the fact that we are under so many agencies and have many differing regulations, parents are asked to complete the entire application and include all necessary paperwork as requested. Not submitting complete paperwork may delay a student’s start time. Once the application is processed, the Admissions Coordinator will set up a planning conference. This planning conference usually includes the student, parent or guardian, the individual service coordinator or case worker, the Achievement Center’s Executive Director, and the Admissions Coordinator. At this planning conference, the student’s individual service plan is developed and goals are established. Once this meeting has taken place, justifications are sent to the sponsoring agency and the Achievement Center will await authorization of services. Once the authorization is sent to the Achievement Center, a start date can be arranged. All paperwork must be in place prior to start date. Parents are encouraged to call the Center at (972) 414-7700 if they have any questions or if there will be any delays in completing the paperwork prior to the start date. **If any of the policies of the Achievement Center are changed for any reason, parents will be notified 2 weeks prior to the change taking place.**

**Transportation**

The Achievement Center of Texas does not transport students to and from the center from their homes, nor do we pick students up from school. We do, however, have two state of the art busses to transport students on field trips or to their community inclusion activities. A permission slip to transport your student is included in the student application. Please be assured that every safety measure has been considered in transporting students and staff are trained to make sure these safety measures are implemented.

**Water Activities**

The Achievement Center of Texas does provide the student’s with opportunities to enjoy water activities in the summer. Swimming, wading, and water games take place at the local pool. Schedules for water activities are posted and included in your summer camp activity calendar. While most of our community inclusion activities are done with the general public, swimming is not one of them. It is important that parents inform staff of any special needs of the student such as ear plugs, special sun tan lotions, swallowing water, seizures, etc. We want the student’s swimming experience to be a very enjoyable, safe, and healthy experience. Water activity permission forms are included in the student application and must be signed and dated.

**Field Trips**

The Achievement Center provides a number of community inclusion field trips. Some of the places the students enjoy are the Dallas World Aquarium, the Science Place, the circus, Disney on Ice, movies, restaurants, Ft. Worth Zoo, etc. Field trips are posted 48 hours prior to the field trip and a map to the activity is also posted in case a parent must reach his/her student before they return. If a parent does not want their student to participate, they must let the program coordinator know 48 hours in advance so she can try to arrange for that student to be cared for in another class. Since most of our classes stay full, especially in the summer, this is not always possible and we may ask you to keep your student home until his or her class returns to the center.

**Animals**

As a rule, the Achievement Center does not permit animal’s onsite, except for fish, hamsters, or birds. However, it is the policy of the Achievement Center to allow student’s opportunities to interact with various animals in a controlled environment as a learning objective. Occasionally we will arrange for animals to be brought in from the Heard Museum or the Dallas Zoo. If any animal is on the premises, there will be a posting on the front door stating what animal is on the premises. Animals brought into the center must have all their shots and a record provided by a vet stating that the animal is in good health.

**Parental Participation with Students**

Parents are encouraged to participate in all programs of the Achievement Center of Texas. Parents may accompany students on field trips, help with classroom activities, and have lunch with their students or just visit in the student’s classroom. This can be done at most anytime when they would like. It is recommended that you check with the teachers to make sure students will be on campus on the day a parent visits unless accompanying the students on a field trip. Parents are welcome to visit the center at any time and observe their student or the center’s operations and program activities without securing prior approval. It is recommended, however, that if you plan on accompanying the class on a field trip you let the staff know so that they can plan for the parent’s transportation.

**Open Door Policy**

It is the policy of the Achievement Center of Texas to maintain an open door policy. Parents or guardians may visit the center at any time without an appointment. Parents may come into the office to discuss any concerns or problems with the staff, as there is always one of the administrative staff available to sit down and discuss any concerns or listen to suggestions from parents. Some of the greatest ideas for improvements come from parents.

Parents may also come in and talk to the Director anytime she is available and on site. The parents or guardians may schedule appointments with the Director and other pertinent participants if a meeting is needed to make changes in the student’s program, to discuss any concerns, or answer any questions.

**Minimum Standards and Day Care Licensing Inspections**

A copy of the minimum standards for day care centers is available in the office for our parent’s perusal. There is also a copy of the disaster plan which may also be reviewed upon request. The Achievement Center strives to exceed these standards as our commitment to our students. A copy of our most recent day care licensing inspection as well as our Fire and Health inspections, are posted for parents to review at any time in the front office.

**Numbers for the local Licensing office, the PRS Child Abuse hotline and the DFPS website are as follows:**

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| --- | --- |
| Day Care Licensing Telephone | (214) 583-4040 |
| Child Abuse Hotline | 1 (800) 422- 4453 |
| DFPS website | https://reportabuse.ws |

**Staff and Staff Training**

The Achievement Center provides staff that is committed to caring and nurturing the students as well as helping them achieve their individual goals. Staff is trained in a 40 hour training session each year. The Achievement Center will close for two regular days and include that Saturday (usually Memorial Day weekend) to train staff. You will be notified of these dates well in advance of closing so you will be able to make the appropriate arrangements.

**Notice of Withdrawal**

In order to provide a smooth separation for your student from the group as well as to provide parents or guardians on the waiting list notification of an opening, we require a written 30 day notice of withdrawal. It is our policy to charge a penalty fee of one week’s day care (not to exceed $140.00) for anyone who withdraws their student without written notification.

**Grievance Procedure**

We are committed to respecting the concerns and opinions of all our families. The staff of the center is available to discuss any concerns or challenges parents face in the program. In the event an issue is not resolvable within the staff, the Executive Director is the person to contact.

**Termination of Services**

Being a model program and very unique in this field, the Achievement Center takes its policies and procedures seriously. They are designed with the best interests of children and adults for their development and welfare. Therefore, the center will terminate services for repeated violation of program policies and procedures. When a family is found to be in violation of the rules and guidelines, the following procedures will be taken:

1. Notice to bring the situation to your attention
2. Written warning of suspension
3. Student may not attend for three days
4. Written notice of termination if problem continues; then
5. Termination of Services

**Reasons for Termination**

1. Attendance (infrequent)
2. Fees (unpaid)
3. Medical (not up to date as required)
4. Behavioral (disruptive or dangerous)
5. Repeated late pick up after closing time
6. Refusal to cooperate
7. Noncompliance with policies and procedures

**Injuries**

Minor Injuries: minor injuries will be cared for at the Center. Parents will be notified of injuries by the program staff. All our staff is certified in CPR and First-aid and we have a registered nurse on staff from 10:30- 3:30.

Serious Injuries: Serious injuries will require immediate notification of parents. Please make sure emergency numbers are up to date. If parents cannot be contacted, emergency procedures for the campus will involve the ACT nurse, police, or paramedics. The student will be taken to the hospital listed on the application, unless the injury or illness is such that the paramedics are required to go to the closest hospital, which is Baylor Garland.

**Emergency or Inclement Weather Closing**

We make every attempt to remain open during inclement weather, but there may be times when we experience late openings, early closings, or forced all day closings. The policy of the Achievement Center of Texas is to follow the closing schedule of Garland Independent School District. If GISD indicates that they will be closed, the Achievement Center will be closed as well. Please listen to the radio for information regarding school closings, or log onto the achievement center website.

**Custody Issues**

The center cannot legally restrict the non-custodial parents from visiting the child, reviewing the child’s records or picking the child up unless the center has been furnished with legally filed, executed and current documents. Copies of all court documents must be submitted to the center, as it is our only means of protection for your student. Our purpose is to protect the interests of the student and not to mediate differences. In case of conflicts, the proper authorities will be contacted.

**Child Abuse and Neglect**

In an effort to protect the interests, health and safety of students, the State of Texas requires anyone who suspects child abuse and neglect to report it to the proper authorities. The center staff has been trained to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. All suspect indicators will be documented and reported. The Center is required by law to cooperate with any investigation of child abuse and neglect. You will be notified if your student is questioned as part of an investigation.

If your student sustains injuries at home or on weekends, please notify the staff as unreported or suspicious bruising, burns, cuts, or other physical injuries MUST be reported to APS or CPS. IT IS THE LAW.



By signing the form below I agree to abide by all rules and policies explained to me throughout this book. My signature means I have a full understanding of the policies and procedures of the Achievement Center of Texas and shall comply with all requirements of being a part of this program.

Student printed name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parents Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The Achievement Center of Texas is a licensed, non-profit daycare and day habilitation center for children and adults with special needs.

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(972) 414-7700

Website: www.achievementcenteroftexas.org

Email: mserie@tx.rr.com/ Marilynne.Serie@act77.org

Executive Director: Marilynne Serie