



Infant Toddler Center (ITC) Parent Handbook

Welcome to our community

A Warm Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you and your child to our Infant/Toddler Center (ITC) on the Santa Monica High School (Samohi) campus. This handbook is designed to provide you with comprehensive information about our center, our philosophy, and our commitment to fostering your child's growth and development. We believe in building strong partnerships with our families, and we are excited to embark on this journey with you.

We understand that choosing a childcare provider is a significant decision, and we are honored that you have chosen SMMUSD. Our dedicated team is passionate about creating a safe, loving, and enriching space where every child can thrive, explore, and learn. We are committed to providing a high-quality early childhood education experience that supports your child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

This handbook will guide you through essential aspects of our center, from our educational approach to daily routines and policies. Please take the time to read it thoroughly. We encourage you to ask questions and share any concerns you may have. Your input is invaluable as we work together to ensure the best possible experience for your child.

Once again, thank you for being a part of our Child Development Services family. We look forward to a positive and productive year where we are able to work in partnership with you to best support our children. We hope you enjoy your experience with us!

Sincerely,

Susan Samarge-Powell, Ed.D.
Director of Early Learning
Child Development Services

Adopted by the SMMUSD Board of Education on August 6, 2026

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Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) Administration

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Child Development Services (CDS) Administration

Dr. Susan Samarge-Powell - Director of Early Learning
Ms. Reham Dabash - Assistant Director, Preschool
Ms. Lisa Vasquez – Assistant Director, ITC and School Age Programs

Program Description

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) Child Development Services (CDS) is funded through the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and Infant/Toddler parents' fees. Policies for providing subsidized services are developed in accordance with the "Funding Terms and Conditions Contract" of the CDSS General Childcare (CCTR)*.

***If applicable, families must meet and continue to meet all eligibility requirements for the ITC CCTR programs.**

CDS ITC Philosophy

Our philosophy is rooted in the belief that every child is a unique individual with innate curiosity and a desire to learn. We provide a play-based learning environment that encourages exploration, discovery, and creativity. Our staff care about children, are eager to learn about their development, and will give each child the individualized attention they need while engaging them in creative play and exploration.



Mission Statement

To provide a safe, supportive, and stimulating environment that nurtures the development of young children, fostering their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth through play-based learning and strong family partnerships.

Open Door Policy

Child Development Services maintains an open-door policy. Parents may visit our classrooms unannounced to observe their child during program hours. Parents must follow district procedures upon arrival.

Prohibition on Religious Instruction

SMMUSD complies with regulations prohibiting religious instruction or worship.

Equal Access

SMMUSD does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability in determining which children and families are served.

Our district understands and complies with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Public Law 101-336 and 42 U.S.C 12101 et seq. to make reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities. Accommodations cannot negatively impact the fiscal solvency of the program.

Daily Schedule, Routines, Curriculum

Our daily schedule is designed to provide a balance of structured activities and free play, catering to the developmental needs of infants and toddlers. We follow a flexible routine that allows for individual needs and spontaneous learning opportunities.

Sign In/Sign Out: We work with KinderSign, an electronic system for signing children in and out. Every adult signing children in or out **MUST** utilize this electronic system. You must **ALWAYS** sign with your complete signature so that anyone reviewing the documents understands who signed the child in or out.

Arrival & Separation - Saying goodbye brings up intense feelings in all of us. We intend to support the development of strategies to cope with these feelings. Each child is assigned a primary caregiver at the center to help with mastering separation and integration into the program. After your child has become comfortable with separation, we request that parents come into the center each day as they sign their child in to connect with the teachers and say goodbye using whatever ritual you'd like - but keeping it consistent. And the child must always be left with an adult.

Departure Time: The goal at this time of day is to create the least stressful experience for children, staff, and parents. All have worked hard and face the additional challenges of the evening ahead! This is an opportunity for parents to reconnect with their child, show interest in their play, and **BRIEFLY** check in with the teacher on any information that needs to be shared.

Planned Daily Schedule (Infants):

- 7:30am - 8:30am: Arrival, Free Play, Quiet Activities
- 8:30am - 9:00am: Diaper Changes and Breakfast Prep
- 9:00 AM - Breakfast
- 9:30am - 11:00am: Sensory Play, Circle Time, Outdoor Play (weather permitting)
- 11:00am - 11:30am: Lunch Prep
- 11:30am - Lunch
- 12:00pm - 2:00pm: Nap Time
- 2:00pm - 2:30pm: Diaper Changes and Snack Prep
- 2:30pm: Afternoon Snack
- 3:00pm - 4:30pm: Free Play, Departure

Sample Daily Schedule (Toddlers):

- 7:30am - 9:00am: Arrival, Free Play, Creative Art, Diaper Changes
- 9:00am - 9:30am: Breakfast
- 9:30am - 11:30am: Themed Activities, Outdoor Play, Music/Movement, Campus Walks
- 11:30am - 12:00pm: Lunch Prep
- 12:00pm - Lunch
- 12:30pm - 2:30pm: Nap Time
- 2:30pm - 3:00pm: Diaper Changes and Snack Prep
- 3:00pm - Afternoon Snack
- 3:30pm - 4:30pm: Story Time, Language Development Activities, Departure

Note: This is a sample schedule and may vary based on the specific needs and interests of the children in each group.

Curriculum Overview

Our curriculum is designed to be play-based, emergent, and child-centered. We focus on providing experiences that promote holistic development across all domains:

- **Cognitive Development:** Encouraging problem-solving, critical thinking, and exploration through hands-on activities.
- **Social-Emotional Development:** Fostering empathy, cooperation, self-regulation, and positive peer interactions.
- **Language and Literacy:** Promoting communication skills through stories, songs, rhymes, and conversations.
- **Physical Development:** Developing gross and fine motor skills through active play and manipulation of materials.
- **Creative Arts:** Providing opportunities for self-expression through art, music, and dramatic play.

We use a variety of age-appropriate materials and resources to support these developmental goals. Our teachers observe children's interests and build upon them to create meaningful learning experiences.



Health and Safety Policies

Our highest priorities include the health and safety of your child(ren). We adhere to strict policies to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

Daily Health/Wellness Check: We are required daily at arrival to check each child for symptoms of colds, over-fatigue, and potentially contagious diseases. We will ask questions each morning - it does not mean we don't trust you; we are required to ensure each child is healthy enough to enter ITC!

Illness Policy: Children who are ill should not be brought to ITC. If a child develops symptoms of illness during the day, parents will be contacted to pick them up. A child must be fever-free for 24 hours (without medication) before returning to the center.

Medication: Medication will only be administered with a written doctor's order and parent authorization. Our school nurse must first review the information, and then may need to gather more information and/or meet with the family. All medication must be stored securely by staff. Please ensure all medication is in its original packaging and clearly labeled with your child's name.

Allergies/Food Preferences: Parents may provide special dietary meals or snacks if needed, provided they are clearly labeled and meet nutritional guidelines. Please inform us of any allergies or dietary restrictions. In both instances, a form must be completed.

Hygiene and Sanitation: We maintain rigorous cleaning and sanitation protocols throughout the center. Handwashing takes place for children and staff regularly throughout the day. Toys and surfaces are cleaned and disinfected daily.

Supervision: Children are always under direct supervision by qualified staff members. Our staff-to-child ratios meet or exceed state requirements, which are 1:4 in the Infant room, and 1:6 in the Toddler room.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, the safety of our children and staff is paramount. We have established procedures for various scenarios, including:

- **Medical Emergencies:** Immediate first aid will be administered, and emergency services will be called if necessary.
- **Emergency Drills:** Regular earthquake, fire, and lockdown drills are conducted to ensure children and staff are familiar with evacuation procedures.
- **Shelter-In-Place and Lockdown Procedures:** Protocols are in place for security emergencies. Our staff are able to quickly move students into enclosed spaces with no visibility from the outside. Parents/families will be contacted as we are able.

Parents will be notified as soon as possible following any emergency incident. Please ensure your emergency contact information is always up-to-date.

We provide nutritious meals and snacks that are balanced and age-appropriate. Menus are planned to meet the dietary needs of young children and are posted monthly.

- **Infant Meals:** Formula/breast milk, pureed foods, and soft solids are provided as per parent instructions and the child's developmental stage.
- **Toddler Meals:** We offer a variety of healthy foods including fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins.

Communication Policies

Open and consistent communication between the center and families is vital. We utilize several methods to keep you informed:

- **Daily Reports:** For infants and younger toddlers, brief daily reports will be provided summarizing feeding, sleeping, diapering, and activities. These can be found on the clipboards in the Infant Room, and via person to person in the Toddler Room.
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Scheduled conferences are held annually, with additional opportunities available upon request.
- **Email and Phone:** We encourage you to contact the center director or your child's teacher via phone or email with any questions or concerns. Please note our office hours for direct phone contact.

Parent Involvement

Ways for Parents to Be Involved

The following are additional examples of ways parents can be involved:

- Volunteer in the classroom.
- Bring items from home that might support projects or activities.
- Attend or join the Early Care and Development District Advisory Committee (DAC).
- Attend the parent /teacher conferences offered twice a year.
- Complete and return the annual required State Parent Survey and CACFP Food Forms.

Community Involvement

The District Advisory Committee consists of Child Development Services staff, parents and members of the community. The committee meets regularly to discuss the needs of all Early Learning programs, including ITC, Preschool, and School Age Programs. Though not a governing board, the members, who represent many aspects of the community, give input concerning program policies and procedures.

Requirements to Volunteer

Our programs are based upon a partnership with the parents of the children enrolled. Therefore, parents are encouraged to participate in our programs. Parent participation is essential to the successful operation of each program. Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and on field trips if possible. District policy requires that all volunteers:

- Complete a SMMUSD Volunteer Application at the school site
- Participate in a volunteer orientation training at the site, if applicable
- Complete an Adult Tuberculosis (TB) Risk Assessment (part of the volunteer packet)
 - The CDS nurse must review the assessment and submit a "Certification of Completion" to be filed with CDS
- Must agree to have Megan's Law Check
- Once all items have been reviewed and approved, you may begin to volunteer

Program and Staff

Education Program

SMMUSD is committed to providing a quality educational program that focuses on the whole child and support services that address the diverse needs of all our families. This is all done in an environment that is rewarding, inclusive, and collaborative for all, including children with special needs. Our program encourages respect for the feelings and the rights of others, building trust and planning routines and transitions so they can occur in a timely, predictable and unhurried manner.

Staff Development

SMMUSD hires qualified staff to be part of our team. All staff members hold appropriate credentials or permits required by the state of California.

- New employees are provided an orientation to guide them in understanding how district policies relate to their respective job description.
- Teachers participate in annual mandatory staff meetings; they receive training on serving as mandated reporters, understanding district policies on substance abuse and harassment; and receive, read and sign Professional Expectations and Absence notification letters
- CDS supports continuous growth by assessing the needs of the staff members and providing professional development activities to enhance their growth.
- Staff members are evaluated per District Evaluation Procedures.
- Internal communication mechanisms are in place, including email and voicemail, to provide staff with information necessary to carry out their respective duties.
- Teachers are trained and certified in First Aid, CPR & Epi-Pen usage

Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS-3)

Each infant and toddler classroom is assessed using the **Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition (ITERS-3)** at least once each school year. This nationally recognized assessment measures the quality of the learning environment, including health and safety practices, classroom organization, caregiver-child interactions, routines, learning activities, and materials. The program strives for each classroom to achieve a minimum score of **5 out of 7** on each subscale. Information gathered through the assessment is used to guide continuous quality improvement, helping teachers enhance classroom environments, select developmentally appropriate materials, and strengthen practices that support the healthy growth and development of infants and toddlers.

Program Self – Evaluation Process

Child Development Services complies with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) regulations which require the department to conduct a yearly self-assessment of its programs. During this process, we identify areas of compliance and non-compliance, and we work together as a team to develop a written plan after the review that will allow for correction of the items found out of compliance. For the Program Self Evaluation summary, we include recommendations based on the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP 2025), Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scales (ITERS), and parent feedback via the Parent Survey that we ask parents to complete anonymously each year.

Program and General Policies

Drop-Off

No child shall be accepted without contact between the classroom staff and the authorized adult bringing the child to the center. Refer to your contract hours. Children need to be signed in using our digital platform (currently, KinderSign).

Pick-Up

Children must be picked up from the center at the agreed upon time. Children need to be signed out EACH DAY using our digital platform (currently, KinderSign). **Under no circumstances** may parents/guardians leave their children at school after the closing hours. Parents picking up a child after program hours will be charged \$1.00 per minute. No exceptions.

Parents/guardians must authorize CDS staff in writing to release the child to adults **not** identified on the emergency card. In an emergency, an email can be sent to the CDS office supervisor, but you must then come to the CDS main office within the next two days to update the Emergency Card. Adults will be required to show photo identification if they are unfamiliar to staff. Unless the parent is a teen parent, all adults must be individuals eighteen (18) years or older.

NOTE:

****Once a child has been picked up and signed out for the day, the child may not return to the program on that day.***

**** It is imperative to authorize and list several adults on the emergency card. Please ensure that all contact information is current.***

Consequences for Late Pick-Up (\$1.00 per minute per child will be charged when picking up child(ren) late after the program hours)		
<i>First Incident</i>	<i>Second Incident</i>	<i>Third Incident</i>
<i>Sign late pick-up form</i> <i>Verbal warning</i> <i>Receive written warning letter</i>	<i>Sign late pick-up form</i> <i>Receive written warning letter</i> <i>Conference with CDS Administrator or designee</i>	<i>Sign late pick-up form</i> <i>Receive written warning letter</i> <i>Meeting with CDS Administrator or designee</i> <i>Disenrollment of services may be issued at this point.</i>

Joint Custody

In the event that custody of children is shared jointly per court documentation, children will be released to either parent and to any adult listed on the emergency card provided by either parent. Should disagreements arise between the parents related to issues of who may pick-up the child; staff will follow any and all procedures outlined in court orders. After this; if further disagreements arise, parents will be asked to return to court for clarification.

Child Abuse Reporting

All CDS Staff are Mandated Reporters. This means we are required to contact DCFS if we suspect Child Abuse. Child abuse and neglect are serious issues for personnel who work with children on a daily basis. We hope to never encounter incidents of child abuse or neglect. However, we recognize that if a child in our program is potentially suffering from abuse or neglect at home, it is our responsibility to protect that child to the greatest degree possible. This may include calling DCFS. This information is not given to frighten you, but rather to familiarize you with our responsibilities as teachers, child-care professionals, and service providers.

Possible child abuse indicators that mandate a call to Department of Child and Family Services and/or the police include (According to Penal Code Section 11165):

- **Physical abuse** – Unexplained bruises, burns, welts, fractures, lacerations etc.
- **Sexual abuse** – Difficulty walking or sitting, pain when urinating/defecating, injury or pain to genital area, unusual or foul odor emanating from genital area.
- **Mental/Emotional abuse** – Failure to thrive, depression (child appears sad often, empty facial expression), severe aggression towards self and others.
- **Neglect** – Underweight, poor growth pattern, consistent hunger, unattended physical problems or medical needs, general unattended appearance (soiled clothing, inappropriate clothing, unusual body odor and lack of medical or dental care).

General Policies

- Children should wear appropriate clothing that would allow the child to successfully participate in the day. They WILL get dirty! Make sure they wear clothes they can play in, and can easily be changed from when needed.
- Please make sure to bring extra clothes for necessary changes!
- Shoes for toddlers should be closed-toe, have backs, and non-skid soles.
- Staff will not be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged belongings. Valuables such as jewelry, money, and toys should remain at home. Please label all clothing and backpacks.
- “Treasures” from home are allowed only after a conversation with the teacher to determine the need and reason.
- Spanking of children is not allowed; please do not spank any child, including your own.
- Please bring concerns or questions to the teacher first. If the teacher is unable to assist you, feel free to contact the CDS Administrative office.
- Please park in designated areas only – outside of campus. **Handicap parking requires a state permit.** Never leave children unattended. Cars with unattended children will be reported to the Santa Monica Police Department.
- Inform teacher immediately when your child will be absent.
- Please ensure emergency cards are updated, at least three (3) names and phone numbers are required for emergency purposes.
- CAR SEAT LAW – Children under the age of 8 years or 4’9 feet (regardless of age) must be in an appropriate booster seat while in an automobile.
- Parents must give the program two week notice prior to terminating child care services. You must inform the office immediately when you are terminating services. **Notify the office staff by phone or in writing** and state the exact last day you wish services to be terminated for your child. Ensure the attendance sheet for your child is fully completed (including absences) up to the last day of service.

Subsidized Child Care

How to Qualify for the Program

Eligibility

SMMUSD/ Child Development Services is in compliance with the regulations of the General Childcare (CCTR) program which mandates that all families applying for subsidy must submit eligibility documentation to receive services.

Income Eligibility is based on documentation and verification of at least one of the following:

Total countable income means all income of the individuals counted in the family size, for example:

- Gross wages or salaries, commissions, Overtime, Tips, Bonuses
- Gambling or Lottery Winnings
- CalWORKS Cash Aid
- Gross income from self-employment (less business expenses except for wage draws)
- Disability or unemployment compensation
- Workers compensation
- Spousal support, Child support payment received/alimony (any financial assistance for housing costs or car payments paid as part of or in addition to spousal/child support)
- Survivor and retirement benefits
- Dividends, interest on bonds, income from estates or trusts, net rental income or royalties
- Rent for room within a family's residence
- Foster care grants, payments or clothing allowance for children placed through child welfare services
- Financial assistance received for the care of a child living with an adult who is not the child's biological or adoptive parent
- Veteran's pensions
- Pensions or annuities
- Inheritance
- Allowances for housing or automobiles provided as part of compensation
- Insurance or court settlements of lost wages or punitive damages
- Net proceeds from the sale of real property, stocks or inherited property
- Other enterprise for gain

Applicants who are employed or self-employed are required to provide all documents requested by staff including but not limited to the following:

Employed	Self-Employed
*Release authorization and payroll check stub *Release authorization and verification of employment *Other official record of wages issued by the employer	*Copy of the most recently signed and completed tax return *Other business records such as ledgers, receipts or business logs *Current monthly calendar or agenda or schedule or appointment book *Other proof of business records such as company website, advertisements, etc... *Self-affidavit of type of business/self-employment

In cases where the applicant is not able to provide any of the documents mentioned above, staff will determine what documents to request to determine eligibility.

SMMUSD - Child Development Services reserves the right to ask for additional documentation to verify income.

Eligibility is also based on documentation and verification of at least one of the following:

1. **Current Cash Aid Recipient** – applicants need to provide proof of aid amount.
2. **Homelessness** – applicants must provide a written referral from an emergency shelter or other legal, medical or social service agency or a written parental declaration that the family is homeless and a statement describing the family's living situation.
3. **Child Protective Services** – participants must provide a written referral dated within six months of application for services and includes:
 - Statement from local county welfare department or child welfare services worker, certifying that the child is receiving Child Protective Services (CPS), and **that childcare and development services are a necessary component of the CPS services plan.**
 - Statement from local county welfare department or child welfare services worker stating that the fee should be waived
 - Probable duration of the CPS service plan
 - Name, address, phone number and signature of the county child welfare staff.
4. **“At Risk” of neglect, abuse or exploitation-** participants will be asked to provide one of the following:
 - Statement by a legally qualified professional (someone licensed in the state to perform legal, medical, health, or social services for the general public)
 - Statement from local county welfare department or child welfare services worker stating that the fee should be waived
 - Documentation that the child is at risk of abuse and neglect, and that child care and development services are needed to reduce or eliminate that risk.
 - Probable duration of the at risk situation.
 - Name, address, phone number and signature of the legally qualified professional.

Family Size

The parent shall provide supporting documentation regarding the number of children and parents in the family. Supporting documentation for the number of children shall be at least **one** of the following:

- Birth certificate for all children
- Child custody court order
- Adoption documents
- Foster Care placement records
- School or medical records
- County welfare department records
- Other reliable documentation indicating the relationship of the child to the parent

During the enrollment process, if a parent indicates that they are a single parent, they will need to self-certify the absence of the other parent by checking the appropriate box on the application. The applicant must initial and sign the confidential application.

Need

Parents must meet one of the requirements below:

- Child(ren) is/are a recipient of Child Protective Services through the county welfare department.
- Child(ren) identified as At Risk of being Abused, Neglected or Exploited by a qualified professional.
- Parent(s) engaged in Vocational Training/Education, enrolled full or part-time in school documentation required. Parent/guardian must be attending school during childcare hours.
- Parent(s) employed full time/part time. Need to provide verification and check stubs.
- Parent(s) incapacitated - physician's statement required; childcare service not to exceed 50 hours per week. Must include physician's license number and hours of care needed.
- Parent is seeking permanent housing.
- Homeless
- Parent is seeking employment – services will be given for less than 30 hours per week

Eligibility for subsidized spaces is not based on “first come, first served” but determined by the priorities established by the State of California. Siblings of currently enrolled families will be offered a space when their names are reached on the eligibility list (from information provided on the waitlist application) .

Required Documentation

Employment / Income Verification

Acceptable employment verification includes, but is not limited to, an employment verification form or a letter from the employer stating start date, work hours, salary, how often paid, and whether or not the current assignment is temporary. Copies of your three most recent check stubs are required upon at the time of enrollment.

Training Verification

School/Training verification consists of official registration forms including class hours and days.

Seeking Permanent Housing

Parents who are homeless and seeking permanent housing must submit documentation from a shelter along with a declaration under penalty that they are seeking permanent, fixed, regular and adequate housing.

Parental Incapacity

Parental Incapacity must include a release signed by the parent authorizing a qualified health professional to disclose information necessary to establish eligibility. The incapacity form must identify to what extent the parent is not capable of providing care and supervision of the child along with the days and hours per week that services are recommended to accommodate the incapacitation. The qualified health professional must also state the duration of parent's incapacity.

Fee Payment/Delinquent Fees

Fees are due upon registration and in advance of services received. Fees are paid at the Child Development Services office or they can also be mailed. Fees are charged on the basis of enrollment, not attendance. No deduction may be made from applicable fees for absences (vacation, illness, personal reasons, etc.).

Methods of payment: Personal or Certified Check, Money order, Visa or MasterCard. Payments are only received at the Child Development Services office via walk in or mail:

Child Development Services
Attn: Billing/Fees
2828 4th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90405

If paying by check, payments are due on the 25th of each month for the following month. Please make the check payable to "SMMUSD" and include your child's first and last name on the memo line. Returned/bounced checks will be charged a \$30 service fee. In the event a personal check is returned, SMMUSD will no longer accept a personal check as payment, and fees will need to be paid by money order, certified check or credit card.

If paying by credit card, please note charges will be processed on the 5th of each month. Declined credit cards will be charged a \$30 service fee. The amount of the original payment plus the service fee must be paid within 10 days of notification.

Delinquent Fees: The State of California Education Code #18114 (a) states: "Fees shall be considered delinquent after seven (7) calendar days after the due date." On the seventh day after fees are due, the center will notify parent(s)/ guardian(s) in writing that the childcare fees are delinquent and must be paid within 14 calendar days. Services shall be terminated if delinquent fees are not paid prior to the 14th calendar day from the date of the notice. A reasonable repayment plan may be requested. If a repayment plan is granted, the parent must comply with the agreed upon repayment plan for continued services. If terminated for nonpayment of delinquent fees, the family will be ineligible for services until all delinquent fees are paid. The family will go back on the wait-list and will be readmitted only if space is available and all fees are current.

How Families are Selected

Admission Priorities (WIC 10271, 5 CCR 18106)

SMMUSD will maintain a current waiting list in accordance with admission priorities. We will contact applicants in order of priority from the waiting list as vacancies occur.

First priority:

1. Must be given to families whose children are recipients of child protective services, or who are at risk of being neglected, abused, or exploited, upon written referral from a legal, medical, or social services agency.
2. Within the first priority for services children receiving protective services through the local county welfare department shall be enrolled before children identified as at risk of being neglected or abused or exploited.

If we are unable to enroll a child in this first priority category, then we will refer the child's parent or guardian to local resources and referral services so that services for the child can be located.

Second priority:

1. All children and families who are not within the first priority for admission shall be admitted in accordance with family income, with the lowest income ranked families admitted first.
2. For purposes of determining the order of admission, families with the lowest gross monthly income in relation to family size as determined by the income ranking schedule adopted by CDSS shall be admitted first. Public assistance grants are counted as income.
3. When two or more families have the same income ranking, families shall be admitted in the following order:
 - a. The family that has a child with exceptional needs shall be admitted first.
 - b. If there is no family with a child with exceptional needs, the family in which the primary home language is a language other than English shall be admitted first,
4. If there is no family with the same income ranking that meet the criteria in (c) above, the family with the same income ranking that has been on the waiting list the longest shall be admitted first.

Notification Process:

When openings are available, the staff will refer to the waiting list and contact families according to the CDSS selection ranking guideline. Parents are contacted by mail, e-mail (if provided), or telephone to schedule an appointment to bring in the required documents for enrollment.

Documents to bring to your appointment:

To verify eligibility, bring the following documents to your appointment:

- Proof of all sources of income
- Birth certificates for all children under 18 in the family.

Notice of Action

Childcare services may not begin until the application for services is signed by both office staff and the parent. At the time of approval of services, staff will issue a Notice of Action (NOA) to the participant indicating the hours of services approved, and any applicable family fees. The "Notice of Action" (NOA) is a written notification of status change for California State Subsidized Families: (i.e. Provision, approval, change, and disenrollment of services).

Updating Records

A Notice of Action will be issued by staff when any of the following occurs:

- Certification is completed
- Recertification is completed
- Changes that affect need, fees and eligibility occur
- The family is to be disenrolled from the program for any reason
- Family fee is delinquent

Upon receipt of a Notice of Action, all participants have the right to appeal. Please see the back of the NOA for information about the appeal process (please note that the appeal process is time sensitive).

How To Continue in the Program

Re-certification

According to the regulations, families must recertify no sooner than twelve months from last certification to continue subsidized services but within 50 days of the first day of eligibility. **Families who fail to recertify will be issued a Notice of Action for Disenrollment.**

Notification of Changes

Families must notify the agency of changes in family income that exceeds the 85% State median income threshold as noted on NOA, family size or the need for services.

Health and Social Services

Upon enrollment, parents will be asked to complete a Needs Assessment. With any nonurgent needs, a referral may be made and a Resource and Referral guide provided to begin the process of supporting our families.

Our program recognizes that children and families may benefit from a variety of health, developmental, educational, and social service resources. Program staff are available to provide information and referrals to community services that support the well-being of children and families.

Referrals may be provided for services including, but not limited to:

- Medical and dental care
- Vision and hearing services
- Developmental screenings and assessments
- Early intervention services
- Regional Center services
- Mental health and behavioral health services
- Nutrition and food assistance programs
- Housing and homeless assistance programs
- Family counseling and parenting support programs
- Domestic violence and family safety resources
- Special education services
- Community and recreational programs

When concerns regarding a child's health, development, or well-being are identified, program staff may discuss those concerns with the family and provide information regarding available community resources. Families are encouraged to seek professional evaluation and services when appropriate.

Participation in referred services is voluntary unless otherwise required by law. All referrals and family information will be handled confidentially in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

Families who would like assistance locating community resources are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher, site supervisor, or program administrator.

At ITC, as part of our ongoing observation and assessment process, staff may identify developmental concerns or delays that warrant additional evaluation. When appropriate, families may be referred to Early Start, the Regional Center, their pediatrician, local education agencies, or other community resources for further assessment and support. Referrals are intended to help children access services as early as possible and support their continued growth and development.

Dual Language Learners (DLL)

You will be given a Family Language Instrument Form at enrollment. This form will help us learn about the languages your child hears, speaks and understands at home. The data collected will be used to inform and plan program curriculum, develop strategies used in the educational setting, create professional development opportunities for staff, and strengthen family partnerships to improve support for Dual Language Learners (DLL).

Diapering Supplies

Our Infant Toddler Center is committed to ensuring that all children have access to the supplies needed for healthy and comfortable care throughout the day.

In accordance with California requirements for state-funded child care programs, families are not required to provide diapers, wipes, or other diapering supplies as a condition of enrollment or participation in the program. The center will provide diapers, wipes, and other necessary diapering materials for children who are not yet toilet trained.

Families may choose to provide a specific brand of diapers, wipes, or diapering products for their child if they prefer; however, doing so is entirely voluntary.

The center follows health and safety procedures established by Community Care Licensing and public health authorities. Staff use sanitary diapering practices, including proper handwashing, cleaning, and disinfecting of diaper-changing areas.

For children who are learning to use the toilet, families are encouraged to provide several changes of clothing. Staff will partner with families to support each child's toilet-learning journey in a positive, developmentally appropriate manner.

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

Child Development Service utilizes the DRDP as recommended by the California Department of Education (CDE), and CDSS to ensure that all children are making progress in all domains: social, emotional, language and literacy, math, science, social studies, and physical and health development.

- This year we will use the DRDP (2025), a tool developed by the CDE to assess child development.
- Children are assessed twice per year. The initial assessment occurs within 60 days of enrollment.
- Parent/guardian's input is a necessary component of this assessment.
- The assessment is also used to plan and conduct developmental activities that are age appropriate for the children.

Attendance and Absence Information

It is our goal that all students attend our programs consistently. In doing so, children receive the most amount of benefits to support their growth and development. Below is information about attendance and absences.

Attendance Documentation

Parents or authorized representatives are responsible for accurately recording their child's attendance, including sign-in and sign-out times, using the program's approved attendance system. Attendance records are legal documents used to support state-funded services and must be completed truthfully and accurately.

Attendance: Sign-in and out

According to program regulations, parents/guardians must sign in/out daily on the digital platform (currently, Kindersign). Only custodial parents and authorized adults (those listed on emergency card) are allowed to sign out or remove a child from a classroom. Staff members will require a picture identification if they are unfamiliar with the adult picking up the child. Individuals under eighteen (18) years will not be allowed to sign children's time sheets in or out unless the individual is the child's custodial parent.

Parents are required to sign in and out on a daily basis. **Full signatures and EXACT time are required for both arrival and departure times.**

Once a child has been signed out of the program by a parent, guardian, or authorized pick up person, they cannot be signed back in. If a child leaves school prior to the end of the school day, they may not return.

Absence Policy

According to State Requirements and program regulations, students in the state subsidized programs are allowed ten (10) "Best Interest" days per program year for vacation, family visits, etc. Any absences in excess of ten (10) days and not included under excused absences are considered *unexcused*, and may be the cause for termination of services.

Children who are absent for five (5) consecutive days due to illness, must have a medical clearance/doctor's note prior to re-admittance. Children who have contracted a communicable illness and are excluded by the public health department, must have medical clearance prior to re-admittance, regardless of the number of days of absence.

- Excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, may result in disenrollment from the state subsidized program.
- Parents **MUST** notify the teacher when their child is absent for any reason.
- Staff members may contact families when there are excessive absences.

Recording/Verifying Absences

Parents/guardians must be specific when recording reasons for absences. (i.e. Flu, Fever, vomiting). Absence excuses must be entered into the digital platform or told to the childcare teacher. Parent/guardian must provide full signature and provide supporting documentation about the absence to ensure proper categorization.

Excused Absences include:

- Illness or quarantine of child
- Illness or quarantine of parent
- Doctor or dentist appointment (per the state must provide a note EACH time)
- Court-ordered visitation (court order must be on file at Child Development Services)

Best Interest Days: (10 days per year July – June)

- Religious activities
- Family vacation
- Special time with relatives
- School activities (mandatory)
- Sport activities
- Play dates
- Court Appearance (child not mandated to be present)
- Child was too tired to attend, didn't sleep well or overslept

Family Emergency:

- Family Death - day of the death and funeral (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt/uncle)
- Earthquake or other severe weather conditions
- Transportation problems (up to 3 days only)
- Civil unrest
- Sibling/Parent Illness

Unexcused Absences are absences not listed above and may include:

- Personal family business
- School Activities (non-mandatory)
- No transportation (after the third day)

If a parent/guardian is not sure about recording the absence, please consult with the CDS office staff or your child's teacher.

Abandonment of Care

If the child(ren) is absent for seven (7) consecutive days without notifying the classroom teacher or CDS main office, staff from CDS will contact the family via phone call, email, or written notification. When there has been no communication with CDS for a total of 30 consecutive calendar days, a Notice of Action (NOA) to disenroll the family will be issued on the basis of abandonment of care.

Disenrollment Policies

If a family is disenrolled for any of the reasons listed below, they may not reapply for any of the CDS programs for not less than one (1) year.

Possible causes for disenrollment include but are not limited to:

- Consistently picking up after closing hours
- Failure to provide required documentation
- Excessive excused and/or unexcused absences
- Persons whose behavior present a risk to children or staff (i.e - using profane language, threats, destroying property, etc.). *See Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion Policy

- Violations of any Education Code regarding firearms, alcohol, drugs, physical violence, theft, willful destruction of property, any conduct by parent, child, or relatives resulting in harm to person or property while on the center grounds
- Failure to provide necessary and/or requested information for continued enrollment for second year of service
- Child jeopardizing the safety of themselves or others *See Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion Policy
- Failure to pay fees for services

Abide by Agency Policies, Procedures, and Program Requirements

It is the responsibility of the parent to abide by all policies, procedures, and requirements to obtain and continue receiving services. Not doing so may result in termination of services.

Family Responsibility for Accurate Information

Families receiving services through the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Child Care and Development Program are required to provide complete and accurate information regarding eligibility, need for services, family size, income, and other information used to determine services.

Families must notify the program within required timelines of changes that may affect their services, including but not limited to:

- Changes in contact information.
- Changes in family size.
- Changes in employment, training, or education status.
- Changes that may affect the family's need for services.
- Changes requested by the contractor to maintain accurate records.

Knowingly providing false, incomplete, or misleading information or intentionally withholding information may be considered fraud or misrepresentation.

Examples may include:

- Submitting falsified income documentation.
- Misrepresenting employment, training, or education activities.
- Falsifying attendance records.
- Allowing another person to sign a child in or out using false information.
- Providing inaccurate information to obtain services for which the family is not eligible.

If fraud or misrepresentation is suspected, the program may:

- Review and verify information provided by the family.
- Request additional documentation.
- Terminate services when permitted by applicable laws and regulations.
- Recover fees or reimbursements owed to the program.
- Refer the matter to appropriate state or local agencies for further investigation.

Families have the right to receive written notice of any action affecting services and may appeal eligible actions through the Notice of Action (NOA) process.

Challenging Behaviors, Prevention of Suspension and/or Expulsion

Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development

Our Infant/Toddler Center is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all children. We recognize that infants and toddlers communicate their needs through their behavior and that all children develop social, emotional, language, and self-regulation skills at different rates.

Our staff work closely with families to understand each child's unique strengths, needs, temperament, and developmental stage. When concerns arise, we partner with families to identify strategies and support that will help children successfully participate in the program.

Biting, hitting, pushing, difficulty with transitions, separation anxiety, limited language skills, and challenges with self-regulation are common developmental behaviors in infancy and toddlerhood. Staff work proactively with families to support children through these developmental stages using positive guidance, responsive caregiving, and developmentally appropriate practices.

Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Our educators use relationship-based caregiving, individualized support strategies, and developmentally appropriate guidance to help children develop social-emotional skills and successfully participate in the program. We partner closely with families and collaborate with specialists and community resources whenever additional support is needed.

In accordance with California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10491.1, children enrolled in this program will not be suspended, expelled, or encouraged to withdraw because of behavior except in the limited circumstances permitted by law. Suspension or expulsion will only be considered after all appropriate interventions and supports have been documented and exhausted.

When Concerns Arise

Before any suspension is considered, the program will make every reasonable effort to support the child's continued participation by:

- observing and documenting the child's behavior and developmental patterns;
- reviewing classroom routines and environmental factors;
- implementing individualized strategies that support the child's social-emotional development;
- partnering with the family to ensure consistency between home and school;
- consulting with early intervention providers, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health consultants, Regional Center staff, medical providers, or other specialists, as appropriate.
- Make reasonable efforts to support the child's continued participation in the program.

Expulsion and Unenrollment

Expulsion is prohibited except in very limited circumstances authorized by California law. Because infants and toddlers are rapidly developing communication, emotional regulation, and social skills, the program recognizes that challenging behaviors are often developmentally appropriate and may reflect unmet developmental, sensory,

communication, or health needs. These behaviors will be addressed through individualized support rather than exclusion whenever possible.

Before any unenrollment related to behavior is considered, the program will document reasonable efforts to support the child's continued participation and determine that the child's continued enrollment would present a serious safety threat that cannot be adequately reduced or eliminated. The program will assist families in identifying other appropriate services or placements if necessary.

Persistent and serious behavior/s:

If an infant or toddler demonstrates persistent behaviors that present a serious and ongoing safety concern that cannot be adequately addressed through reasonable supports this may be considered persistent and/or serious behaviors.

Persistent and serious behavior is defined by the State of California as "repeated patterns of behavior that significantly interfere with the learning of other students or interactions with peers and adults and that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate support." This includes any form of physical aggression, property destruction, and/or self-injury. Suspension will only be used as a last resort when there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated without the removal of the student. If persistent or serious behaviors occur, notification of intent via Notice of Action (NOA) to suspend and/or expel will be given to parents/guardians.

Parent Rights and Appeals

Upon enrollment, families receive written information regarding California's limitations on suspension and expulsion. If the program suspends or expels a child pursuant to state law, the family will receive a written Notice of Action (NOA) and information regarding their right to appeal directly to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) within 14 calendar days of receiving the notice in person, or 19 days of receiving the notification by mail. The effective date of action will be no less than 24 hours after the service of the notice.

Since the action to suspend or expel a child involves persistent and serious behaviors, the child may not attend the program during the appeal process.

- You will be informed in writing of any steps we consider taking to address the concerns.
- You have the right to appeal any decision. While your first appeal should be with Child Development Services in SMMUSD, you have the right to appeal directly to the state.

Your request to the CDSS must include the following information:

- A copy of both sides of the original NOA with which you disagree;
- A copy of the written decision letter from the local hearing; and
- A statement (e.g., letter) explaining why you disagree with the local hearing officer's decision.

You may e-mail, mail, fax or deliver your request to:

Child Care and Development Division
744 P Street M.S. 9-8-371
Sacramento, CA 95814

CCDDAppeals@dss.ca.gov

Non-Subsidized Child Care

Enrollment and Registration

To enroll your child, please complete our registration form and submit it along with the required documentation and fees. Our enrollment process ensures that we have all the necessary information to provide the best care for your child. The following process is utilized to support enrollment:

Step 1: Complete a Waitlist Application. We maintain a waitlist, and we will contact you as soon as a space becomes available.

Step 2: Tour the Facility. Tours will be conducted for prospective parents and visitors on an as-needed basis. Please call the center to schedule a tour. Tours are for adults only so staff can provide you with an overview of our program, philosophy, and physical layout of our location.

Step 3: Complete An Enrollment Packet. Once accepted, you will be provided with an Enrollment Packet. You must ensure all documents are completed, signed, and returned to the appropriate location before you are offered a confirmed space in the program.

Important Note: All forms must be completed and submitted before your child's first day of attendance. If your child requires medication or special accommodations, you may need to set up a meeting with a supervisor or our school nurse.

Step 4: First Week of School. We try to introduce new children to the program gradually, so that each child gets the necessary time and attention to become comfortable at school. Your child will be assigned a 'primary caregiver'. We require parents to spend the time necessary in the first three days with their child to help with the transition. As part of the connection from home to center, we ask that families bring a special item (eg - blanket or favorite stuffy) and extra clothes. In addition, families must bring diapers, breast milk/formula, bottles, and pacifiers for their infant or toddler.

Age Groups:

Infants (6 weeks - 18 months)

Toddlers (18 months - 36 months)

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday: 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Holidays: We observe major federal holidays. A list of observed holidays and breaks will be provided annually.

Program Fees and Policies

Tuition fees are determined by the age group and enrollment schedule. Detailed fee schedules are available at the center. Payments are due on a monthly schedule.

Payment Methods: We accept payments via check, Visa, or Mastercard credit card. We do NOT accept American Express.

Late Payments: Late payments will incur a \$30 fee as outlined in the tuition agreement. Please contact the center director if you anticipate difficulty meeting payment deadlines.

Financial Assistance: Financial Assistance may be available for families who qualify. Please contact the CDS office to apply for assistance.

Refunds

Refunds will be granted to families who notify CDS by the 1st day of the month, or the 15th of the month. Refunds are issued for a ½ month or full month only (depending on when the family notifies CDS). If the original payment was made by check or money order, a refund check will be issued in the name of the payee and mailed to the address on file. Refunds may take up to 4 to 6 weeks to be issued.

Withdrawal and Disenrollment Policies

Withdrawal Policy

Families planning to withdraw from the program are required to notify CDS office by phone or in writing by the 1st day of the month or the 15th of the month to avoid fee penalties. In the event you fail to notify the CDS office of your intent to withdraw, you will be responsible for paying one half month of tuition.

Abide by Agency Policies, Procedures, and Requirements

It is the responsibility of the parent to abide by all policies, procedures, and requirements in order to continue to receive childcare services. CDS has the right to disenroll families due to parents who do not follow the policies, procedures, and requirements.

Disenrollment Policy

Possible causes for disenrollment include but are not limited to:

- Persons whose behavior present a risk to children or staff (i.e - using profane language, threats, destroying property, etc.).
- Violations of any Education Code regarding firearms, alcohol, drugs, physical violence, theft, willful destruction of property, any conduct by parent, child, or relatives resulting in harm to person or property while on the center grounds
- Child jeopardizing the safety of themselves or others
- Failure to pay fees for services

Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development

Our Infant/Toddler Center is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all children. We recognize that infants and toddlers communicate their needs through their behavior and that all children develop social, emotional, language, and self-regulation skills at different rates.

Our staff work closely with families to understand each child's unique strengths, needs, temperament, and developmental stage. When concerns arise, we partner with families to identify strategies and supports that help children successfully participate in the program.

Biting, hitting, pushing, difficulty with transitions, separation anxiety, limited language skills, and challenges with self-regulation are common developmental behaviors in infancy and toddlerhood. Staff work proactively with families to support children through these developmental stages using positive guidance, responsive caregiving, and developmentally appropriate practices.

When Concerns Arise

If a child experiences challenges that affect their participation in the program or the safety of themselves or others, we will:

- Communicate with the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).
- Observe and document concerns, and developmental needs.
- Collaborate with families to develop consistent support strategies.
- Consult with available specialists, such as an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, when appropriate.
- Refer families to community resources, developmental screening services, regional center services, early intervention programs, or other supports as appropriate.
- Make reasonable efforts to support the child's continued participation in the program.

Temporary Removal from Care

Suspension may only occur in extraordinary circumstances when there is a serious or persistent safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated through reasonable supports and interventions. The program will work collaboratively with families and utilize available resources before considering suspension.

If a temporary removal from care becomes necessary to protect the safety of children or staff, the program will:

- Continue working with the family to identify supports and resources.
- Develop a written plan for the child's return to full participation.
- Provide referrals to appropriate services and community resources.
- Support the child's return to care as quickly as possible while maintaining safety.

Expulsion and Unenrollment

Expulsion is prohibited except in very limited circumstances authorized by California law. Before any unenrollment related to behavior is considered, the program must document reasonable efforts to support the child's continued participation and determine that the

child's continued enrollment would present a serious safety threat that cannot be adequately reduced or eliminated. The program will assist families in identifying other appropriate services or placements if necessary.

Persistent and serious behavior/s:

Persistent and serious behavior is defined by the State of California as “repeated patterns of behavior that significantly interfere with the learning of other students or interactions with peers and adults and that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate support.” This includes any form of physical aggression, property destruction, and/or self-injury. Suspension will only be used as a last resort when there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated without the removal of the student. If persistent or serious behaviors occur, notification of intent via Notice of Action (NOA) to suspend and/or expel will be given to parents/guardians.

Summary

This handbook provides a comprehensive overview of our Infant and Toddler Center, covering essential information from our welcoming philosophy to daily routines, health and safety, and communication. We are committed to providing a nurturing and stimulating environment for your child's development and encourage open communication and active parent involvement. Please keep this handbook as a resource and reach out with any questions. We are excited to partner with you in your child's early learning journey.