Excellence in Care and Education
MARYLAND ACCREDITATION

Academy Child Development Center

MARYLAND EXCELS
CHECK FOR QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

Academy
K.A.V.E. club
Kids Active Enrichment

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2026-2027

A Non-Profit Educational and Child Care Organization

Established 1981

Tax ID #52-1228660

Main Business Office
9035 Shady Grove Court
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
(301) 424-6282
information@academychild.com
Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
www.academychild.com

Locations & Hours

All Academy programs are **licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care (OCC)**, are **MSDE Accredited**, and maintain **Maryland EXCELS Level 5 ratings**, reflecting the highest standards of quality in early childhood and school-age care.

Academy at Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School
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Silver Spring, MD 20905
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cdrewacademy@gmail.com
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Academy at Cold Spring Elementary School
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Academy at Galway Elementary School
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Academy at DuFief Elementary School
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Academy at Stone Mill Elementary School
14327 Stonebridge View Drive
North Potomac, MD 20878
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About This Handbook

This Family Handbook is designed to help families understand Academy's programs, daily practices, and important policies. It serves as a helpful guide to our shared expectations and supports clear communication between families and Academy staff.

From time to time, Academy may update policies or introduce new procedures to reflect regulatory requirements, program needs, or the well-being of our community. Families will be notified of significant changes, and the most current version of the handbook will always be available on Academy's website. In some situations, Academy may make temporary or permanent adjustments or exceptions when appropriate.

We encourage families to take a few moments to review this handbook along with the Enrollment Agreement provided during registration. As part of the enrollment process, families are asked to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the policies outlined in this handbook.

Thank you for partnering with us—we look forward to a positive and successful year together.

Founding and History

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. was founded in July 1981 by Marilyn Fleetwood and has proudly served Montgomery County families for more than four decades. Academy opened on September 8, 1981, in a kindergarten classroom at Montrose Elementary School in Rockville, Maryland, under the leadership of Director Ellen Goeden, with two senior teachers and an enrollment of thirteen children. Following the closure of Montrose Elementary School, Academy relocated to Rocking Horse Road Elementary School, where it expanded from two to four classrooms and served the community for more than a decade. Continued growth led to the opening of additional centers beginning in 1988 at Cold Spring Elementary School in Potomac and Stone Mill Elementary School in North Potomac. Over time, Academy expanded to multiple locations throughout Montgomery County, including DuFief, Charles Drew, Georgian Forest, Academy Hills, Galway Elementary School, Temple Beth Ami, and B'nai Israel Schilit.

As enrollment increased and family needs evolved, Academy expanded its facilities and programming to support working families. In 1991, Academy received an IBM Funds for Dependent Care Initiatives Grant to construct a modular facility at Stone Mill Elementary School, allowing the Center to offer comprehensive programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. Academy also expanded before- and after-school care programs by utilizing multipurpose school spaces, providing consistent, high-quality enrichment and supervision for elementary-aged children.

Additional growth included the opening of a freestanding facility at Cold Spring Elementary School in 2001 and the Academy Hills campus in Rockville in 2003. Through strong partnerships with schools and community organizations, Academy has been selected to provide child care and before- and after-school programs in a variety of public and community-based settings.

Academy has earned long-standing recognition for excellence through NAEYC and MSDE accreditation, participation in the MSDE EXCELS Quality Rating and Improvement System, and consistently high program ratings. These achievements reflect Academy's commitment to best practices, professional staff development, and high-quality learning environments.

Today, Academy Child Development Center serves more than five hundred families each year with infant, toddler, preschool, and before- and after-school programs. With a dedicated professional staff and strong family partnerships, Academy is a trusted leader in early childhood education and school-age programming, committed to nurturing children's growth and supporting families in the communities it serves.

Guided by a mission to nurture the whole child, Academy Child Development Center is committed to providing safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments where children can grow with confidence and curiosity. Through developmentally appropriate early childhood education and enriching before- and after-school programs, Academy partners with families to support children's academic, social, and emotional development. As a trusted leader in early childhood and school-age programming, Academy remains dedicated to quality, integrity, and meeting the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Our Mission and Values

Academy Child Development Center, Inc.'s mission is to provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate early care and education, as well as before and after school-age programs in a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment. We are committed to supporting each child's growth across all areas of development—social, emotional, physical, and cognitive—while fostering curiosity, confidence, and a love of learning.
Through intentional teaching practices, strong relationships, and meaningful family partnerships, Academy prepares children for lifelong success in school and in the broader community.

Our Values

Academy's values guide our daily practices, decisions, and relationships with children, families, and staff.

Children First

We recognize each child as capable, competent, and unique. Our programs are designed to honor individual strengths, developmental needs, and learning styles within a supportive group setting.

Family Partnership

Families are children's first teachers and essential partners in their development. We value open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration with families to support each child's success.

Inclusion & Equity
Academy is committed to creating an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates diversity in abilities, cultures, languages, family structures, and backgrounds. We work collaboratively to provide equitable opportunities for all children.

Quality & Professionalism
We uphold high standards for teaching, care, and operations. Our staff engage in ongoing professional development and reflective practice to ensure excellence and continuous improvement.

Safe & Supportive Environments
Children learn best when they feel safe, valued, and supported. We prioritize health, safety, and emotional well-being in all aspects of our programs.

Curiosity & Lifelong Learning
We believe learning is an active, joyful process. Through play, exploration, and discovery, children develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Our Philosophy

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. is guided by our *Building Blocks for Life* philosophy, which serves as the foundation for all learning and development. Our mission is to provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate early care and educational experiences in a nurturing and safe environment for the children, families, and communities we serve.

Academy believes that all children are capable and competent from birth. Children develop and learn at their own pace, and our teachers use a child-centered approach to support each child's individual strengths, interests, and developmental needs. Respect for and appreciation of individual differences are central to our work and inform all aspects of our program.

Our teachers design meaningful learning experiences that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and appropriately challenging. Through a responsive, inclusive, and play-based curriculum aligned with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Maryland EXCELS standards, children build essential pre-academic, social-emotional, and life skills. Teachers intentionally foster children's self-esteem, creativity, sense of belonging, and confidence as learners.

Partnership with families is essential to children's growth and success at Academy. We believe strong relationships built on trust, communication, and mutual respect create the best foundation for learning. When children are supported in an environment that values cooperation, respect, and belonging, they develop positive character, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.

Academy is committed to supporting children today while preparing them for the world of tomorrow.

Academy's Board of Directors

Since Academy Child Development Center, Inc. was founded in 1981, its Board of Directors has provided strategic leadership and oversight. Composed of experienced educators, administrators, and professionals with nonprofit governance expertise, the Board helps ensure that Academy remains fiscally responsible and upholds high standards of quality and accountability.

The Board is led by its President and supported by standing committees, including the Finance Committee, to promote effective governance. Written requests to address the Board may be submitted to information@academychild.com.

Our Staff

The quality of Academy's programs is directly connected to the experience, professionalism, and dedication of our teachers and staff. Academy is committed to hiring qualified educators who are knowledgeable in early childhood and school-age development and who share our commitment to nurturing, high-quality learning environments.

Academy carefully recruits and employs staff who meet or exceed the requirements of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care, applicable accrediting agencies, and Academy's own professional standards.

Staff Qualifications

- **Lead Teachers** must have a bachelor's in early childhood education, a related field, or an approved equivalent.
- **Child Care Teachers** are approved and qualified by the MSDE Office of Child Care.
- **Instructional Assistants and Aides** receive orientation, training, and mentoring prior to working independently with children.

All Academy staff have experience working with children and demonstrate a genuine interest in children's learning, development, and well-being.

Training, Screening, and Professional Standards

Before employment begins, all staff members must complete required health and safety clearances, including physical examinations, tuberculosis screening, immunizations, criminal background checks, and reference verification. Ongoing training and professional development are required to ensure staff remain current with best practices and regulatory expectations.

Academy values strong partnerships between families and staff. Through open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect, our teachers and staff work closely with families to support each child's growth, development, and success.

Licensing and Accreditation

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. operates state-licensed programs that are regularly inspected to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and quality standards. Inspections are conducted by state and local health, fire, licensing, and building authorities and include oversight of staff qualifications, child-to-staff ratios, facilities and playground safety, nutrition, health and safety practices, and record-keeping.

Academy is licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care, and its programs are **MSDE accredited** to serve children from infancy through school age. Academy programs have also achieved the highest quality ratings through **Maryland EXCELS**, the state's quality rating and improvement system for early childhood and school-age programs.

Families with questions regarding licensing, accreditation, or regulatory requirements are encouraged to speak with their Center Director.

Educational Programming

Classrooms

Academy carefully considers each child's developmental needs when making classroom placement decisions. Children benefit socially and emotionally when they learn alongside peers of similar developmental age, while still being supported within a group that reflects a range of abilities. Academy takes multiple factors into account to create classroom groupings that promote positive relationships, confidence, and successful learning experiences.

Classroom placements are reviewed regularly and may be adjusted as children grow and develop. All classrooms meet or exceed Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care requirements for group size and teacher-to-child ratios.

Classroom Groupings

- **Infants/Toddlers**
  Typically up to 6 children, ages 2 months to 23 months, with 2 teachers.
  Teacher-to-child ratio: **1:3**
- **Tiny Tots**
  Typically up to 12 children, ages 24 months to 36 months, with 2 teachers.
  Teacher-to-child ratio: **1:6**
- **Preschool**
  Typically up to 20 children, ages 3 to 4 years, with 2 teachers.
  Teacher-to-child ratio: **1:10** during instructional and child care hours
- **Pre-Kindergarten**
  Typically up to 20 children, ages 4 to 5 years, with 2 teachers.
  Teacher-to-child ratio: **1:10** during instructional and child care hours

Academy remains committed to maintaining safe, supportive, and developmentally appropriate classroom environments for all children.

Pre-Kindergarten Expansion Grant – Blueprint Funding

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. participates in the Pre-Kindergarten Expansion Grant Program funded through Maryland's Blueprint for Education. This program expands access to high-quality prekindergarten services for eligible children and families and is administered and overseen by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for the Pre-Kindergarten Expansion Grant:

- Children must be three or four years of age on or before September 1.
- Family household income must be at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

Program Standards & Staffing

As a Community-Based Provider, Academy meets all MSDE and federal program requirements. Academy maintains the highest level of **Maryland EXCELS**, holds **MSDE State Accreditation**, and employs Pre-K Grant teachers who hold current **Maryland Teaching Certificates** issued by MSDE.

Program Components

Grant funding supports instructional materials, classroom supplies, curriculum enhancements, staff salaries, professional development, family engagement activities, and enrichment opportunities. Academy maintains strong partnerships with community agencies, including Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), to support program quality and continuity.

Schedule, Attendance & Extended Care

The Pre-K Grant Program provides 6.5 hours of daily instruction and follows the MCPS school calendar. Before- and after-care services are available for an additional monthly fee and include full-day child care on MCPS school holidays.
Academy accepts Child Care Scholarship (CCS) vouchers and other approved fee assistance programs. Students enrolled in the Pre-K Grant Program may not exceed 18 absences during the academic year. Chronic absenteeism may result in disenrollment from the grant program in accordance with MSDE requirements.

Curriculum

Academy's curriculum is grounded in child-centered teaching, developmentally appropriate practice, and the understanding that play is a vital part of how children learn. Our approach is guided by *Building Blocks for Life*, Academy's IDEAL curriculum framework, which supports children's growth in confidence, creativity, and lifelong learning skills.

Academy implements research-based curricula aligned with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) standards to meet the developmental needs of children at each stage:

- **Infants, Toddlers, and Twos:**
  The Creative Curriculum, aligned with **MSDE Healthy Beginnings** standards.
- **Preschool (3-year-olds):**
  Children Explore Their World (CEW)

- **Pre-Kindergarten (4-year-olds):**
  Children Study Their World (CSW)

Across all classrooms, teachers plan intentional learning experiences that promote social-emotional development, early literacy, and numeracy, problem-solving, and curiosity through hands-on, play-based exploration.

Child Assessment and Developmental Progress
Assessment is an essential component of Academy's high-quality early childhood programs. Ongoing assessment allows teachers to understand each child's development, monitor individual growth and progress, support learning, and plan meaningful, individualized experiences within the daily classroom environment.

Academy utilizes developmentally appropriate, research-based assessment tools aligned with its curriculum and Maryland's Early Learning Standards to monitor and support each child's growth and development.

For infants, toddlers, and two-year-olds, Academy implements *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos*, using ongoing teacher observations and developmental documentation to assess children's progress across key developmental domains.

For preschool and pre-kindergarten children, Academy utilizes age-appropriate assessment tools, including the Early Learning Assessment (ELA), Preschool Whole Child Assessment, and Star Early Literacy Assessment, as applicable. Pre-kindergarten instruction and assessment are also aligned with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS).

Children's growth and progress are monitored throughout the program year through ongoing teacher observations, documentation of children's work, and assessment data. These practices help teachers identify each child's developmental strengths, emerging skills, and areas requiring additional support. Assessment findings guide individualized instructional planning, inform classroom experiences, and measure progress toward age-appropriate developmental and learning benchmarks.

Academy's assessment practices address all areas of development, including social-emotional, cognitive, physical, language, and early literacy skills, while recognizing that each child develops and learns at an individual pace. Assessment information is also used to communicate with families about their child's progress and to promote a collaborative approach to supporting each child's continued growth, development, and school readiness.

Assessment Practices

Assessment is embedded in daily classroom activities and includes:

- Teacher observations and anecdotal notes
- Work samples and documentation.
- Developmental checklists aligned with curriculum goals

Assessments are guided by the following curricula:

- *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos*

- *Children Explore Their World* (Preschool/Threes)
- *Children Study Their World* (Pre-Kindergarten/Fours)

Information gathered during enrollment and annual updates helps teachers better understand each child's background, strengths, and needs. Assessments are conducted by familiar staff in a relaxed, supportive setting during individual, small group, and whole group activities.

Using Assessment Information

Teachers use assessment information to:

- Identify children's interests, strengths, and areas for growth.
- Plan intentional, responsive instruction.
- Set individual learning goals.
- Design classroom environments that support all learners

Assessment results and developmental progress are shared with families during scheduled parent-teacher conferences three times per year, or more often as needed. If assessment results suggest a need for further evaluation, teachers will discuss next steps with families and support referrals to appropriate outside agencies for additional screening or assessment.

Placement Criteria

Children are grouped primarily by age in accordance with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care regulations and applicable standards. For admission to MSDE-approved programs, children must meet the required age eligibility on or before September 1 of the applicable school year. Program placement also considers readiness expectations appropriate to the program level.

In addition to age, Academy considers licensed capacity, group size, and required teacher-to-child ratios when making placement decisions. These factors ensure safe, developmentally appropriate learning environments for all children.
In some cases, and when space permits, families, teachers, and program leadership may agree that an alternative developmental placement would better support a child's needs. When this occurs, a written plan will be developed in partnership with the family to outline goals and support.

Academy intentionally plans transitions between program levels. Vertical articulation and transition plans are developed for each child to support continuity of learning and ensure smooth, developmentally appropriate progression as children move into the next program level.

Children enrolled in Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten programs are expected to be independently toilet trained, including the ability to use the restroom with minimal adult assistance and follow basic hygiene routines. Families with questions about readiness are encouraged to speak with the Center Director.

Transitioning to a New Classroom

Academy carefully plans classroom transitions to support continuity of learning and a positive experience for each child. Transitions are based on developmental

readiness, age eligibility, and program expectations, as well as licensed capacity, group size, and required teacher-to-child ratios.

Families will receive advance notification when a transition is planned. When appropriate, children will have an opportunity to participate in a transition visit to their new classroom to become familiar with the environment, teachers, and routines prior to the official move.

To support a smooth and developmentally appropriate progression, the child's current teacher will share relevant information with the receiving teacher, including strengths, areas for growth, and effective support strategies.

Academy works in partnership with families during the transition process. Families who wish to discuss their child's placement or transition may request a conference with their child's teacher or program leadership.

School-Age Programs

Academy has been providing high-quality before and after school child care programs in a safe and secure environment for working families and their children in MCPS Elementary Schools for over four decades. Academy staff have developed lasting relationships with the children, families, and community partners in the school communities we serve, and have an exceptional reputation for sharing space respectfully. Academy collaborates closely with the principals, school administration, teachers, and staff to support the students, families, and community.

Our ongoing collaborative partnerships are built on trust, communication, and mutual respect. These relationships provide parents with a sense of security and peace of mind that their children experience safe, smooth, seamless transitions each day from our before care program to their MCPS classroom, and at dismissal from their classroom to our after-school program that operates in the Stone Mill MPR.

Academy employs highly qualified staff in our before and after school child care programs who are approved for their position by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care (OCC). Our staff have specialized training and education in the areas of child development, curriculum planning, as well as professional experience working with school-age students. Our school-age program has been recognized for our commitment to quality and best practices throughout our tenure within MCPS Elementary Schools.

The licensed group sizes vary from 30 students, 45 students, 60 students or more depending on the Academy location, the needs of the school community and the licensed space in the building. The teacher to child ratio is 1:15 for Kindergarten through 5th Grade. The following group sizes require the following staffing:

Group size of 30 students: Two staff required.
Group size of 45 students: Three staff required.
Group size of 60 students: Four staff required.

Our before and after school programs are in the multi-purpose rooms (MPR) within the various elementary schools we serve. Our school-age program is known as the Academy K.A.V.E. Club. K.A.V.E. stands for **K**ids **A**cti**V**e **E**nrichment. Our before and after school programs follow a daily schedule that includes nutritious morning and afternoon snacks that follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program/USDA. Additionally, the schedule includes a balance between large and small group activities that encompass academic enrichment, homework support, opportunities for social-emotional learning, physical activity, and creative exploration. There are blocks of time where students are free to choose their own activities and friends which aids in the development of social-emotional skills. Our staff understand that most school days are highly structured, and that children need transition time, particularly in the after-school hours, to unwind and follow their own inclinations.

Brief daily group meetings, snack and outdoor recreational time all provide opportunities to transition from school to out of school time. The daily group meetings between the staff and students provide children with the opportunity to share something about their day, and for the staff to talk about the planned activities and clubs for the afternoon. Our experience working with school-age students has taught us that when children have down time, it helps them focus on homework/independent reading, as well as the structured activities that we offer them each day.

Academy staff provide supervision and academic support to students as needed during the designated homework time. Parents can communicate their preference on whether their student works on homework assignments or engages in another quiet activity such as independent reading. The environment is conducive and free of distraction during this time. Tools, resources, equipment, and materials are available and accessible for student use during homework time at Academy.

Academy has daily schedules for MCPS Early Release and Closed Days. Academy staff utilize the bonus program hours to provide the students with additional time to expand, explore, and elaborate on current clubs and themes that allow them more time to socialize with their friends.

Our school-age staff are vital to the program's success. Teaching personnel are responsible for facilitating classroom learning activities; therefore, the support provided to them is crucial for fostering children's education and maintaining the quality of the program. Planning time is a vital aspect of professional support. Academy staff have daily planning time to create engaging, challenging, and developmentally appropriate activities.

Our staff facilitate and organize enrichment activities through clubs and weekly themes that are child-initiated and reflect their interests and cultural backgrounds. Our staff recognize the significant role that they play in helping children build important social

skills and discover what they like while equipping them with skills they can use throughout their lifetime.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) oversees the selection of providers for before- and after-school child care services offered in MCPS facilities. Academy participates in this process in accordance with MCPS requirements and standards.

The MCPS provider selection process was designed to promote consistency, transparency, and alignment with district priorities. The process incorporates community input, standardized evaluation of provider qualifications, and formal review by MCPS-appointed committees.

Provider Selection Process

The MCPS selection process includes two primary phases:

- **Request for Qualifications (RFQ):**
  Child care providers submit qualifications demonstrating their ability to meet MCPS requirements. Submissions are reviewed through a pre-screening process to confirm minimum standards are met, followed by committee evaluation and Board of Education approval.
- **Request for Proposals (RFP):**
  Providers who qualify through the RFQ are invited to submit proposals for specific school sites. Proposals are evaluated by the Selection Committee, which conducts interviews and recommends providers for each location. Final selections are subject to Board of Education approval.

School-age before- and after-school child care programs approved through this process are awarded for a six-year term.

What This Means for Families

MCPS's selection process ensures that Academy meets high standards for quality, safety, and program management. Families can be confident that Academy's school-age programs are reviewed, approved, and monitored by MCPS and are designed to provide consistent, reliable care aligned with school and community priorities.

Enrollment

Admissions Process

Academy Child Development Center, Inc., welcomes families seeking high-quality early care, education, and before/after school programs for their children. Children are eligible for admission beginning at two months of age, subject to age eligibility, program availability, and applicable licensing requirements. When a child may need disability-related accommodations or support. Academy will make an individualized assessment and consider reasonable modifications before making an enrollment decision. Enrollment decisions will not be based on generalizations or stereotypes about a disability.

The admissions process begins with an inquiry submitted through Academy's website at www.academychild.com. After an inquiry is received, the Center Director will contact the family to provide an application and schedule a tour. If space is not available in the appropriate classroom, families may choose to place their child on a waitlist for a $30 non-refundable fee.

Non-Discriminatory Admissions Policy

Academy maintains a non-discriminatory admissions policy and enrolls children without regard to race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, immigration status, marital or family status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, language, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable state or federal law.

Academy complies with all applicable federal and Maryland laws governing non-discrimination in education, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code. In accordance with these laws, Academy does not:

- Discriminate against a current or prospective child or family in enrollment, participation, or access to services.
- Refuse enrollment, expelling a child, or withhold program privileges based on a protected characteristic.
- Discipline, penalize, or retaliate against a child or family for raising concerns or filing a complaint related to discrimination.

Enrollment decisions are based on age eligibility, program availability, and applicable licensing requirements. When additional information is reasonably necessary to evaluate or implement a requested accommodation or support, Academy will work with the family to obtain that information and complete an individualized assessment.

Enrollment Status

Enrollment is subject to the Enrollment Agreement, this Handbook, and applicable law. Academy may discontinue enrollment for a legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason stated in the Enrollment Agreement or this Handbook. A decision based on a child's disability or support needs will be made only after an individualized assessment and consideration of reasonable modifications. Academy may delay or discontinue enrollment when the child poses a direct threat, meaning a substantial risk of serious harm to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications, or when a requested modification would fundamentally alter the nature of Academy's program.

Inclusion and Individualized Support Policy

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. is committed to providing inclusive, equitable, and developmentally appropriate learning environments that recognize and respond to the individual strengths, needs, abilities, cultures, and family backgrounds of every child. Academy welcomes children of all abilities and believes that children benefit from opportunities to learn, participate, and develop within supportive group child care environments.

Families are encouraged to share information that will help Academy understand and support their child's development and participation. When applicable, this may include relevant portions of a current Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, medical documentation, evaluation, or recommendation from a service provider. Providing an entire plan is not a condition of enrollment or continued care. When a child needs an accommodation, modification, specialized support, or assistance, Academy may request information reasonably necessary to understand the child's needs and evaluate or implement appropriate supports. Academy may request a signed Authorization or Release/Exchange of Confidential Information only when communication with a school, health care provider, therapist, early intervention provider, or other professional is reasonably necessary for that purpose.

When individualized planning is needed, the Center Director will work with the family, classroom teachers, appropriate administrators, and, with written parental authorization, relevant service providers. The purpose is to understand the child's needs in Academy's particular program environment and develop appropriate strategies, supports, accommodations, or modifications. Any individualized plan will be based on the child's strengths and needs, family input, relevant profession information, the classroom environment, applicable staff-to-child ratios, health and safety considerations, and the nature of the child care services Academy provides. The plan will be reviewed and revised as the child's needs or circumstances change.

Academy will consider requests for reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures and will provide reasonable accommodations and support consistent with applicable law. When information is reasonably necessary to evaluate a requested accommodation or prepare for a child's participation, families should provide it sufficiently in advance to allow Academy reasonable time to review it, communicate with the family and relevant providers when appropriate, and develop an individualized plan when needed. A start date may be delayed only when Academy has not received information reasonably necessary to evaluate or safely implement the requested support, or when additional time is reasonably necessary to complete the individualized planning process.

If concerns arise regarding a child's participation, Academy will work with the family to identify appropriate strategies and determine whether additional information, consultation, supports, or reasonable modifications may be appropriate. Academy may delay enrollment or discontinue care based on a child's disability or support needs only after an individualized assessment and consideration of reasonable modifications. Any determination that a child poses a direct threat will be based on objective evidence concerning the particular child and will consider whether reasonable modifications would eliminate the risk. Academy may also determine that a requested modification would fundamentally alter the nature of its program. Academy will communicate the decision to the family and, when appropriate, provide information about community resources or alternative programs.

Family Resources, Early Intervention, and Support Services

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. is committed to supporting the healthy growth, development, and well-being of every child. We recognize the importance of

early identification, intervention, and access to community resources that support children's developmental, social-emotional, behavioral, and health-related needs.

Academy partners with families to identify concerns, share information, and facilitate referrals to appropriate community agencies and professional support services.

Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program (MCITP)

The Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program provides early intervention services for eligible children from birth through age two who have developmental delays, disabilities, or other qualifying conditions. Services are designed to support children's development and assist families in meeting their child's individual needs.

Contact Information:

- Phone: 240-777-3997
- Phone: 240-740-2170

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Child Find

MCPS Child Find provides screening, evaluation, and identification services for preschool-age children, ages three through five, who may have developmental delays or disabilities and may qualify for special education and related services.

Parents may contact Child Find directly if they have concerns about their child's speech and language, learning, motor development, social-emotional development, or other developmental areas.

Contact Information:

- Intake Line: 301-947-6080
- Fax: 301-460-2318
- Email: ChildFind@mcpsmd.org

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation provides support to families and early childhood educators in promoting children's social-emotional development, understanding challenging behaviors, strengthening positive relationships, and developing appropriate strategies to support children's individual needs.

Academy may collaborate with families and IECMHC professionals to identify strategies that promote positive outcomes for children within the classroom environment.

Contact Information:

- Phone: 240-777-4769

Child Care Health Consultant

Academy may consult with a Child Care Health Consultant regarding children's health, safety, medical needs, and appropriate accommodations within the child care environment. Consultation may include guidance related to individual health care plans, medical conditions, illness prevention, and other health-related concerns.

Families interested in accessing health consultation services should contact their Academy Director for assistance.

Referral Procedures and Family Collaboration

Parents and guardians are encouraged to speak with their Academy Director whenever they have concerns regarding their child's development, behavior, learning, or health.

When additional support may be beneficial, Academy follows these referral procedures:

1. **Discuss Concerns:** The Director will communicate with the family regarding developmental, behavioral, social-emotional, or health-related concerns and share relevant classroom observations.
2. **Identify Appropriate Resources:** The Director will provide information about available services, including MCITP, MCPS Child Find, IECMHC, or the Child Care Health Consultant, based on the child's age and individual needs.
3. **Facilitate Referrals:** With appropriate parental consent, the Director may assist the family in contacting the appropriate agency, completing referral documentation, or coordinating consultation services.
4. **Collaborate and Follow Up:** When appropriate and authorized by the family, Academy will collaborate with service providers to identify strategies and reasonable supports that promote the child's development and successful participation in the program.

Families may contact MCITP or MCPS Child Find directly without first obtaining a referral from Academy.

Confidentiality and Family Partnership

Academy recognizes parents and guardians as essential partners in decisions affecting their child's development and well-being. Information shared during the referral and consultation process will be treated confidentially and disclosed only as permitted or required by applicable law and with appropriate parental authorization when necessary.

Academy is committed to ensuring that families have access to information, resources, and professional supports that promote their child's healthy development and success.

Registration and Enrollment Requirements

Registration Process

Families begin the registration process by completing an Inquiry Form on Academy's website at www.academychild.com/enrollment. Once the inquiry is received, the Center Director will contact the family to schedule an orientation tour and an interview

with the family and child. At that time, families will receive an Enrollment Application to complete.

Grant Programs (EquiCare and Pre-K Expansion) - Enrollment procedures, requirements, and timelines for grant programs differ from our tuition-based programs. For further information, refer to **Appendix A.**

Priority Enrollment and Placement Policy

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. is committed to providing equitable access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education and school-age child care programs while supporting continuity of care for currently enrolled children and their families.

When enrollment requests exceed available spaces, **Academy will prioritize enrollment and placement in the following order:**

1. **Currently Enrolled Children:** Children currently enrolled in an Academy program who wish to continue enrollment for the upcoming program year, provided all enrollment requirements and applicable deadlines are met.
2. **Siblings of Currently Enrolled Children:** Siblings of children currently enrolled in an Academy program, to support family continuity and accommodate families with multiple children.
3. **Children and Families Facing Barriers to Access:** Children from marginalized or historically underserved communities, including families experiencing economic hardship or other barriers to accessing affordable, high-quality early childhood education and child care.
4. **Montgomery County Employees:** Children of Montgomery County employees seeking enrollment in an Academy program.
5. **Other Applicants:** Remaining available spaces will be offered to eligible applicants based on program availability, age-group requirements, licensing capacity, and the date a completed application is received.

Additional Considerations

Priority placement does not guarantee enrollment. All placements are subject to available space, applicable age eligibility, MSDE Office of Child Care licensing requirements, approved program capacity, and completion of required enrollment documentation.

Academy reserves the right to consider individual family circumstances and program-specific eligibility requirements when making enrollment decisions. Programs supported by public grants or other designated funding sources, including the MSDE Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and EquiCare Grant, will follow all applicable eligibility and enrollment priority requirements established by the funding agency.

Academy is committed to administering its enrollment and placement policies fairly, consistently, and without unlawful discrimination.

Enrollment Materials & Fees

Upon receipt of a completed Enrollment Application and payment of the non-refundable Admission and Materials Fees, families will receive the following:

- Enrollment Agreement
- Family Handbook
- Required health and student information forms.

Families who are co-parenting, separated, or divorced are required to have both parents and legal guardians sign the Enrollment Application, confirming agreement with the selected program.

The signed Enrollment Agreement and required payment—either a security deposit for 12-month programs or the final month's installment for 10-month programs—must be returned to the Center Director within three (3) days, as stated in the Enrollment Agreement.

Required Forms & Documentation

All required enrollment forms, including MSDE Office of Child Care (OCC) forms and Academy-specific forms, must be completed, signed, and submitted by the deadline provided by the Center Director.

Academy is a licensed child care center through the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care and is required by state law to maintain a complete and current file for each enrolled child. In accordance with licensing regulations, children with incomplete documentation may not attend until all required paperwork has been received. We appreciate families' cooperation in meeting these requirements.

Health Requirements, Religious Exemptions, and Exclusion During Outbreaks

Maryland regulations require that children enrolled in licensed child care programs have a current health assessment on file. This includes:

- A parent-completed health history
- Documentation of allergies, if applicable
- A medical evaluation signed by a physician confirming the child is medically cleared to attend child care, completed within required times based on the child's age

Lead screening or testing is required in accordance with Maryland law, based on the child's date of birth.

In accordance with **COMAR regulations** and **Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)** requirements, parents may object to required immunizations, medical examinations, or lead testing based on bona fide religious beliefs and practices. Families claiming a religious exemption must submit the required written religious objection statement along with all applicable health history documentation, as required by state regulation.

Academy Child Development Center will review all documentation to ensure compliance with applicable health, safety, and licensing requirements, including those

associated with the MSDE PreK Expansion Grant. When appropriate, Academy will work with families to develop health and emergency care plans that are consistent with state law, licensing regulations, and program requirements.

To protect the health and safety of all children and staff, and in accordance with **COMAR**, guidance from the **Maryland Department of Health**, and **local health department directives**, Academy may **temporarily exclude a child from attendance** during a communicable disease outbreak or public health emergency. Children who are not immunized due to a religious exemption may be excluded during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases or when required by public health authorities. Such exclusions do not constitute discrimination and will remain in effect until conditions for safe return are met in accordance with applicable regulations.

Academy will notify families of any required exclusions, conditions for return, and relevant public health guidance. Readmission will occur only when it is determined to be safe and permissible under state and local health requirements.

Customized Schedules

Customized schedules include any enrollment option not listed on the Center's published tuition worksheet or requests for enrollment outside of the standard program periods. All requests for customized schedules must be submitted in writing and are subject to prior approval by Academy's Business Office.
Customized schedule approvals are based on program availability, staffing, and operational needs. Priority placement is given in the following order:

1. Five-day, full-day 12-month enrollment (July 1–June 30)
2. Currently enrolled students
3. Sibling applications

Academy reserves the right to approve or deny customized schedule requests to ensure program consistency and quality.

Withdrawal from the Program

Families who wish to withdraw a child from Academy must submit a completed withdrawal form to the Center Director at least 30 days prior to the first day of the month in which the withdrawal will take effect. Tuition remains due during the 30-day notice period, regardless of attendance. There are no mid-month withdrawals or prorated tuition refunds.

For 12-month programs, families must be enrolled for a minimum of one month and provide the required written notice. The security deposit will be applied in accordance with the Enrollment Agreement.

Families who are co-parenting, separated, or divorced are required to have both parents and legal guardians sign the withdrawal form, confirming agreement with the decision to withdraw. Academy cannot process a withdrawal request without signatures from both parents and guardians, as applicable.

Program Cancellation

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. reserves the right to cancel a program or session due to insufficient enrollment or operational needs. When a cancellation is necessary, Academy will make every reasonable effort to provide families with at least 30 days' notice whenever possible.

The School Day

Your Child's First Day

A child's first day at Academy is an important milestone. While this transition can be exciting, it can also bring uncertainty or anxiety—for children and families alike. Academy works in partnership with families to support a smooth and positive start, and we encourage you to share any questions or concerns prior to your child's first day.

When possible, we recommend that new students begin with a gradual transition, such as shorter days that increase over time. This approach allows children to become familiar with their new environment, routines, and teachers at a comfortable pace. Each child adjusts differently, and our staff are attentive to individual needs during this transition period.

Open communication is especially important during the first few weeks. Families are encouraged to connect regularly with teachers and staff to share observations and ask questions. After a child completes the required three-day orientation, the Center Director will coordinate the child's first official school day in collaboration with the classroom teacher and family.

Consistent arrival and departure routines help children feel secure and confident. Families may check in on their child's progress by messaging the teacher through the Family Communication App (Child Pilot) or by contacting the center directly.
On your child's first day, please send all items listed on the materials list provided by the Teacher and/or Center Director. All personal items should be clearly labeled with your child's name.

Parking & Carpool

The safety of children, families, and staff is our top priority. We ask all families and staff to use care, patience, and courtesy while in parking and carpool areas. Please drive slowly, follow posted traffic patterns, remain alert to pedestrians, and always hold children's hands.

To reduce distractions and increase safety, cell phone use should be limited while driving or walking through the parking area.

Failure to follow parking and traffic procedures creates a serious safety risk. Repeated or significant violations may result in corrective action, including fines, suspension, or immediate termination of enrollment, in accordance with Academy policies and the Enrollment Agreement.

For building security, families are asked not to hold exterior doors open for others. Allowing entry only through proper check-in procedures helps ensure that all individuals entering the building are authorized.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping keep our community safe.

Family Communication App

Academy uses a Family Communication App. Upon enrollment, families will receive an invitation by email or text to set up their account. Through the Family Communication App, families can complete the daily required sign-in and sign-out procedures, as well as communicate with teachers and administration, and receive daily reports. The Family Communication app platform complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Detailed setup instructions and screenshots with instructions on how to set up your family's account are in **Appendix B1** of this handbook.

Setting Up Your Account

- **Create a free account:**
  Use the email address or mobile phone number that received the invitation to create your parent account through the Child Pilot website or mobile app.
- **Confirm your child's profile:**
  After creating your account, review your child's profile to confirm information such as birthdate, allergies, and authorized contacts. If your child's profile does not appear, please contact the center with the email address or phone number used during registration.
- **Set account preferences:**
  Notification settings may be adjusted within your account profile at any time.

Sign-In / Sign-Out Procedures (All Families)

Families are required to sign children in and out daily using the Family Communication app upon arrival and departure.

1. Upon arriving at the center, open the Family Communication mobile app.
2. Select the QR code icon in the upper right-hand corner.
3. Tap the Sign In/Sign Out button located at the bottom of the screen.
4. When prompted, complete the required electronic signature.

Staff are available to assist if technical issues arise.

Arrival

Mornings set the tone for a successful day at Academy. A calm, consistent arrival routine helps children transition smoothly into their classroom and feel ready to learn. To support a positive start each day, families are asked to:

- **Sign your child in** using the Family Communication App and your assigned check-in code. Families may use the on-site kiosk or their personal device through the app or QR code.
- **Accompany your child to and from the classroom** each day.

- **Connect briefly with the teacher** upon arrival. This is an important opportunity to share relevant information about your child's morning, health, or any changes to their schedule.

Families are kindly asked to arrive at least five minutes before the start of morning circle or group time. Timely arrival allows children to fully participate in classroom activities and helps maintain a smooth, focused learning environment. Frequent late arrivals may result in children missing important learning opportunities and can disrupt the classroom routine. Thank you for partnering with us to support a positive and successful start to each day.

Departure

For the safety and accountability of all children, families are required to sign their child out each day using the Family Communication App. Sign-out may be completed at the front entrance kiosk or on a personal mobile device, following the same process used for arrival.

Before leaving, families must check in with their child's teacher or a staff member to ensure a smooth and supervised transition at pick-up.

If you have trouble signing out due to Wi-Fi or technical issues, please notify a staff member immediately so assistance can be provided.

Thank you for helping us maintain accurate attendance records and a safe dismissal process.

Change in Pick-Up Person

For the safety of all children, families must notify Academy in advance if someone other than a parent or legal guardian will be picking up their child.

Children will be released only to parents, legal guardians, or individuals who are authorized in advance on the child's Emergency Form and within the Family Communication App. Families are responsible for keeping authorized pick-up information current. Requests to add or update authorized individuals must be submitted through the Family Communication App.

In situations involving custody agreements or court orders, Academy must have a copy of the current legal documentation on file to enforce any pick-up or contact restrictions. In the absence of court documentation, Academy is required to recognize both parents as having equal access.

At departure, families and authorized pick-up persons must check in with classroom staff and complete the required sign-out process. For safety purposes, Academy staff will request a government-issued photo ID from any individual who is not personally known to staff before releasing a child.

For Parents of Students Enrolled in our Before & After School Programs

Academy staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for each child throughout the day. Parents and guardians are responsible for signing their child in at morning drop-off and signing their child out at afternoon pick-up using the Family Communication app.

For school-age children, Academy staff are responsible for signing students out when they are dismissed to school in the morning and signing them back in upon arrival from school in the afternoon.

Each afternoon, staff verify attendance and follow up on any child who does not report to the program as expected. Parents are asked to notify the Center Director in advance of planned absences, including vacations, medical appointments, or other reasons.

Written parental permission is required for a child to be released from Academy's school-age program to attend any extracurricular activity. Parents must complete Academy's Extracurricular Activity Release Form, which must include the name of the activity, dates, and times the program meets, the location of the activity, and whether the child will return to Academy following the activity.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that the instructor or responsible adult for the extracurricular activity signs the child out of Academy's school-age program and for returning the child to Academy, at which time the child must be signed back in. For safety reasons, school-age students are not permitted to sign themselves in or out of the before- and after-care program.

Absences, Sick Days & Vacations

Regular attendance supports children's learning, routine, and sense of belonging. Accurate attendance records are also required for all children enrolled in Academy's child care programs.

Families are asked to notify the center in advance when a child will be absent due to an appointment or vacation. If a child is ill, families should notify Academy as soon as possible. All absence notifications should be sent directly to the child's teacher through the Family Communication App.

Health Requirements for Return After Illness (3+ Days)

For health and safety reasons, a child who has been absent for three or more consecutive days due to illness may not be readmitted until Academy receives written clearance from the child's health care provider confirming that the child is able to return to a regular schedule.

Thank you for partnering with us to support children's well-being and consistent participation.

Rest Time

All children participate in a daily quiet rest period. Children are not required to sleep; however, after a busy and engaging morning, many toddlers and preschool-aged

children choose to rest or nap when provided with a calm, comfortable environment. Children who do not fall asleep after a reasonable rest period are offered quiet, age-appropriate activities.

Academy provides cots or mats for children during rest time, which are regularly cleaned and disinfected to maintain a safe, clean, and healthy environment. Parents are responsible for providing appropriate linens for their child and ensuring that these items are taken home at the end of each week for laundering and returned clean for the following week.

Children enrolled in the Pre-K Grant Program participate in a rest or quiet enrichment period that does not exceed one hour per day. During this time, children may rest on their mats or engage in small-group or enrichment activities with a teacher.

Required teacher-to-child ratios are always maintained during rest periods. Children are continuously supervised by staff through direct sight and sound. Academy does not use mirrors, video devices, or sound monitors as substitutes for in-person supervision.

Classroom Schedule

Each classroom follows a developmentally appropriate daily schedule designed to meet the needs of the children in that group. While schedules vary by age and program, all classrooms align with the MSDE instructional day of 6.5 hours and include a rest or quiet enrichment period in the early afternoon.

Although every part of the day supports children's growth, families are encouraged to schedule appointments outside of core instructional hours whenever possible. Core learning experiences include small- and large-group activities, learning centers, and circle time, which are essential to children's development and classroom community.

Teachers thoughtfully plan activities that reflect young children's attention spans—providing experiences that are engaging and appropriately challenging without becoming overwhelming. Classroom schedules outline approximate times for daily activities. Consistent routines help children feel secure, while built-in flexibility allows teachers to respond to individual needs and interests throughout the day.

Classroom Activities

Teachers plan developmentally appropriate learning center activities on a weekly basis, guided by curriculum goals and the needs of the children in their classroom. Planning is intentionally responsive, culturally aware, and designed to support a range of learning styles and developmental levels. Activities are flexible and may be adapted to meet individual needs while providing appropriate challenges that promote skill development.

Classrooms are organized into clearly defined learning centers or interest areas. Children are encouraged to explore these centers throughout the day, supporting choice, independence, and engagement. Through hands-on experiences, children develop social-emotional, cognitive, language, and physical skills.
Learning centers may include:

- Dramatic Play
- Writing
- Blocks
- Science
- Math and Manipulatives
- Library
- Art
- Technology
- Peace Place / Calming Corner

Learning Experiences

Academy enriches its curriculum by incorporating meaningful learning experiences that connect children to their community and the families we serve. Teachers thoughtfully integrate community resources and family participation to expand classroom learning through hands-on, real-world experiences.

In-house learning experiences may include cultural presentations led by community members or families, visits or demonstrations by community helpers, and age-appropriate scientific investigations. These experiences support curiosity, cultural awareness, and deeper understanding while complementing classroom instruction.

Screen Time Policy

Academy uses screen-based activities sparingly and intentionally to support learning and physical development. When used, tablets, computers, videos, or digital media are selected to enhance curriculum objectives and are always supervised by staff. Academy maintains posted guidelines for appropriate computer and internet use to ensure children's safety.

Screen Time Guidelines

- **Infants and Toddlers (2–35 months):**
  No screen time is permitted.
- **Preschool and Pre-K (Age 3 and older):**
  Screen time is limited to **no more than 30 minutes per week** and is used only for educational or physical activity purposes.
- **School-Age Program:**
  Computer use is limited to 15-minute increments unless additional time is required to complete homework assignments.

Teachers carefully review and select all digital content to ensure it is developmentally appropriate and related to classroom learning. Families will be informed when screen media is used as part of the program.

Playground and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of Academy's daily program. Children go outside each day when weather conditions permit. When outdoor play is not possible, teachers provide safe and engaging indoor activities that allow children to remain active.

Academy follows the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care Weather Watch Chart when determining whether outdoor play is appropriate. Decisions are based on temperature, wind chill, heat index, and other weather conditions to ensure children's health and safety.

Families are asked to dress children appropriately for outdoor play each day, including weather-appropriate clothing and footwear. During colder months, this may include coats, hats, gloves, and warm layers; during warmer months, lightweight clothing and sun protection are recommended.

Academy's playgrounds and outdoor materials are designed to promote active play, exploration, and physical development. Teachers intentionally plan outdoor experiences that support a range of skills, including balance and coordination, climbing, running, jumping, throwing, kicking, and pedaling. These activities help children build strength, confidence, and healthy habits while enjoying fresh air and movement.

Air Quality

Academy closely monitors air quality conditions and makes decisions using the Child Care Weather Watch Chart developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Weather Service.

When air quality is rated Code Yellow, outdoor play time may be reduced. When conditions reach Code Red, children will remain indoors, and gross motor activities will be provided inside to support continued movement and physical activity.

When conditions are safe, children typically use the playground at least twice daily. All decisions are made with children's health and safety as the top priority.

Meals

General Mealtimes

Academy provides breakfast snacks, milk with lunch, and afternoon snacks each day for children two years of age and older. Weekly menus and scheduled mealtimes are posted on the Parent Information Board and are also available upon request through the Family Communication App.

All meals and snacks are prepared and served in accordance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) / USDA guidelines for children ages two and older. Lunch includes milk, one protein, one grain, and two fruits and/or vegetables. Breakfast and snacks include a grain and fruit or vegetable.

Mealtimes at Academy are viewed as important learning and social experiences. Children and staff eat together and engage in positive conversation. Staff encourage children to explore new foods in a supportive manner. Children are never forced to eat, bribed, or pressured, and food is not used as a reward or punishment.

Families are responsible for providing healthy, balanced meals from home when required. To support healthy eating habits, soda and candy are not permitted. *Gummy vitamins, supplements, and medications may not be packed in a child's lunch or snack and must be administered in accordance with Academy's Medication Policy.*

To support a consistent and inclusive mealtime environment, fast food meals provided by families must be eaten off-site and may not be brought into classrooms or shared spaces. Academy provides nutritious morning and afternoon snacks, and snacks from home are not permitted unless required to accommodate a documented food allergy or medical need.

Special Dietary Needs

(Academy does not intentionally stock or serve foods that contain nut ingredients.)

Academy is committed to supporting children with special dietary needs while maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all children. To help reduce the risk of allergic reactions in the classroom, Academy follows an "only-from-home" policy for children with documented food allergies. Under this policy, families are responsible for providing all meals and snacks from home for their child.

Children with food allergies must have a complete Allergy and Anaphylaxis Medication Administration Authorization Plan on file at the center prior to attendance. Families may also be asked to provide a supply of non-perishable, allergy-safe snacks to be kept in the classroom for occasions when special treats are offered.

For children with documented disabilities who have special feeding needs, Academy staff may maintain a daily record of the type and quantity of food consumed. This information will be shared with families to support ongoing communication and care planning.

Academy works collaboratively with families to ensure children's nutritional and medical needs are met while adhering to health, safety, and licensing requirements.

Infant & Toddler Mealtimes

Nutritious, safe feeding practices are essential for infants' and toddlers' growth and development. For children ages 2 months to 2 years, families are responsible for providing all food, formula, and/or breast milk.

Bottle & Food Preparation

- Bottles and food containers are never heated in a microwave. When warming is necessary, bottles are warmed using warm water only.
- Families must provide prepared, single-serving bottles with clean nipples for each feeding.

Each bottle must be clearly labeled with:

- Child's first and last name
- Date and time the bottle was prepared.
- Contents (formula or breast milk)
- Number of ounces

Only single-use bottles and nipples may be used per feeding. For example, three feedings require three separate bottles with clean nipples. Bottles with disposable liners are permitted; however, liners and nipples must be changed for each feeding.

Cups, Utensils & Serving Practices

- Sippy cups are for single use only and may not be rinsed and reused. A separate sippy cup is required for each milk serving.
- For children under two years of age, plastic utensils and Styrofoam containers are not permitted due to choking hazards.
- Families must provide non-disposable, child-appropriate utensils daily for each snack or meal.

Food Safety & Storage

- Once a child has eaten from a container, sippy cup, or baby food jar, the remaining food may not be refrigerated or reused.
- For baby food jars, staff will transfer the initial serving into a separate container. Only the final serving may be offered directly from the jar. All opened, perishable food, formula, and breast milk are discarded daily.
- Only unopened, non-perishable, commercially packaged food may be sent home in a child's lunch container.

Food is disposed of after each meal unless a parent submits a written request to view leftovers at dismissal. All opened food is considered contaminated after one hour and will be discarded according to policy.

These procedures help ensure safe feeding practices and compliance with health and licensing requirements. Academy appreciates families' partnership in supporting infant and toddler nutrition and safety.

Breastmilk, Formula & Bottles / Sippy Cups

To ensure safe feeding practices, families must provide breast milk and formula fully prepared and ready to serve. Center staff are not permitted to pour from breast milk storage bags, mix formula bottles, or add cereal to bottles. Breast milk must be pre-portioned into individual bottles, and formula must arrive premixed in bottles. All bottles must be clearly labeled in accordance with Academy requirements.

Bottles and sippy cups may not be left at the center overnight. Any remaining contents will be discarded at the end of the day.

For health and safety reasons:

- Children will not be laid down to rest with a bottle or sippy cup.
- Bottles and sippy cups will not be propped.
- Children may not walk around the classroom with a bottle or sippy cup.

Academy works collaboratively with families to support healthy feeding development. Once families and teachers agree that a child is developmentally prepared, they will support the child in moving on to drinking from an open cup.

Breastfeeding Support

Academy supports families in their infant feeding choices, including breastfeeding. Families are welcome to breastfeed on-site, and Academy maintains an open-door approach to support this process.

Academy employs trained staff who have successfully completed the state-regulated breastfeeding course and are prepared to support families and provide appropriate resources. A quiet, private, and comfortable space is available on-site for breastfeeding or pumping.

Staff work collaboratively with families by listening respectfully to parents' feeding goals, whether breastfeeding, providing expressed breast milk, or using formula. Academy encourages the involvement of fathers, partners, and other caregivers in discussions and decisions related to an infant's care and feeding. Resources and guidance are available to help families develop feeding plans that align with their needs, preferences, and beliefs.

Personal Belongings

All items brought from home must be clearly labeled with the child's name. Academy is not responsible for lost or damaged belongings. Each child is assigned a cubby or hook for personal items; families should check cubbies daily.

Clothing & Shoes

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing suitable for active play. Please provide two complete sets of extra clothes, including socks, and an extra sweater or sweatshirt. Dress children in weather-appropriate layers, including warm outerwear in colder months and sun-protective clothing in warmer months.

Children must wear closed-toe, closed-heeled shoes with rubber soles. Flip-flops, clogs, Crocs, cowboy boots, and slick-soled shoes are not recommended due to safety concerns. Academy is not responsible for clothing that becomes stained or worn during normal activities.

Diapers & Wipes

Families of children in diapers or toilet training must provide an ongoing supply of diapers, wipes, and extra clothing.

Belongings from Home

Academy provides toys and materials for daily learning. Comfort items (such as a blanket or soft toy) may be used during rest time. Other personal toys should remain at home unless requested by a teacher. Toy weapons are not permitted.

Personal or school-issued electronic devices (except assistive communication devices) must be turned off and stored during the school day. School-age students may use school-issued devices only during designated homework time.

The School Year

Calendar

Families receive an annual Academy calendar at the time of enrollment. The official Academy calendar is also located in Appendix B of this handbook. Academy observes most federal holidays and designates specific days each year for staff professional development. Academy reserves the right to adjust the calendar as needed, and families will be notified of significant changes. Tuition and fees are not prorated for absences due to illness, holidays, inclement weather, or emergency closures.

Academy is open on MCPS early release days, delayed openings, non-instructional days, most MCPS professional development days, and on select inclement weather days. Academy is closed on MCPS holidays and systemwide closure days when MCPS schools and central offices are closed.

Academy operates within facilities leased from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and participates in the Montgomery County Child Care in Public Space (CCIPS) and Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) programs. Because our programs are located on MCPS campuses, Academy's operating schedule may be impacted by MCPS-related closures or schedule adjustments **(Appendix C)**.

Inclement Weather Days

Academy's operating status during inclement weather is determined primarily by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), MCPS Central Administrative Offices, Montgomery County Government (CUPF), and, when applicable, Federal Government closures. Academy may also close or adjust hours when conditions are deemed unsafe.

- If MCPS Central Administrative Offices or the Federal Government are closed, Academy is closed.
- When MCPS schools are closed or delayed but administrative offices are open, Academy may open on a delayed schedule for child care only.
- Breakfast is not served on delayed opening days, and families must provide lunch.
- If MCPS closes early, Academy will close early, or sooner if conditions require.

Families will be notified of schedule changes through the Family Communication App.

The full Inclement Weather & Emergency Closings Policy is in **Appendix D** of this handbook.

Pets and Animals

Academy complies with all Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care (OCC) licensing requirements regarding pets and animals in child care settings. Regular classroom pets are limited to fish aquariums.

Animals may be included occasionally as part of planned educational activities or curriculum experiences. In such cases, appropriate documentation (including current rabies certification, when applicable) is required, and student allergies and health considerations are reviewed in advance. Academy may also partner with professional organizations that provide animal education programs or exhibits. Families will be notified prior to these special events.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals that are individually trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability are permitted. Emotional support animals, therapy animals, comfort animals, or pets that are not trained service animals are not considered service animals under the ADA and are not permitted.

Except for ADA-defined service animals, parents, guardians, family members, and visitors may not bring animals into any Academy center.

Celebrations & Birthdays

Celebrations and birthdays are special opportunities to build community and joy in the classroom. Academy is happy to recognize these moments while prioritizing children's health and safety.

To support a safe and inclusive environment, birthday celebrations at school must follow Academy's healthy treats guidelines. Families are permitted to supply a small, commercially packaged snack that does not contain nuts, and must ensure that an ingredient label is visible for staff to review for potential allergens. Candy, gum, and foods that present a choking risk are not permitted.

Families are encouraged to choose nutritious options such as whole-grain snacks, fresh fruit, vegetables, yogurt, or fruit-based treats. Please coordinate with your child's teacher in advance and provide enough for all children in the classroom.

Families may also choose a non-food celebration option, such as donating a book or puzzle to the classroom, providing a special activity, or participating in a teacher-led celebration. Non-food celebrations are welcomed and encouraged.

Movies and Special Events

Occasionally, classrooms may schedule a "fun" movie experience. Academy permits the viewing of G-rated movies for limited periods, and alternative activities are always available for children who choose not to participate. For school-age students, an age-appropriate PG-rated movie may be shown only with written parental permission.

Academy holds the appropriate copyright license for all media shown.

Communication & Family Involvement

Family Involvement

Academy believes children thrive when families and the center work together as partners. We maintain an open-door policy, welcoming parents, and guardians of currently enrolled students to visit at any time and engage in their child's learning experience.

Open, respectful communication is a priority at Academy. Families are encouraged to connect with teachers and administrators through their preferred methods, including phone calls, written communication, email, or in-person meetings. Information is shared through multiple channels, including conversations with staff, the Family Communication App, newsletters, flyers, family bulletin boards, notes, phone calls, conferences, and email.

Academy also offers opportunities for families to be actively involved and to connect with the school community. Volunteering is always welcome, and families are invited to share their time, talents, and interests with the classroom. Opportunities may include reading a favorite book, playing an instrument, or sharing a special skill or hobby with the children.

Additional family involvement opportunities include:

- Annual Family Picnic
- Children's Performances
- Parent/Teacher Exchange (PTeX)
- Field Trip Chaperones

Families are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher or Center Director to learn more about ways to participate.

Program Evaluation and Family Feedback

Academy is committed to continuous improvement and regularly evaluates its programs, services, and staffing practices to ensure high-quality care and education. Program evaluation includes administrative review, family feedback, and ongoing regulatory oversight.

To gather family input, Academy uses the NAEYC Family Questionnaire twice each year for our early childhood programs. For school-age programs, Academy uses the National AfterSchool Alliance Family Questionnaire, along with child interest surveys, to better understand student experiences and preferences.

Families will receive an email and/or a message through the Family Communication App (Child Pilot) with instructions for accessing the questionnaires, including the submission deadline. All survey results are reviewed by Academy leadership

and shared with families as part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.

Families are encouraged to share questions, suggestions, or concerns at any time by speaking with their child's teacher or the Center Director.

Home–School Communication

Academy uses a Family Communication App to support clear, timely communication between families and staff. In our Early Childhood programs, the app is used to share daily updates about children's care, activities, and learning, while in School-Age programs it is primarily used for attendance, schedule changes, and program announcements. Families are encouraged to use the app to notify staff of absences, schedule updates, or important information about their child. All communication is professional, child-focused, and managed in accordance with Academy's privacy and confidentiality policies.

Conferences

Family participation is encouraged and valued at Academy. Conferences are an important part of our ongoing communication and partnership with families and are designed to:

- Share meaningful information about a child's development and learning.
- Support individualized planning that reflects each child's family, culture, and community.
- Build on family strengths to promote growth and development.
- Document and monitor a child's progress over time.

Academy schedules three formal conferences each school year. While conferences are not mandatory, families are strongly encouraged to participate, including for our youngest students. Conferences provide families with the opportunity to better understand their child's progress and to collaborate with teachers on developmental goals. A written report highlighting each child's strengths and areas for growth is provided during these conferences.

Open communication is always welcomed. Families are encouraged to contact their child's teacher at any time with questions, concerns, or requests for updates. If concerns arise regarding a child's development, Academy staff are happy to collaborate with families and provide strategies, resources, or referrals to community programs when appropriate.

Custody Orders and Legal Documentation

Some families have legal custody or protection orders that specify pick-up, visitation, or contact restrictions. If such orders apply to your child, a current copy must be provided to Academy and kept on file. Academy will strictly follow court-ordered documentation on record and will release children only to individuals who are authorized on the child's Emergency Form and within the Family Communication App.

Custody information is treated as confidential and used solely to support the safety and well-being of the child. Families are responsible for notifying the Center Director promptly when custody orders are updated, modified, or expire.

Visitation and Parenting Time
Academy staff are not permitted to supervise visitation or parenting time, and visitation may not take place on Academy premises.

All enrollment, tuition, and financial arrangements are the responsibility of the parents or legal guardians. Academy does not mediate disputes between separated or divorced parents.

Foster Care

For children enrolled through the foster care system, Academy must have a copy of the current foster care placement documentation on file. Children will be released only to the authorized foster parent(s) or the child's assigned case worker.

Caseworkers must:

- Present government-issued photo identification
- Sign the child in and out on the visitor log.
- Provide written verification (email or letter) for any changes to authorized individuals or release instructions.

Family Support

While Academy's primary focus is providing high-quality early childhood education and before- and after-school programming, we recognize that families may occasionally need support beyond the classroom. Academy is committed to partnering with families and offering assistance when possible.
Support may include:

- Connecting families with community resources and services
- Assisting families in accessing emergency supports, such as food, clothing, housing, utilities, or counseling.
- Supporting families with successful school transitions
- Providing access to the Family Resource Lending Library

All requests for support are handled confidentially and respectfully, with information shared only as necessary to provide assistance. Families are encouraged to contact the Center Director if they need support or would like additional information about available resources.

Family's Preferred Language for Communication

Academy values the diverse languages and cultures of the families we serve and is committed to ensuring that all families can fully understand information, communicate comfortably, and actively participate in their child's education.
Families are encouraged to let us know their preferred language for communication, including if it is a language other than English. When requested and whenever possible,

Academy will work with families to provide information and support in the language with which they are most comfortable.

Confidentiality Policy

Academy is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of children and families. In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state laws, Academy does not disclose or discuss information about a child or family without written parental or guardian consent, except as permitted or required by law.

Permitted Disclosures Without Written Consent

Academy may disclose information without written permission in the following circumstances, as allowed under FERPA and related regulations:

- To Academy staff who have a legitimate educational interest in the information
- To appropriate elementary school officials for school-age students, when necessary to support health, safety, or educational continuity
- To public agency representatives in the event of a health or safety emergency
- To authorized government officials acting within the scope of their authority
- In response to a judicial order or subpoena, as required by law.
- To accrediting organizations conducting official functions
- To financial aid personnel, when necessary to determine eligibility, amount, or conditions of financial aid

Access to Student Records

Parents and legal guardians may request copies of their child's records in writing. Student records are maintained in a secure location and are accessible only to authorized individuals. Records are retained for two years after a student leaves Academy, after which they are securely destroyed.

Additional copies of records may be requested for a fee of $1.50 per page.

Photographs and Videos

Academy may photograph or record program activities for educational, training, or informational purposes, including use in Academy publications, on its website, and on social media. All use will follow Academy's permissions and policies. Families who do not want their child photographed or recorded must notify Academy in writing.

Student Observations and Training

From time to time, students in early childhood education programs at accredited institutions, such as the University of Maryland, may be placed at Academy for supervised observation and training. All participating students must comply with Academy's confidentiality and privacy requirements.

Tuition and Financial Policies

Academy recognizes that your child's early care and education are an important investment. Timely payment of tuition allows Academy to maintain a highly qualified teaching staff and provide a positive, stable learning environment. Current tuition rates are available from the Center Director.

Tuition is due on or before the first day of each month, in accordance with your Enrollment Agreement. Tuition rates are reviewed annually, and tuition increases occur each year on July 1, typically reflecting cost-of-living adjustments.

Enrollment in either the 12-month or 10-month (school-year) program represents a commitment for the full program term. Staffing, budgeting, and classroom planning are based on enrollment commitments.

Closures and Emergencies

Academy may be required to close temporarily or for an extended period due to communicable disease, staffing limitations, or other circumstances beyond its control. Tuition refunds or credits are not provided during such closures. Academy also reserves the right to close individual classrooms if adequate staffing cannot be maintained due to illness or public health concerns.

If closure is mandated by the State of Maryland, MSDE, MSDE Office of Child Care, MCPS, or Montgomery County Government, the Enrollment Agreement remains fully in effect.

Early Childhood & 12-Month Programs

(July 1 – June 30)

- Programs operate from July 1 through June 30.
- A $500 security deposit is required at the time the Enrollment Agreement is signed and is applied to the final month of attendance.
- Tuition is due on the first of each month.
- Tuition, admission fees, and material fees are non-refundable.
- The security deposit is refundable only if:
    - The child attends the program for at least one full month.
    - The Center Director receives 30 days' written notice of withdrawal.
    - The account has no outstanding balance.
- Mid-month withdrawals are not permitted.

School-Age & 10-Month Programs

(School Year Program – Follows MCPS Calendar)

- Tuition is calculated as an annual fee, based on the number of weeks in the school year, and divided into ten equal installments.
- Tuition installments are non-refundable.
- The first installment is due August 1 and is applied to the final month of attendance.

- Remaining installments are due on or before the first business day of each month through May.
- Enrollment reserves space for the full school year in alignment with the MCPS calendar.
- Applications received after August 1 are adjusted so that all tuition payments are completed by May 1.

Trips & Dips Summer Program

Academy's Trips & Dips Summer Program is offered in one-week sessions during the summer months for children entering Kindergarten through fifth grade in the fall. Tuition is calculated on a weekly basis, and advance payment is required for all sessions.

Join us for a summer of exploration and adventure, featuring exciting weekly themes, weekly off-site field trips, and on-site enrichment experiences. Each week concludes with a culminating family engagement event that celebrates children's learning and experiences.

Late Pick-Up

Timely pick-up is essential for your child's safety and for staff scheduling. A late pick-up fee of $1 per minute will be assessed for each minute a child is picked up after their scheduled dismissal time, including on inclement weather or emergency closing days. If a fourth late pick-up occurs, the fee increases to $2 per minute.

Late pick-up fees are payable in cash directly to the staff member(s) who remain with the child and must be paid before the child may return to the classroom.

If Academy has not heard from a child's parent or guardian within 30 minutes after closing, and emergency contacts are unreachable, Academy is required to contact the Montgomery County Police (non-emergency) at (301) 279-8000 to ensure the child's safety.

Repeated late pick-ups disrupt program operations. If a child is dropped off early or picked up late three times beyond their confirmed schedule, tuition will be automatically adjusted to the next tuition option. Families may be asked to secure alternate child care if a child is picked up late on four occasions.

Drop-In Care

Drop-in care is available to currently enrolled children on an occasional, space-available basis for an additional fee. A minimum of 24 hours' advance notice is required, and all drop-in requests must be approved by the Center Director.

Approval is based on staffing availability and required teacher-to-child ratios, in accordance with licensing regulations. Families should contact the Center Director for current rates, availability, and scheduling.

Change in Program

To request a change in program, parents must complete and submit a new application to the Program Director. Requests to change a child's program enrollment are subject to approval and availability. Only program increases will be accepted prior to October 1. Mid-month changes are not permitted.
All other program change requests - whether increases or decrease - will take effect on the first of the month. A 30-day written notice is required for all 12-month programs, and a 15-day written notice is required for school-age programs.

Increase in Service

Requests for an increase in service require the submission of a new application and are subject to approval. Upon approval, Academy will issue a revised Enrollment Agreement or an addendum outlining the updated program details and any associated tuition adjustments.

Decrease in Service

Requests for a decrease in service must receive prior approval from Academy's Business Office. Upon approval, families are required to submit a new application and remit a $100 program change fee. Academy will issue a revised Enrollment Agreement or an addendum to document the approved change.

All fees paid prior to an approved reduction in service are non-refundable. Any special payment arrangements, tuition discounts, financial assistance, or child care subsidies are subject to review and may be modified or discontinued because of the change.

Field Trips

Academy believes that learning is enriched through opportunities for exploration beyond the classroom. Field trips are intentionally planned to support classroom curriculum, children's developmental levels, and cultural backgrounds. Preschool and Pre-K programs typically participate in an average of two field trips per year.

All field trips are preplanned with appropriate safety and emergency procedures in place. Academy staff always prioritize student safety and prepare children through classroom discussions before and after each trip to help set expectations and reinforce learning outcomes. Transportation fees are charged per child, with admission costs billed separately. Advance reservations are required, and all field trip fees are non-refundable.

Property Damage

Academy uses developmentally appropriate behavior guidance practices to help children learn how to care for materials and their environment. Children are taught expectations for the safe and respectful use of equipment and property.

When damage occurs, Academy considers the child's age, developmental level, and intent. If damage or loss results from behavior that is not consistent with typical developmental exploration and occurs despite appropriate guidance and support, families will be notified and may be responsible for the cost of repair or replacement.

Academy works in partnership with families to support children in developing responsibility, critical thinking skills, and respect for shared materials.

Payment Methods

Academy accepts tuition payments through direct ACH bank transfer or bank check, as selected on the Enrollment Agreement. Academy is committed to protecting your financial information. Banking details are processed through secure, encrypted systems, and Academy does not store confidential banking information. No Academy staff or external parties have access to family banking records.

All families are required to submit banking information with their completed Enrollment Agreement. Parents and guardians hold primary responsibility for payment of services, regardless of whether tuition is paid directly by the family, an employer, or through a child care subsidy or voucher program.

In limited circumstances, Academy may accept payments through PayPal or Venmo. These payment methods may be subject to additional processing fees.

Tuition Due Dates, Returned Payments & Late Fees

Tuition is due on the first day of each month. As a non-profit organization, Academy strives to be responsive to family needs while also maintaining the financial stability required to support high-quality programming.

If a payment is returned, declined, or rejected due to insufficient funds, incorrect banking information, or ACH processing failure, families will be notified and are responsible for submitting payment promptly. Any bank or processing fees incurred by Academy because of a returned payment will be charged to the family, and repeated payment failures may result in required changes to payment method or additional administrative action.

Accounts that are 15 days past due, or accounts with repeated late or failed payments, may be subject to late fees or termination of services. A $50 late fee will be assessed on any account not paid in full by the 15th of the month unless prior payment arrangements have been approved.

Families experiencing financial challenges are encouraged to contact the Accounting Department in advance to discuss a tuition payment plan. Requests for exceptions must be approved prior to the due date.

Upon enrollment, all families are required to sign an acknowledgment confirming that they have read, understand, and agree to comply with Academy's tuition and payment policies.

Temporary Withdrawal or Vacations

Academy is unable to hold a child's space during periods of temporary withdrawal for vacations or other personal reasons. Tuition remains due during all absences, including vacations. Families who choose not to continue tuition payments must formally

withdraw their child from the program in accordance with Academy's withdrawal policy.

Tuition payment receipts may be requested by contacting the Accounting Department at the Main Office.

Child Care Subsidy and Fee Assistance Programs

Academy accepts child care subsidy vouchers and/or fee assistance from the following agencies:

- **Montgomery County Working Parents Assistance Program (WPA)**
- **Maryland Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP)**
- **Federal Employees Education and Assistance Fund (FEEA)**
- **Military Child Care Fee Assistance Program** through Child Care Aware of America (CCAOA)
- **Navy Child/Youth Program (CYP)**

Families are responsible for maintaining active eligibility and meeting all program requirements.

Enrollment Process for Families Using or Applying for CCSP (Child Care Scholarship Program)

Families with an Active CCSP Voucher at Enrollment

- A $30 non-refundable Admissions Fee is due with the application.
- The Annual Materials Fee is waived.
- Families must complete the CCSP Co-Payment Determination Form and submit it with their voucher.
    - Co-payments are determined by the number of units of care on the voucher:
        - 1 unit = $4 per month
        - 2 units = $8 per month
        - 3 units = $12 per month (maximum monthly co-payment)
- The voucher must be submitted to the Center Director to complete Academy's weekly tuition rate section.

Families Applying for CCSP (Voucher Not Yet Approved)

- Families must provide proof that they have applied for CCSP. Acceptable documentation includes:
    - CCS application confirmation or approval letter
    - Screenshot of submitted application
    - Email from CCS confirming receipt of the application.
- A $30 non-refundable Admissions Fee and $150 non-refundable Security Deposit is required for enrollment.
- The Annual Materials Fee will be waived once the voucher is approved.
- Families must complete the CCSP Co-Payment Determination Form.

- The voucher must be submitted to the Center Director to complete Academy's weekly tuition rate section.
- Once Academy completes the voucher, families must submit all required documents to: **CCSScholarships@maryland.gov**

Important CCSP Responsibilities & Deadlines

- Families must promptly verify attendance in the Child Care Scholarship Portal. Failure to validate attendance may result in families being billed directly by Academy for services received.
- If Academy does not receive an approved voucher within one month of enrollment, families will be responsible for any outstanding balance and the full monthly tuition going forward.
- If a family does not receive an approval notice or request for additional information within 10 days of submitting a voucher, families are strongly encouraged to:
    - Follow up directly with CCSP, and
    - Submit an inquiry through the CCSP portal to confirm application status.

Due to delays in notification from CCSP, failure to follow up may result in voucher denial or delayed payments.

Annual Fees

Admissions fees are billed per family, assessed annually at the time the Enrollment Agreement is signed, and is non-refundable.

Returned Checks

A $30 service charge will be assessed for any returned check. In the event of a returned payment, a money order or cashier's check will be required immediately, and applicable late fees may apply. Repeated returned payments may result in additional administrative action, including termination of services.

Families with a history of unpaid returned checks will be required to submit all future payments in the form of a money order or cashier's check.

Family Discounts

Families with more than one child enrolled full-time may be eligible for a sibling discount, which is applied to the older child's tuition. Only one discount may be applied per family.

Sibling discounts do not apply to children enrolled in grant-funded programs, tuition assistance programs, or child care subsidy programs, including but not limited to CCSP, WPA, FEEA, or military fee assistance programs.

Health & Safety

Safety & Behavior Guidance Policy

At Academy, safety always comes first. Our highest priority is creating a nurturing, secure environment where children feel protected, respected, and supported every day. Families can feel confident knowing their children are cared for with intention, professionalism, and compassion.

Our Philosophy on Behavior Guidance

Children's social-emotional development is essential to healthy growth and school readiness. Academy uses developmentally appropriate, positive behavior guidance to help children learn self-regulation, problem-solving, and respectful interactions.

Our approach focuses on teaching, not punishment. Through responsive relationships and consistent guidance, children learn to make safe and positive choices while building confidence and self-esteem. Consistency between home and school is essential, and we value strong partnerships with families to support children's success.

Positive Guidance Strategies

Academy staff use proactive strategies that encourage cooperation and positive behavior, including:

- Setting clear, realistic, and developmentally appropriate expectations.
- Consistently enforcing a small number of classroom rules (3–5) with known outcomes.
- Arranging classrooms to promote positive behavior and engagement.
- Maintaining predictable routines with a balance of teacher-guided and child-initiated activities.
- Teaching children to Stop, Think, and Make Good Choices.
- Using redirection to guide children from unsafe or unproductive behavior to appropriate alternatives.
- Ignoring minor, non-harmful attention-seeking behaviors when appropriate.
- Providing a Peace Place—a calm, cozy area where children may go to regain control and self-regulate.

Children are supported in recognizing when they need time to calm down. Once regulated, they are invited back into classroom activities with encouragement and guidance.

Time Away from Activity

Time away from activity is used only as a last resort and never for children under age three. It may be used briefly when a child has:

- Willfully harmed another person physically or emotionally.
- Endangered themselves by ignoring safety rules.
- Intentionally damaged Academy or another child's property

Time away from activity does not exceed one minute per year of age and is followed by a brief, supportive conversation with the teacher before the child returns to the group.

Ongoing Support & Intervention

If challenging behaviors persist:

- Academy will develop a behavior support plan in partnership with the family.
- Ongoing communication will occur between teachers, administration, and parents
- Outside resources or specialists may be consulted, when appropriate

If behavior continues to raise significant safety concerns despite intervention, Academy will conduct an individualized assessment and consider whether additional reasonable modifications or supports could address the concern. Academy may terminate enrollment when the behavior is not disability-related and termination is otherwise permitted under this Handbook and the Enrollment Agreement, or when the child poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications. Academy will provide reasonable notice unless immediate action is necessary to address an imminent safety risk.

Prohibited Practices

Corporal punishment is never used at Academy.

Our Commitment to the Whole Child

- **Our Environment:** Engaging materials, intentional schedules, and active learning reduce frustration and promote success.
- **Our Teachers:** Staff build trusting relationships, model calm behavior, help children name emotions, and use social stories to teach social skills.
- **Our Families:** We partner with families to ensure consistent guidance between home and school and to connect families with resources when needed.

Academy's approach is grounded in research-based best practices in early childhood education and social-emotional development.

Biting

Biting is a common and developmentally typical behavior in young children, particularly during infancy and toddlerhood. Children may bite for many reasons, including teething, sensory exploration, seeking attention, or expressing strong emotions such as frustration, anger, or fear. Because young children are still developing language and self-regulation skills, they may bite when they are unable to communicate their needs effectively.

Biting occurs most frequently between 12 and 24 months of age and typically decreases as children develop stronger communication and coping skills. Biting beyond approximately 2½ to 3 years of age is less common and may require additional support.

Academy's Response to Biting

Academy addresses biting using developmentally appropriate behavior guidance strategies. Staff closely supervise children, intervene promptly, and teach alternative ways to communicate feelings and needs. We work to identify patterns or triggers and adjust the environment and routines to reduce occurrences.

Prevention Strategies

To reduce the likelihood of biting, Academy staff may:

- Closely observe children to identify triggers or patterns.
- Maintain appropriate teacher-to-child ratios and active supervision.
- Support children in developing language and communication skills.
- Teach and model safe ways to express emotions (e.g., using words, gestures, or asking for help).
- Provide teething-safe materials and sensory activities when appropriate.
- Adjust classroom routines or environments to minimize frustration.
- Use redirection and positive reinforcement to guide behavior.

Ongoing Support & Family Partnership

For repeated biting incidents, particularly with preschool-aged children, Academy may request a parent–teacher conference. The purpose of this meeting is to partner with families to better understand what may be contributing to the behavior and to develop a collaborative plan of support, consistent with Academy's Behavior Guidance Policy.

Communication with Families

When a biting incident occurs:

- Families of both the child who bit and the child who was bitten will receive an Incident/Accident Report
- Reports maintain the confidentiality of all children involved.
- Academy will communicate openly with families while respecting privacy.

Academy is committed to supporting children as they develop healthy communication and self-regulation skills and to working in partnership with families to promote a safe and caring environment for all children.

Physical Contact Policy

Academy's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children and staff. We encourage appropriate physical contact with children and staff and prohibit inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff towards children in our programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Academy's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

Appropriate Physical Interactions

- Side Hugs
- Shoulder-to-shoulder "temple" hugs

- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes, high fives
- Verbal Praise
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate
- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms.
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands with young children when assistance is necessary.

Inappropriate Physical Interactions

- Full frontal hugs
- Kisses
- Showing affection in isolated space.
- Lap sitting
- Wrestling
- Piggy back rides
- Tickling
- Allowing a child to cling to a staff member. or volunteers leg and/or arm.
- Any type of massage
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Compliments about physique or body development
- Bottom touching, chest, or genital areas

Child Protection and Abuse Prevention Policy

Academy provides the highest quality childcare services available, and we are committed to creating a safe, nurturing, and empowering environment for children, staff, and families. Academy will not tolerate any form of abuse/molestation. Any confirmed abuse will result in immediate termination. Any reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with children or staff or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Academy will fully cooperate with the authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

The following are types of abuse that will not be tolerated at Academy:

- Physical abuse is an injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a client.
- Sexual abuse is any abuse of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult of between two children. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other client.
- Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs or the failure to protect a child from harm.

- Verbal Abuse includes language that is degrading or threatening, and includes verbal interactions such as name calling, insults, cursing, derogatory remarks, belittling, and shaming.

Annual Abuse Prevention Training for Academy Employees

All Academy employees are mandated reporters as required by state and federal law, as well as Academy policy. Academy recognizes the importance of providing training and professional development activities that relate to our employee roles and responsibilities. Annual abuse prevention training serves as a refresher for previously learned concepts and provides additional knowledge and skills to enhance the ability of employees to protect children. All employees are responsible for annually completing training on the following concepts:

- Academy's up-to-date policies related to preventing and responding to abuse.
- How to maintain appropriate boundaries with children; and
- Additional topics that contribute to employee skills and knowledge related to abuse prevention. These may vary according to an employee's role within the organization [Teachers/aides, Directors, Administrative Team Members, and Board Members].

Bully-Free School

Academy is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all children. Bullying of any kind is not tolerated. Every child has the right to feel valued, supported, and safe, and Academy staff take all concerns seriously.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated behavior intended to hurt, intimidate, exclude, or control another person. It may involve an imbalance of power and can be verbal, physical, relational, or digital in nature. Bullying may include implied or explicit threats and ongoing actions that make a child feel unsafe or unwelcome.

Bullying behaviors may take the following forms:

- Physical Bullying: Hitting, pushing, kicking, pinching, restraining, or other physical aggression
- Verbal Bullying: Name-calling, teasing, threats, or hurtful language
- Relational (Social) Bullying: Exclusion, gossip, friendship manipulation, or intimidating gestures
- Cyberbullying: Aggressive or harmful behavior through technology, including messages, images, posts, impersonation, or intentional online exclusion.

Academy's Approach to Prevention & Response

Academy takes a proactive, educational approach to preventing bullying. Staff work with children to establish clear expectations for kindness, respect, and inclusion.

Staff responsibilities include:

- Establishing clear classroom rules and expectations at the start of each year.
- Actively supervising and remaining alert to signs of bullying.
- Immediately intervening when bullying behavior is observed.

- Supporting the child who was targeted in a way that promotes dignity, safety, and emotional well-being.
- Teaching bystanders how to seek help or respond appropriately.
- Addressing bullying behavior with the child responsible and reinforcing Academy's expectations.

Family Communication & Follow-Up
Parents and guardians of all children involved will be notified. Academy will provide follow-up support and interventions as needed for both the child who was bullied and the child who engaged in bullying behavior.

Consequences
Consequences are developmentally appropriate and may include:
- **Minimum:** Removal from the situation, staff intervention, and parent notification or conference
- **Maximum:** Loss of social opportunities and/or dismissal from the program

Adults & Serious Concerns
- If a staff member engages in bullying behavior, Academy will follow its evaluation and disciplinary procedures, up to and including termination.
- If bullying behavior is suspected to involve an adult family member or associate, Academy will notify parents and may contact Child Protective Services (CPS), as required by law.

Academy is committed to working in partnership with families to promote positive relationships, empathy, and a culture where all children feel safe and respected.

Daily Health Checks & Illness Monitoring
In accordance with COMAR 13A.16.11 (Child Health and Safety) and MSDE Office of Child Care requirements, Academy staff conduct daily health checks for each child on arrival and dismissal. A health check consists of a brief visual observation to assess a child's general health and well-being, including appearance, behavior, breathing, skin, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

Throughout the day, staff continue to observe children for signs of illness or changes in condition. Midday health observations are conducted for children under five years of age, as required by regulation.

Families are essential partners in maintaining a healthy environment and are asked to share any information that may affect their child's health while in care, including changes in sleep, appetite, bowel movements or urination, mood, behavior, or any unusual events at home.

If a child shows signs or symptoms of illness during a health check or at any time during the day, Academy will follow its Illness Exclusion Policy. This may include temporarily separating the child from the group, contacting the family for pick-up, and requiring documentation from a health care provider before the child may return, when applicable.

These procedures help protect the health and safety of all children and staff and ensure compliance with state regulations.

Sick Child Policy

We ask for your partnership in helping keep our community healthy. Preventing the spread of illness protects not only your child, but also other children, families, and staff. Academy's Sick Child Policy is based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Maryland Department of Health, and the Montgomery County Health Officer, as well as MSDE Office of Child Care requirements.

Certain signs and symptoms may indicate the presence of a communicable illness. For the health and safety of everyone in our care, children who exhibit symptoms outlined in this policy must be excluded from the child care setting until they meet the criteria for return, as determined by health guidelines and Academy procedures.

A detailed list of signs and symptoms of illness, exclusion criteria, and return-to-care requirements is provided in the Sick Child Policy **Appendix E**. Families are encouraged to review this appendix carefully and to contact the Center Director with any questions.

Academy appreciates your cooperation in keeping sick children at home and notifying the center promptly when your child is ill. Together, we can maintain a safe and healthy learning environment for all.

Medication Administration Policy

(MSDE Office of Child Care / COMAR-Aligned)
Academy administers medication in strict compliance with Maryland law and MSDE Office of Child Care regulations, including COMAR 13A.16.11 (Child Health and Safety). The safety of children is our highest priority, and medications are administered only when all requirements are met.

General Requirements

Medication, whether prescription or non-prescription—may not be administered unless all the following conditions are met:

1. Written Parental Authorization
   A completed, signed, and dated Medication Administration Authorization Form provided by Academy must be on file before any medication is given.
2. Health Practitioner Approval
   A licensed health practitioner must approve the medication and dosage, as required by regulation.
3. Initial Dose at Home
   Prescription medication may not be administered unless the child has received at least one dose at home prior to coming to the center.

Prescription Medication Labeling

Prescription medication must be supplied in its original container and clearly labeled by the pharmacy or prescribing physician with:

- Child's full name
- Date of prescription
- Name of medication
- Dosage
- Administration schedule
- Route of administration
- Special instructions (if applicable, e.g., "take with food")
- Duration of prescription
- Expiration date

Non-Prescription & Topical Products

The following items may be applied without prior approval from a licensed health practitioner when supplied by the parent and documented appropriately:

- Diaper rash products
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

Medication must always be administered according to the most current written instructions on the medication label or from the licensed health practitioner.

Lip balm must be non-medicated and free of additives, dyes, or flavorings. Examples of acceptable products include Blistex, ChapStick, and Carmex (original only).

Documentation & Recordkeeping

- Each administration of prescription or non-prescription medication—including approved self-administration—must be documented in the child's record.
- Application of diaper rash products, sunscreen, or insect repellent must also be recorded.
- If a scheduled dose is not administered, the reason for omission must be documented.

Medication Storage

All medications must:

- Be labeled with the child's name, dosage, and expiration date.
- Be stored according to manufacturer, pharmacy, or physician instructions.
- Be kept inaccessible to children, but readily accessible to authorized staff.
- Be discarded according to EPA or Office of National Drug Control Policy guidelines or returned to the parent upon expiration or discontinuation.

Medication Handling & Transport

- Academy staff cannot accept medication without a completed Medication Administration Authorization Form.
- Medications may not be stored in children's backpacks or transferred between parents' homes through the center.

Emergency Medications

Emergency medications, including epinephrine auto-injectors, may be administered by trained staff according to the physician-completed Medication Authorization Form.

- Parents are responsible for training staff on the use of emergency medications.
- Only pre-measured doses (e.g., autoinjectors) may be administered.
- Academy staff are not health professionals and do not assess symptom progression prior to administering emergency medication.

Academy appreciates your partnership in helping us maintain a safe, healthy, and compliant environment for all children.

To ensure compliance with MSDE Office of Child Care regulations, families are required to review **Appendix F: What Families Should Not Send to School.** Items not permitted at school include unapproved medications, gummy vitamins or supplements, and medication sent in backpacks or lunch containers.

Cleaning & Sanitation

In accordance with COMAR 13A.16.11 (Child Health and Safety) and MSDE Office of Child Care requirements, Academy follows established procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting to reduce the spread of infectious disease and maintain a healthy learning environment.

Classrooms, equipment, toys, and frequently touched surfaces are cleaned and sanitized daily using approved, child-safe products. Toys and materials that become contaminated during use are promptly removed, then cleaned, sanitized, and air-dried before being returned to children. Surfaces and materials are sanitized at key points throughout the day, including arrival and departure, and as needed based on use.

Academy follows NAEYC best-practice guidance for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting schedules. Families may reference the NAEYC Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table for additional detail on recommended frequencies for specific surfaces and materials.

These practices support compliance with state regulations and help ensure a clean, safe environment for children, families, and staff.

Handwashing

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness and is an essential daily practice at Academy. Staff and children follow consistent hand-washing procedures throughout the day in accordance with MSDE Office of Child Care (OCC) and COMAR health and safety guidelines.

Handwashing Requirements for Staff

Staff are required to wash their hands:

- Upon arrival at the center
- Before and after preparing or serving food or snacks
- Before and after assisting children with toileting or diapering
- After handling items soiled with body fluids (including blood, saliva, urine, stool, or nasal/eye discharge)
- After caring for or supervising an ill child

- After using the restroom, wiping their nose, or attending to personal needs
- Before eating
- After outdoor play

Handwashing Requirements for Children

Children are supported and supervised in hand washing:

- Upon arrival at school
- After using the bathroom
- Before and after eating or handling food
- Before and after sensory activities
- After contact with a child who may be ill or with soiled materials
- After blowing or wiping their nose
- After outdoor play

Proper Handwashing Method

The required hand-washing procedure includes:

1. Wet hands with warm running water and apply soap.
2. Rub hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds, washing between fingers, the backs of hands, and wrists.
3. Rinse thoroughly under running water.
4. Dry hands completely using a clean paper towel.
5. Turn off the faucet using the paper towel to avoid recontamination.

These practices help protect the health of children, families, and staff and support a clean and safe learning environment.

Universal Precautions

Academy follows universal precautions to reduce the risk of transmission of bloodborne pathogens, including HIV, Hepatitis B, and other infectious agents. Universal precautions are infection-control practices used in child care and health settings that assume all blood and certain body fluids may be infectious, regardless of the source.

These precautions help protect both children and staff and are implemented consistently whenever there is potential exposure to blood or bodily fluids.

Universal Precaution Procedures

When staff encounter blood or body fluids, the following procedures are followed:

1. Use of Protective Gloves
   Approved latex-free vinyl or latex gloves are worn when there is contact with blood, body fluids, mucous membranes, open wounds, or items and surfaces contaminated with blood or bodily fluids. Gloves are single-use only and are never washed or reused.
2. Hand Washing
   Hands and any exposed skin are washed immediately and thoroughly after contact with blood or body fluids and after gloves are removed, in accordance with Academy's Hand-Washing Policy.
3. Resuscitation Precautions
   While saliva alone is not considered a route of HIV transmission by the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is treated as a bodily fluid. Mouth-to-mask resuscitation devices are available and are used by trained staff in emergency situations.

4. Training & Annual Review
   All Academy staff receive annual training on universal precautions, bloodborne pathogen awareness (including HIV and Hepatitis B), and proper handling and disposal of infectious waste.

These procedures support compliance with MSDE Office of Child Care regulations and help ensure that children are cared for in a clean, safe, and well-supervised environment. Families can feel confident knowing that Academy staff are trained, prepared, and committed to protecting the health and well-being of every child in our care.

Attendance Monitoring

Academy carefully monitors attendance throughout the day to ensure the safety and accountability of every child in our care. Classroom staff maintain accurate, up-to-date attendance records and regularly verify that the number of children present matches the names recorded.

Staff conduct frequent "Name-to-Face" headcounts, which require visually identifying each child by name. These headcounts occur throughout the day, with particular attention during transitions, including arrival, departure, movement between classrooms, outdoor play, and field trips.

Arrival & Departure Quick Check

- ✔ Sign your child in and out using the Family Communication App or kiosk
- ✔ Escort your child to and from the classroom
- ✔ Connect with staff at drop-off and pick-up.

Families play an essential role in these safety procedures by consistently following Academy's Arrival and Departure Procedures.

Together, these practices align with MSDE Office of Child Care (OCC) and COMAR supervision requirements, ensuring every child is accounted for and appropriately supervised at all times.

Field Trip Supervision and Transportation

Academy is committed to ensuring the health, safety, and supervision of children during all field trips, in accordance with MSDE Office of Child Care (OCC) supervision and transportation regulations. Academy always maintains appropriate adult-to-child ratios, with increased supervision provided as needed. When visiting locations with large

crowds, public venues, or areas near water, supervision will be enhanced whenever possible, with ratios as high as one adult for every two children.

All employees and approved volunteers participating in field trips are trained in active supervision practices consistent with MSDE OCC guidance. These practices include:

- Positioning themselves to maintain continuous sight and sound supervision of assigned children.
- Anticipating children's behavior and proactively redirecting when necessary
- Remaining alert to changes in the environment or children's behavior, including silence or sounds of distress.
- Staying fully engaged with children at all times and avoiding distractions or socializing with other adults.

Academy staff will always accompany children when using off-site restroom facilities. When public restroom configurations present gender-related limitations, staff will plan accordingly to ensure that a qualified staff member is available to accompany any child—regardless of gender—into the appropriate restroom, consistent with safety and supervision requirements.

Written parental or guardian permission is required for all field trips and is obtained through signed permission slips, which staff will carry throughout the activity. For identification and safety purposes, all employees and volunteers must wear Academy-issued identification badges, and children will wear Academy field trip shirts. Attendance is taken and documented prior to departure and again before returning to the center.

Transportation for field trips is provided through a licensed and insured transportation company that meets MSDE safety and insurance requirements, or when appropriate, with Academy's Activity Bus driven by an authorized Academy staff member. Academy staff will carry a center-issued cell phone on all field trips, and volunteers are required to have personal cell phones available for emergency communication.

Injuries & Accidents

Your child's safety is our highest priority. At the same time, we understand that minor bumps and scrapes are a normal part of children learning, exploring, and growing.

When a minor injury occurs at Academy, staff provide immediate first aid and document the incident. Families will receive a completed Accident or Incident Report Form describing what occurred and the care provided.

Each classroom has access to a first aid kit, and additional supplies are maintained in the office. Common first-aid responses include cleaning with soap and water, applying ice to bumps, and using bandages for minor cuts or scrapes. All Academy staff are trained in First Aid and Infant/Child CPR within 90 days of employment and maintain current certification.

More Serious Injuries

If an injury requires more than basic first aid, a parent or guardian will be contacted promptly to discuss next steps and the need for medical evaluation. If an injury is serious, families will be asked to pick up their child immediately. In the event of a life-threatening injury or illness, Academy will call 911 for emergency medical assistance.

To ensure your child's safety in all situations, families must keep emergency contacts, authorized pick-ups, and medical provider information current in the Enrollment Agreement and Family Communication App.

These procedures help ensure timely care, clear communication, and the continued safety of every child in our program.

Major Safety Requirements for All Academy Parents & Staff

The safety of every child at Academy is a shared responsibility. The following requirements are essential to maintaining a secure, well-supervised environment and should be read in conjunction with Academy's Arrival & Departure, Custody & Parental Cooperation, and Emergency Preparedness policies.

Expectations for Parents & Staff

- Parents and staff are expected to read, understand, and comply with all Academy policies outlined in this handbook.
- Staff and parents must drive safely and courteously, especially in school zones and parking areas.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved and visit the center, provided visits do not interfere with classroom routines or disrupt children or staff.
- Children are always supervised, and Academy staff will never release a child to an unauthorized individual (see Arrival & Departure Procedures and Custody Policy).

Parent Responsibilities

Parents and guardians must ensure that:

- Children are signed in and out using the Family Communication App and are escorted to and from their teacher by an adult or authorized individual 16 years of age or older, in accordance with Academy's Arrival & Departure Procedures.
- Any change in pick-up or dismissal procedures is submitted in writing. Requests made by children or unauthorized individuals will not be honored (see Change in Pick-Up Person and Custody Policy).
- Academy is notified if a school-age child will be absent from after-school care.
- All required extra-curricular activity release forms are completed, and arrangements are made for an authorized adult to transport the child.
    - Academy staff may not escort children to or from extracurricular activities, as staff must remain with the group and comply with COMAR staffing and supervision requirements.
- Emergency contact, medical, and custody information is always kept current (see Emergency Information and Custody Policy).

Anyone picking up a child, including parents and guardians, must be prepared to present government-issued photo identification when requested. Academy will release a child only to:

- A parent or legal guardian, or
- An individual authorized in writing on the child's Emergency Form (OCC 1214) or through a specific written authorization for a designated date or situation (see Arrival & Departure Procedures and Custody Policy).

Emergency Preparedness & Drills

- Fire drills and other emergency preparedness drills are conducted on a regularly scheduled basis in accordance with state and local requirements (see Emergency Preparedness Policy).
- Each Academy program maintains a current Emergency Preparedness Plan that is site specific. Since Academy is located on MCPS campuses, our programs follow the Emergency Response Protocols that include:
  - HOLD!
  - SECURE!
  - LOCKDOWN!
  - EVACUATE!
  - SHELTER!
- All programs update their site specific Emergency Preparedness Plans on an annual basis, and as needed.
- Enrolled families will be provided with information on their center's emergency evacuation locations during parent orientation.
- A Reunification Plan will also be shared with families.
- Academy will send important information to families through the Family Communication App.
- My Important Stuff (MIST) Bag details will also be provided to families to gather items to leave at the center if we must evacuate.

Staff Responsibilities

Academy staff will:

- Maintain current CPR/First Aid certification, Medication Administration training, and follow Academy's Emergency Preparedness Plan.
- Review and discreetly post emergency medical and special needs information for staff use.
- Routinely inspect the environment for potential safety hazards.
- Teach, encourage, and model proper handwashing to reduce the spread of illness.

School-Age Safety

If a school-age child leaves Academy grounds without authorization, 911 and the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. Academy cannot assume responsibility for school-age children who leave the site without permission.

Plan for locating a missing school-age child (after school) prior to going to the office at the elementary school:

1. Check the Family Communication App.

2. Contact Center Director and ask them to check the Academy voice mail for any messages.
3. If no messages were received, go to the school office to check.
4. Check with the child's MCPS teachers, and any Academy staff that opened in the morning (if it was someone other than you).
5. Call parents – leave messages if no one answers, with a return phone number.

Product & Food Safety

Families are encouraged to stay informed about product and food safety recalls by visiting:

- **U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA):** www.fda.gov
- **Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC):** www.cpsc.gov

Toilet Training

Definition of Toilet Trained

A child is considered toilet trained when they can independently, successfully, and consistently:

- Use the toilet,
- Clean themselves appropriately, and
- Dress themselves afterward.

Children enrolled in Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten (ages 3-5) are expected to be toilet trained. Academy will consider reasonable modifications for a child whose disability affects toileting, whether the disability is physical, developmental, or otherwise covered by applicable law. Academy may request information that is reasonably necessary to understand the child's needs and evaluate an appropriate toileting support plan, but will not require an entire IFSP, IEP, or other individualized plan as a condition of consideration.

Children must wear underwear and have very few accidents. A preschool or pre-K child who has frequent toileting accidents is not considered toilet trained.

See also: Placement Criteria

Why Is Toilet Training Required for Preschool & Pre-K?

Academy adheres strictly to Montgomery County Health Department, MSDE Office of Child Care (OCC), and COMAR licensing regulations related to toileting, sanitation, supervision, and staffing.

- Pull-ups are not permitted in Preschool and Pre-K classrooms.
- Preschool and Pre-K classrooms are not designed, equipped, or staffed to provide toilet training.
- Academy must maintain required teacher-to-child ratios (1:10; group size of 20).
- To remain in compliance, staff cannot leave the group to assist with toileting accidents.

Toileting Expectations at a Glance

Preschool & Pre-K (Ages 3–5):

✔ Fully toilet trained

✔ Wears underwear

✔ Toilets, cleans, and dresses independently

✘ Pull-ups not permitted

✘ Frequent accidents indicate child is not yet toilet trained.

Tiny Tots (Age 2):

✔ Toilet learning supported

✔ Family–teacher partnership encouraged

✔ Child must be able to undress independently

✔ Easy-to-remove clothing required.

Bathroom Routines & Support

Children are provided with regular restroom opportunities throughout the day, including:

- Upon arrival
- Before outdoor play
- Before rest time
- After rest time

We recognize that occasional wet accidents may occur. In these cases:

- Staff supervise from outside the restroom to preserve privacy.
- Children independently change into spare clothing from their cubby.
- Staff provide verbal guidance and encouragement only.

Soiling Accidents

If a Preschool or Pre-K child soils themselves, families will be contacted to pick up their child. When a child experiences repeated toileting accidents, Academy will work with the family to identify appropriate strategies and determine whether a toileting support plan or reasonable modification is needed. Any temporary change in attendance will be based on the child's individual circumstances, health and sanitation requirements, and consideration of reasonable modifications, rather than the existence of a disability.

Toilet Learning in the Tiny Tots Program (Age 2)

Academy's Tiny Tots program is intentionally designed to support developmentally appropriate toilet learning.

When readiness signs appear, families and teachers will collaborate to:

- Establish consistent routines,
- Provide positive reinforcement,
- Support skill-building at the child's pace.

Families must provide:

- Several changes of clothing (including underwear),
- An extra pair of shoes,
- Clothing that is easy to remove (avoid snaps, buttons, and zippers).

Our Commitment to Families

Toilet learning is a developmental process, and each child progresses at their own pace. Success is best supported through consistency, patience, and partnership between families and teachers.

Academy staff are committed to supporting children and families in a respectful, developmentally appropriate way and are always available to discuss your child's progress or answer questions.

Reporting Procedures Involving Child Abuse & Neglect

Child abuse and neglect is a serious problem which requires the involvement of all pri vate citizens and professionals in the community for the purposes of prevention, identification, and treatment.

Reporting does not require proof that abuse or neglect has occurred. Everyone in Maryland is obligated under the law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Individuals in their practice of employment, occupations, or profession, (health practitioners, police officers, social workers, educators, hospital staff, public health staff, child care providers, juvenile detention centers. Schools and similar institutions), who have reason to believe a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect shall make a report as soon as possible to local departments of social services or law enforcement as set forth in Maryland Family Law 5-704. Any professional who knowingly fails to make a required report of child abuse/neglect may be subjected to certain professional sanctions.

All Academy employees, volunteers, and members of the Board of Directors are mandated reporters. This obligation applies regardless of job title or role and requires the immediate reporting of any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect in accordance with Maryland law.

Academy has zero tolerance for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of children in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or

volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer services.
abuse of children in its programs.
Further, Academy will fully cooperate with law enforcement, child protective services, and the MSDE Office of Child Care throughout the investigation and resolution of mistreatment or abuse incidents.
Furthermore, Academy has zero tolerance for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among children in Academy centers. Academy is committed to providing all children with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child by another child.

Any behavior by children that constitutes abuse, mistreatment, or inappropriate sexual activity will prompt intervention or disciplinary measures, which may include dismissal from the program.

What is Child Abuse?

According to Maryland Law, child abuse and neglect includes any recent act or f ailure to act by a perpetrator (a caregiver or family member) which causes physical injury, puts a child's health or welfare at a substantial risk of harm, an act of sexual molestation or exploitation, substantial impairment of a child perpetrator (a caregiver or family member) which causes physical injury, puts a child's health or welfare at a substantial risk of harm, an act of sexual molestation or exploitation, substantial impairment of a child's psychological ability to function, or failure to give proper care and attention to a child where the child's welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of harm.

Any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of abuse or neglect is IMMUNE fr om any civil liability or criminal penalty. When there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect, staff will immediately interrupt the behavior and inform the head of the institution or their designee. Internal reporting to the head of an institution does NOT replace a person's mandatory duty to report the abuse to local departments and law enforcement. These laws supersede any policy of an agency. The head of the institution or their designed and identified individuals will immediately meet to discuss and document the incident.

All Academy employees and volunteers will be sensitive to the needs for confidentiality and will discuss matters only with the head of the institution or designee, Montgomery County Child Protective Services, and the MSDE Office of Child Care. In the event the reported incident involves an employed staff person or program volunteer, the head of the institution or designee will without exception suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of

children that may include reassignment to administrative functions if it involves a supervisor or administrator.

The head of the institution or designee will speak with the employed staff member or program volunteer who has been reported and document the conversation. When applicable, other employees will be notified that there has been a critical incident and Academy's crisis management plan has been activated.

If appropriate, parents and/or guardians will be notified. Reinstatement of an employee or program volunteer will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the head of the institution or their designee and the investigating agency.

To report suspected child abuse or neglect call the 24-hour reporting hotline at 240-777-4417.

School Policies

Code of Conduct & Civility Policy

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. is extremely fortunate to have a supportive and welcoming parent community. Academy families understand that education is a collaborative process that thrives through strong partnerships among parents, administrators, teachers, staff, and the broader school community. Through this partnership, parents recognize the importance of maintaining positive, respectful working relationships that help equip children with the skills they need for success in adulthood. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents, administrators, teachers, and staff to actively participate in all aspects of our programs.

The purpose of this policy is to remind all parents, administrators, teachers, staff, community partners, and visitors of the standards of conduct expected within our programs. These expectations help ensure that Academy continues to grow, succeed, and thrive in an environment rooted in mutual respect, cooperation, and understanding.

To maintain a safe, caring, peaceful, and orderly school environment, Academy expects civility from all members of the school community, including administrators, Board of Directors members, employees, parents, students, community partners, and visitors. Mutual respect, professionalism, and common courtesy are essential qualities that must be demonstrated at all times to promote a school environment free from disruption, harassment, bullying, and aggressive or hostile behavior.

We appreciate the cooperation of parents, administrators, teachers, staff, community partners, and visitors in supporting and upholding this policy. Thank you for your continued commitment to the success of Academy Child Development Center, Inc.

Code of Ethical Conduct

Maintaining a safe and healthy school environment for the children, staff, families, and communities we serve is a shared responsibility. Strong partnerships between school, families, and community partners are essential and are built on a foundation of trust, mutual respect, and open, transparent communication. By working together and

upholding these shared commitments, we ensure a secure, supportive environment where children can thrive.

Expectation of Parental Cooperation

Academy expects parents and guardians to communicate and cooperate respectfully and appropriately regarding their child's care and education while the child is enrolled. Families must refrain from involving Academy staff in personal disputes or using Academy as a communication intermediary.

To promote stability and consistency for children:

- Parents and guardians should communicate directly with one another regarding custody and visitation arrangements.
- Academy will not relay messages or manage scheduling conflicts between parents.

Academy may issue a written reminder if these expectations are not met. Continued disruption to the program or environment may result in further action, including non-renewal or termination of enrollment.

Custody and Parental Disputes

Academy's role is to provide a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment for every child. Matters related to custody, visitation, or parental disputes fall outside the scope of Academy's responsibilities and authority.

No Mediation or Involvement in Disputes

Academy and its employees do not mediate, negotiate, or intervene in disputes between parents or guardians related to custody, visitation, co-parenting, separation, divorce, or other personal matters. Families are expected to manage these matters independently and outside of the program.

Legal Documentation

Academy will comply only with official court-issued legal documentation regarding custody and parental rights. Parents and guardians are responsible for providing the Center Director with current, valid court orders, including custody agreements, visitation schedules, or protective orders.

Unless Academy has a court order on file that legally restricts access, the Center cannot deny a parent or legal guardian access to their child.

Legal Communication

Academy employees will not voluntarily communicate with parents' attorneys or provide documentation directly to legal representatives. If legal matters arise, Academy will consult its attorney. Should Academy or its employees receive a subpoena or court order, Academy will respond through appropriate legal channels.

Legal disputes may result in significant costs. To the extent permitted by law, families may be held responsible for reimbursing Academy for legal fees or expenses incurred because of parental disputes.

Program Integrity

If the Administration determines that a family's personal situation interferes with or threatens the safety, stability, or operation of the program, Academy reserves the right to terminate enrollment immediately.

By following this policy, Academy can remain focused on what matters most providing a safe, consistent, and supportive environment for every child in our care.

Tobacco-Free, Alcohol-Free, Drug-Free, and Weapon-Free Environment

Academy Child Development Center is committed to maintaining a safe, orderly, and healthy learning environment for all children, staff, families, and visitors. Academy complies with all applicable Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) policies, Montgomery County Government regulations, State of Maryland and federal laws, and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requirements.

Tobacco-Free Environment

In accordance with **MCPS Regulation JHG-RA (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs)** and **COMAR 13A.02.04.01**, Academy maintains a **tobacco-free environment**. The use or possession of tobacco products is prohibited on school property at all times. This includes cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, and similar products.

Alcohol- and Drug-Free Environment

Consistent with MCPS Policy JHG (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs) and Maryland law:

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited on school property.
- Illegal drugs and controlled dangerous substances are prohibited in, on, or within 1,000 feet of school property.
- The possession or use of marijuana or cannabis products is prohibited on school property and during school-related activities, regardless of age or legal status under Maryland law. This includes smoking, vaping, edibles, oils, and any cannabis-infused products.

Although Maryland law permits adult recreational marijuana use in certain non-school settings, state law and MCPS regulations prohibit cannabis on school property and during school-sponsored activities.

Weapon-Free Environment

In accordance with MCPS Regulation COE-RA (Weapons), MCPS Exhibit COE-EB (Firearms), and federal and state law, Academy maintains a weapon-free environment. Weapons are not permitted on school property. This includes firearms, knives, and any object that may be considered dangerous or capable of causing bodily harm. This policy applies to all individuals, including parents, guardians, staff, volunteers, and visitors.

Shared Responsibility

Families are expected to support these policies and cooperate with Academy staff to help maintain a safe and secure school environment. Working together promotes a positive learning atmosphere and ensures the well-being of all children.

Dealing with an Impaired Parent or Family Member

The safety and well-being of the children in our care is our highest priority. An impaired parent or family member - whether due to alcohol, drugs, or another condition - poses a serious safety concern. Academy Child Development Center staff will follow the procedures below whenever there is reasonable concern that an individual arriving to pick up a child may be impaired.

Whenever possible, staff will address the situation in a private area to maintain confidentiality and respect. A staff member, preferably the Director or Lead Teacher, will speak calmly with the individual and request that an alternate authorized person be contacted to safely transport the adult and the child.

If the individual refuses this option, staff will clearly inform them of the following:

"We cannot prevent you from leaving with this child; however, we are genuinely concerned about your safety and the safety of the child. If you choose to leave with the child, we are required to call 911 immediately and report that we believe you may be unable to operate a vehicle safely and that a child is a passenger."

Staff will remain calm, non-confrontational, and always focused on child safety, and all incidents will be documented according to Academy policy.

Registered Sexual Offenders

Academy Child Development Center, Inc. (Academy) is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all children in our care. In support of this commitment, Academy follows all applicable State of Maryland laws, Montgomery County Government regulations, and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) policies regarding registered sexual offenders on school and child care property.

Under Maryland law, a registered sexual offender (registrant) is an individual who is required to register with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and local law enforcement and whose information appears on the Maryland Sex Offender Registry. This includes individuals classified as child sexual offenders, sexually violent offenders, sexually violent predators, or individuals convicted of certain crimes involving minors or child kidnapping. The law also applies to juvenile registrants, as defined by statute.

In accordance with MCPS regulations regarding registered sexual offenders on MCPS property, registered sexual offenders and juvenile registrants are not permitted to enter Academy facilities or any building where Academy provides licensed child care services, including programs located on MCPS property.

These restrictions are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children and are enforced in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Academy works in cooperation with MCPS and Montgomery County authorities to uphold these requirements.

Families are encouraged to direct any questions regarding this policy to Academy administration.

Babysitting and Private Employment

Academy staff members are dedicated professionals whose responsibilities are governed by Academy policies and procedures. To avoid conflicts of interest and to protect both families and staff, Academy employees are not permitted to provide private babysitting, tutoring, transportation, or child care services for enrolled families outside of Academy programs.

Academy and its Board of Directors are not responsible for any private arrangements made independently between families and staff members, and such arrangements are not endorsed or supervised by Academy.

Commitment to Diversity and Equity

Academy is committed to making diversity, equity, and inclusion ongoing, intentional practices within our programs. We foster tolerance, understanding, and belonging through positive, respectful exposure to people of different ages, genders, family structures, cultures, races, religions, abilities, and lived experiences. Our learning environments are designed to actively welcome diversity, affirm each child and family, and thoughtfully challenge bias and discrimination. Through daily interactions, curriculum choices, and partnerships with families, we strive to ensure that every child feels valued, respected, and supported.

Grievance and Complaint Resolution

Academy is committed to open, respectful, and collaborative communication as the most effective way to address concerns and maintain strong partnerships with families. We ask families to follow the steps below to support timely and thoughtful resolution:

1. **Teacher Level:** Concerns should first be discussed with the child's teacher or the staff member directly involved.
2. **Center Director Level:** If the concern is not resolved, families should contact the Center Director.
3. **Administration Level:** If further review is needed, concerns may be submitted in writing to Academy Administration.
4. **Board of Directors:** Requests to address the Board may be submitted to information@academychild.com.

Academy prohibits retaliation against any family who raises concern in good faith. While disagreements may occur even with the best of intentions, experience has shown that open, compassionate, and cooperative communication is key to maintaining positive relationships. Adults are expected to model the respectful problem-solving behaviors we want our children to learn. If a concern cannot be resolved through initial conversation, a meeting may be arranged with the parties involved and a member of the administrative team to determine an appropriate course of action.

Legal Information

Nondiscrimination

Academy is committed to full compliance with all applicable federal and State of Maryland nondiscrimination laws and regulations. Academy does not discriminate, and shall not tolerate discrimination, on the basis of race, color, religion or creed, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, disability, genetic information, military or veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.
This nondiscrimination policy applies to all Academy programs, activities, and operations, including but not limited to the admission and treatment of students; provision of services; employment practices; hiring, promotion, compensation, training, discipline, and termination of staff; and the selection of volunteers, contractors, and vendors.

Academy is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful, and welcoming environment for all children, families, staff members, volunteers, subcontractors, and community partners. Academy is an equal opportunity employer and will take affirmative steps, as required by law, to ensure nondiscrimination in all aspects of employment and program delivery.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Academy is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), its implementing regulations, and all applicable federal, state, and local laws governing the provision of services to individuals with disabilities. Academy welcomes children of all abilities and does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

In accordance with the ADA, Academy will make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures when necessary to provide children with disabilities equal access to its programs and services, unless Academy can demonstrate that a requested modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the program. Academy is not required to admit or continue serving a child who poses a direct threat, meaning a substantial risk of serious harm to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications. These determinations will be based on an individualized assessment using objective evidence and will not rely on generalizations or stereotypes about a disability. Academy will collaborate with families and, with written parental authorization when appropriate, relevant service providers.

Academy's group child care structure, staffing model, or available resources will be considered as part of the individualized assessment but will not, standing alone, determine whether a child may enroll or remain enrolled. Academy will first consider whether reasonable modifications would provide access without fundamentally altering the nature of the program or leaving a direct threat that cannot be eliminated. When Academy lawfully cannot provide the requested support, it will communicate with the family and, when appropriate, help identify alternative supports or community resources.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of students' education records. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. Academy Child Development Center, Inc. (Academy) complies with all federal, state, and county laws and regulations applicable to data collection, privacy, and security, including, but not limited to the requirements of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, and its implementing regulations (34 C.F.R. part 99), the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* (COPPA), 15 U.S.C. § 6501-6505, and its implementing regulations (16 C.F.R. § 312, et seq.), the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* (HIPAA), 42 U.S.C. § 300gg, 29 U.S.C. § 1181 et seq., and 42 U.S.C. § 1320d et seq., and its implementing regulations (45 C.F.R. Parts 160 & 164); the *Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment*, (PPRA) 20 U.S.C, § 1232(h) and its implementing regulations (34 C.F.R. § 98.1 et seq.), the *Maryland Student Privacy Act of 2015*, Md. Ed. Code Ann., §4-131, *Code of Maryland Regulations* (COMAR) 13A.08, as well as applicable Academy Child Development Center, Inc. policies and State Board of Education COMAR 13A.16.01-.19 Regulations for Child Care Centers, as relates to Academy student information, *Federal Requirements for Use of Protected Student Information*.

For further information about FERPA:

https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/parent-guide-family-educational- rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa

Record Retention and Requests for Copies

Academy complies with all applicable State of Maryland record retention requirements. Student records are maintained for two (2) years following a child's withdrawal from the program, in accordance with state regulations.
Requests for copies of student records must be submitted in writing within 30 days of withdrawal. Reasonable fees may be assessed to cover the cost of labor and duplication. Requested records will be provided within 30 days of receipt of the written request, unless otherwise required by law.

Availability of Asbestos Management Plan

In October 1986, the U.S. Congress enacted the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), which established requirements for public and private elementary and secondary schools to identify and manage asbestos-containing building materials.

Under AHERA, covered school buildings are required to be inspected for both friable and non-friable asbestos, to develop and maintain an Asbestos Management Plan, and to implement response actions, as necessary.

Academy programs that operate in buildings subject to AHERA are covered under an Asbestos Management Plan maintained by the building owner, typically Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). This plan includes information related to inspections, re-inspections, response actions, and ongoing surveillance activities.

Families may review the applicable Asbestos Management Plan during normal business hours, at no cost. To arrange a review or to ask questions about the plan, please contact the MCPS Building Principal at the public school site or your Academy Center Director, who can assist with coordination.

For buildings constructed after October 12, 1988, AHERA permits the use of exclusion documentation in place of a full management plan. In these cases, the documentation indicates that, to the best of current knowledge, no asbestos-containing building materials are present.

Appendix A: Enrollment in a Grant Program at Academy

*(**EquiCare** Grant or **Pre-K Expansion** Grant)*

Academy offers grant-funded enrollment opportunities for eligible families through the ***EquiCare Grant***, funded through the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Initiative – ECEI, while the ***Pre-K Expansion Grant*** is funded by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Blueprint.

It is important to note that each of these grants have specific eligibility requirements for families.

Due to limited availability, all grant enrollments follow a structured application and review process.

Grant Enrollment Process

1. **Submit an Inquiry**
   Families begin the process by scanning Academy's QR code or visiting the enrollment link to complete an inquiry form. This places the family on Academy's grant contact list.
2. **Tour and Application**
   The Center Director will contact the family to schedule a tour. Families will be asked to complete a grant application and submit all required income eligibility and supporting documentation.
3. **Eligibility Review**
   Once all required documents are received, Academy's Grant Team will review the application to determine eligibility. Applications are not reviewed until documentation is complete. Incomplete submissions may delay review and could result in a family losing their place in the process.
   - If additional documentation is needed, or if a family does not qualify, the Grant Team will contact the family.
4. **Enrollment Confirmation & Forms**
   Families who qualify will receive a Confirmation Letter and a packet of required enrollment forms, including health, emergency, and Academy enrollment documents. All forms must be completed and submitted by the stated deadline.
5. **Mandatory Orientations**
   After paperwork is complete, parents are required to participate in an Academy program orientation. Children must also complete a three-day student orientation prior to their official start date.

Waitlist & Alternative Options

If a family meets eligibility criteria but all grant-funded spaces are filled, the family will be placed on Academy's grant waitlist. Families may also choose to:

- Enroll as a private-pay family, or
- Apply for child care vouchers or other fee assistance programs, if available

Grant-funded enrollment is limited, and placement is dependent on available slots.

Appendix B: Family Communication App (Child Pilot) Instructions

Academy uses the Family Communication App (Child Pilot) as the primary platform for family communication, attendance tracking, authorized pick-ups, and document management. All families are required to activate and maintain an active account.

Account Setup & Login

1. Families will receive an email or text invitation from Academy to create a Child Pilot account.
2. Click the invitation link and create a password using the email address on file with Academy.
3. After verifying your email, you may log in to the Parent Portal.
4. Download the mobile app by searching "**Child Pilot Parents**" in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Family Tab (Home Screen)

The Family Tab displays: - Child(ren) profiles – Daily check-in option and family check-in code – Parents/Guardians – Authorized pick-ups – Emergency contacts.

Families may tap a child's name to view details and activity summaries or use the three-dot menu to edit information or report an absence.

Updating Information

- Use the (+) icon to add children or contacts where permitted.
- If documents require updates, a notification indicator will appear on the home screen.
- Families are responsible for keeping all contact pickup, and emergency information current.

Attendance & Absences

- Children must be signed in and out daily using the app or on-site kiosk.
- Absences may be reported directly through the app using the child profile menu.

For technical issues or access concerns, families should contact their Center Director.

2026-2027 Annual Calendar

APPENDIX C

2026

JULY
1 First day of 12-month programs
3 Academy Closed - Independence Day Observance

AUGUST: Student & Parent Orientations
14 Trips & Dips - Last Day
20 Academy Closed - Professional Day/Staff Annual Meeting
21 Academy Closed - Professional Day
25 First day of school for 10-month students

SEPTEMBER
7 Academy Closed - Labor Day
18 MCPS Early Release – Child Care Only After Lunch
21 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only

OCTOBER
16 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only

NOVEMBER: Parent/Teacher Conferences
2 MCPS Closed*- Academy Open for Child Care Only
3 Academy Closed - Election Day
23 MCPS Early Release - Child Care Only After Lunch
24 MCPS Early Release - Child Care Only After Lunch
25 MCPS Early Release – Child Care Only After Lunch
26 **Academy Closed** - Thanksgiving
27 **Academy Closed** - American Indian Heritage Day

DECEMBER
23 MCPS Early Release – Child Care Only After Lunch
24 **Academy Closed** – Christmas Holiday
25 **Academy Closed** – Christmas Holiday
28 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only
29 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only
30 MCPS SC - Academy Open for Child Care Only ****
31 MCPS SC - Academy Open for Child Care Only ****

2027

JANUARY: Priority Enrollment
1 Academy Closed - New Year's Holiday
18 Academy Closed - Martin L. King, Jr. Day
25 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only

FEBRUARY: Parent/Teacher Conferences
15 Academy Closed - Presidents' Day
26 MCPS Early Release – Child Care Only After Lunch

MARCH
9 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only
26 Academy Closed – Good Friday
29 Academy Closed – Easter Monday
30 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only
31 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only

APRIL
1 MCPS SC - Academy Open for Child Care Only ****
2 MCPS SC - Academy Open for Child Care Only ****
12 MCPS Closed – Academy Open for Child Care Only
22 MCPS Closed* – Academy Open for Child Care Only

MAY: Parent/Teacher Articulation Conferences
17 MCPS Closed* – Academy Open for Child Care Only
31 Academy Closed - Memorial Day

JUNE: Transitions & Orientations
11 MCPS Early Release/Last Day of School for 10-month programs- Child Care Only After Lunch
14 Academy Closed* – Professional Day
15-17* See below
18 Academy Closed – Juneteenth
30 Last Day for 12-month programs

Before & After School Care: Includes MCPS openings, and all "Child Care Only" dates listed above.
(**Does Not Include Winter & Spring Breaks, and Systemwide Closures)
**** SC = Systemwide Closure – Location and Hours TBA**
Before School Care Only: Operates on days when MCPS is open & includes MCPS delayed openings.
After School Care Only: Operates on days when MCPS is open & includes MCPS early release.

***Designated MCPS Make Up Days**
Calendar includes approximately 181 school days for MSDE Non-public Educational School programs.

Please Note: *Due to ongoing changes to the MCPS Calendar by the Board of Education, and increase in *Systemwide Closures, this calendar is subject to change.*

Updated 5/26/2026 DE – ACDC Board Approved 5/26/2026

Academy
Child Development Center

Appendix D: INCLEMENT WEATHER / EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY

We realize the difficulty and inconvenience when Academy is closed. However, the decisions are made with the safety of the children and staff in mind. Due to our lease agreements, ***Academy must base our emergency closings on the decisions of Montgomery County Government (CUPF) and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) or when conditions are otherwise judged to be unsafe. Academy will also consider our emergency closings based on the decisions of the Federal Government and State Government offices.***

1) If MCPS Central Administrative Offices are closed: **Academy will CLOSE.**
2) If the Federal Government closes: **Academy will CLOSE.**
3) If MCPS is closed for the day and MCPS Central Administrative Offices are on a **two**-hour delayed opening:
   Academy will OPEN at 10:30 AM for child care only.
   If MCPS is closed for the day and MCPS Central Administrative Offices are on a **three**-hour delayed opening:
   Academy will OPEN at 11:30 AM for child care only.
   Breakfast is not served.
   All students should bring their own lunch.
4) If MCPS is closed for the day:
   Academy opens at 9:00 AM for child care only.
   Breakfast is not served.
   There are no Academy part-day programs.
   Please call or arrive with your child by 10:00 AM. Staffing will be determined by that time.
   All students should bring their own lunch.
5) If MCPS openings are delayed two hours and MCPS Central Administrative Offices are delayed two hours:
   Academy opens at 9:00 AM for child care only.
   Breakfast is not served.
   Only part-day Pre-K students who would normally attend until MCPS dismisses, may arrive when MCPS opens and will be dismissed at their regularly scheduled school dismissal time.
   Academy AM part-day programs are cancelled.
   Make certain that someone is responsible for your child's safe arrival at Academy.
   All students should bring their own lunch.
6) If MCPS openings are delayed and MCPS Central Administrative Offices open on time:
   Academy opens at 8:00 AM for child care only.
   Only Part-day students who would normally attend until MCPS dismisses, may arrive when MCPS opens and will be dismissed at their regularly scheduled school dismissal time.
   Academy half-day programs are cancelled.
   Make certain that someone is responsible for your child's safe arrival at Academy.
   All students should bring their own lunch.
7) If MCPS closes early: **Academy Child Care Only will close early at 5:00 PM**
   Part-day students must be picked up early as follows:
   Cold Spring & DuFief - 12:55 PM
   Galway & Stone Mill- 1:15 PM

8) If other emergency closings are necessary, such as when MCPS is not in regular session, **call your center after 6:30 AM or after 1:00 PM when conditions are questionable.** Closing decisions are made in consultation with the main Academy office. **Parents will be notified in person, by text messaging service or email.**

MCPS INFORMATION
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org
MCPS TV Channels:
Comcast 34, Comcast HD 998,
Verizon 36, RCN 89, RCN HD 1058
MCPS Recording (301) 279-3673
TV & Radio: Local Stations

ACADEMY INFORMATION (After 6:30 AM)
Charles Drew: (301) 989-0245
Cold Spring: (301) 424-4318
DuFief: (301) 309-1224
Galway: (301) 586-0080
Stone Mill: (301) 762-8206
Academy Main Office: (301) 424-6282
www.academychild.com
www.facebook.com/academychilddevelopmentcenter.com

January 2022 lw

Appendix E: Sick Child Policy

We need your help in keeping the outbreak of illness to a minimum. Our sick child policy is based on recommendations from CDC, Maryland DHMH and Montgomery County Health Officer guidelines. Certain symptoms in children may suggest the presence of a communicable disease. Children who have symptoms listed below should be excluded from the child care setting until:

1. The symptoms have been gone for a minimum of 24 hours.

-or-

2. A health care provider notes the child may return to the program without danger to himself or other children and staff.

-and-

3. The child is well enough to participate fully in the child care's daily routine.

If a child has any of the following signs and symptoms of illness, they should be kept/sent home from child care. If symptoms are severe or persist, parents should contact their private source of medical care.

Appearance/Behavior

Child looks or acts differently than usual: unusually tired, pale, loss of appetite, confused, irritable, difficult to awaken plus has an oral temperature of 100° F or above.

Cough

See respiratory symptoms below.

Diarrhea

An increased number and/or abnormally loose stools in the previous 24 hours.

Eye/Nose Drainage

Red or pink eyes/thick mucus or pus draining from the eye or nose.

Fever

Remember that temperatures taken under the arm are one degree lower than oral temperatures. Therefore, one degree Fahrenheit will be added to the armpit reading. Any child with an oral temperature of 100° F or above is considered to have a significant fever. Children should not return to child care until they have been fever free for 24 hours.

Respiratory Symptoms

Difficult or rapid breathing, severe cough, high-pitched croupy, wheezing, or whooping sound after cough.

Skin Problems

Undiagnosed skin rashes are contagious. Be alert to rashes or sores with crusty, yellow, or green drainage. Rashes with fevers can be serious and need to be discussed with the child's health care provider.

Sore Throat/Earache

Sore throat and/or difficulty swallowing, especially when fever or swollen glands in the neck are present.

Unusual color

Eyes or skin – yellow (jaundice) Stool – gray or white
Urine- dark, tea colored
The above symptoms can be found in hepatitis and should be evaluated by the child's health care provider.

Nausea/Vomiting

Two or more episodes of vomiting within the previous 24 hours.

Diarrhea, vomiting, undiagnosed rashes, fever, pallor, irritability, excessive sleepiness and change of behavior are signs of illness that must be noted. Parents will be notified when a child has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the facility as described below:

A. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in facility activities.

B. The illness requires more care than the child care staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
OR
C. The child has any of the following conditions:

1) Temperature: Oral 100 degrees F or greater; axillary (armpit) 99 degrees F or greater; accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.
2) Signs and symptoms of possible severe illness (such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or wheezing).
3) Uncontrolled diarrhea, that is, increased number of stools, increased stool water that is not contained by the diaper.
4) Vomiting illness: two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours.
5) Rash with fever or change in behavior.
6) Identified disease that requires exclusion.

When a child is sent home, he/she should remain at home for a minimum of 24 hours or submit a written statement, from the health care provider, approving the return to the program. Parents are advised to arrange a plan for backup care when the child is ill.

If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called. A parent/legal guardian or authorized designee should pick up the child within an hour. If the child's condition warrants immediate medical attention, 911 will be called.

The director may not re-admit a child to the center after an absence of three or more days due to illness, without first receiving a written statement from the child's health care provider stating that the child may return to a regular schedule. If a child sustains a serious illness or injury or is hospitalized for any reason, a doctor's readmit certificate is required.

Appendix F: Medication Administration

General Requirements
Medication, whether prescription or non-prescription—may not be administered unless all the following conditions are met:

1. Written Parental Authorization
   A completed, signed, and dated Medication Administration Authorization Form provided by Academy must be on file before any medication is given.
2. Health Practitioner Approval
   A licensed health practitioner must approve the medication and dosage, as required by regulation.
3. Initial Dose at Home
   Prescription medication may not be administered unless the child has received at least one dose at home prior to coming to the center.

Prescription Medication Labeling
Prescription medication must be supplied in its original container and clearly labeled by the pharmacy or prescribing physician with:

- Child's full name
- Date of prescription
- Name of medication
- Dosage
- Administration schedule
- Route of administration
- Special instructions (if applicable, e.g., "take with food")
- Duration of prescription
- Expiration date

Non-Prescription & Topical Products
Non-Prescription medication and topical products must be supplied in its original container or packaging. The following items may be applied without prior approval from a licensed health practitioner when supplied by the parent and documented appropriately:

- Diaper rash products
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

Lip balm must be non-medicated and free of additives, dyes, or flavorings. Examples of acceptable products include Blistex, ChapStick, and Carmex (original only).

Medication must always be administered according to the most current written instructions on the medication label or from the licensed health practitioner.

Documentation & Recordkeeping

- Each administration of prescription or non-prescription medication—including approved self-administration—must be documented in the child's record.
- Application of diaper rash products, sunscreen, or insect repellent must also be recorded.
- If a scheduled dose is not administered, the reason for omission must be documented.

Medication Storage

All medications must:

- Be labeled with the child's name, dosage, and expiration date.
- Be stored according to manufacturer, pharmacy, or physician instructions.
- Be kept inaccessible to children, but readily accessible to authorized staff.
- Be discarded according to EPA or Office of National Drug Control Policy guidelines or returned to the parent upon expiration or discontinuation.

Medication Handling & Transport

- Academy staff cannot accept medication without a completed Medication Administration Authorization Form.
- Medications may not be stored in children's backpacks or transferred between parents' homes through the center.

Emergency Medications

Emergency medications, including epinephrine auto-injectors, may be administered by trained staff according to the physician-completed Medication Authorization Form.

- Parents are responsible for training staff in the use of emergency medications.
- Only pre-measured doses (e.g., auto-injectors) may be administered.
- Academy staff are not health professionals and do not assess symptom progression prior to administering emergency medication.

To ensure compliance with MSDE Office of Child Care regulations, families are required to review **Appendix G: What Families Should Not Send to School.** Items not permitted at school include unapproved medications, gummy vitamins or supplements, and medication sent in backpacks or lunch containers.

Academy appreciates your partnership in helping us maintain a safe, healthy, and compliant environment for all children.

Appendix G: What Families Should Not Send to School

To keep all children safe and to remain in compliance with **MSDE Office of Child Care (OCC)** and **COMAR regulations**, families **may not send** the following items to Academy.

Do NOT Send These Items

- **Unapproved medications**
  (Prescription or over-the-counter)
- **Medication without a completed Medication Administration Authorization Form**
- **Medication not in its original, labeled container**
- **Gummy medications**
  (Including gummy vitamins, supplements, melatonin, or similar products)
- **Vitamins, herbal remedies, supplements, or homeopathic products**
- **Medication in lunchboxes, backpacks, pockets, or cubbies**
- **Medication transferred between parents' homes**
  (Sent with the child or their belongings)
- **Expired medications**
- **Medicated lip balms, ointments, or creams**
  (Without proper authorization)

❌ **Fast-acting emergency medications that are not pre-measured**
(For example, non–auto-injector epinephrine)

✅ What IS Allowed

✔ Only medications that meet **Academy's Medication Administration Policy**
✔ Only medications that comply with **MSDE Office of Child Care regulations**
✔ Only medications submitted **directly to staff** with required documentation

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❓ Questions or Unsure?

📞 Please contact the **Center Director** *before* bringing any medication or health-related item to the center. We are happy to help clarify what is permitted.

Appendix H:

IN AN EMERGENCY Take Action

HOLD! In your room or area. Clear the halls.

STUDENTS
Clear the hallways and remain in room or area until the "All Clear" is announced
Do business as usual

ADULTS
Close and lock the door
Account for students and adults
Do business as usual

SECURE! Get inside. Lock outside doors.

STUDENTS
Return to inside of building
Do business as usual

ADULTS
Bring everyone indoors
Lock outside doors
Increase situational awareness
Account for students and adults
Do business as usual

LOCKDOWN! Locks, lights, out of sight.

STUDENTS
Move away from sight
Maintain silence
Do not open the door

ADULTS
Recover students from hallway if possible
Lock the classroom door
Turn out the lights
Move away from sight
Maintain silence
Do not open the door
Prepare to evade or defend

EVACUATE! (A location may be specified)

STUDENTS
Leave stuff behind if required to
If possible, bring your phone
Follow instructions

ADULTS
Lead students to Evacuation location
Account for students and adults
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults

SHELTER! Hazard and safety strategy.

STUDENTS
Use appropriate safety strategy for the hazard

Hazard	Safety Strategy
Tornado	Evacuate to shelter area
Hazmat	Seal the room
Earthquake	Drop, cover and hold
Tsunami	Get to high ground

ADULTS
Lead safety strategy
Account for students and adults
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults

K12 2021
STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL

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2026–2027 FAMILY HANDBOOK
FAMILY ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

Academy is committed to maintaining a safe, nurturing, inclusive, and supportive environment for every child. A strong partnership between Academy and families depends on clear communication, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. By enrolling my/our child in an Academy Child Development Center, Inc. program, I/we acknowledge and agree that:

- I/We have received or been provided access to the 2026–2027 Family Handbook and have had the opportunity to read and review its contents.
- I/We understand and agree to abide by the policies, procedures, requirements, and family responsibilities outlined in the Family Handbook, including those applicable to my/our child's program.
- I/We understand that enrollment is also governed by the signed Enrollment Agreement and applicable laws and regulations, including the tuition, payment, attendance, withdrawal, and other requirements applicable to our enrollment.
- I/We understand that Academy may revise policies or procedures to address regulatory requirements, program needs, or the well-being of the Academy community. Academy will notify families of significant changes, and the current Handbook will be available on Academy's website.
- I/We agree to communicate promptly with Academy regarding changes in contact information, authorized pick-up arrangements, health information, or other circumstances relevant to my/our child's care, safety, and participation.
- I/We understand that questions or concerns about Handbook policies may be directed to the Center Director.

Acknowledgment: By signing below, I/we confirm receipt and understanding of the Family Handbook and agree to comply with its applicable policies and procedures as a condition of enrollment, subject to the Enrollment Agreement and applicable law.

By signing my/our child's Enrollment Application and Enrollment Agreement, I/we acknowledge and agree to abide by the policies and procedures established by Academy Child Development Center, Inc., as outlined in the Family Handbook.

I/we understand that I am/we are expected to review, sign, and return the Family Handbook Acknowledgment and Signature Page to the Center Director. Failure to sign and return this acknowledgment does not relieve me/us of my/our responsibility to comply with Academy's policies and procedures, as agreed upon through the signed Enrollment Application and Enrollment Agreement.

Child's Full Name: _____

Academy Center / Program: _____

Parent (Print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent (Print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____