



**Carriage
House**
CHILDREN'S CENTER

PARENT'S HANDBOOK

*Enriching the lives of children and their families
through a child-centered program*

Welcome!

Dear Parents*,

It is our pleasure to welcome you and your child to the Carriage House Children's Center! We eagerly anticipate an exciting and successful year for your child. Our entire staff has prepared a nurturing and stimulating environment, full of opportunities designed to help your child grow and develop. Our child-centered philosophy and goals, combined with an active partnership with you--your child's most important teacher--help us to guide your child through the countless important moments she will experience during her time here.

There are many details involved in being a member of our Carriage House community. I hope this Family Handbook will be a helpful resource as you become acquainted with our philosophy, goals, policies and procedures. This handbook is a reflection of contributions in time and energy from staff, parents, and the Board of Directors, to whom we are very grateful. Our thanks go to the children whose spirit and trust constantly remind us to strive to provide a high quality program for them.

If you have questions that are not answered within these pages, please remember that the door is always open, and that we appreciate and value your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Sharon Amick
Executive Director
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Carriage House Children's Center

*Please note that throughout this handbook and other written materials from the Center, the term "parent" is used to include custodial and non-custodial parents, legal guardians, and others identified, by those having legal responsibility for the child, as someone who can assume the parental role.

Table of Contents

Welcome	2
Center Philosophy	6
Mission Statement	6
General Background Information	6
Program Description	7
Hours of Operation	7
Children’s Schedules	8
Staff : Child Ratios	8
Infant-Toddler Program	8
Preschool Program	8
Half-Day Programs	8
Half-Day/Full-Day Programs	9
Summer Camp	9
Admissions Policy and Procedures	9
Eligibility	9
Visitation	9
Application Process for New Students	10
Application Process for Returning Students	10
Enrolling Children with Special Needs	10
Contractual Agreements	10
Tuition Policy	11
Field Trip Fees	11
Forms and Confidentiality	11
Withdraw or Termination	12
Curricula and Learning	12
Staff Qualifications	12
Classroom Environments	13
High/Scope Curriculum	13
Assessment	13
Obtaining Support Services	14
Transitions	14
Toilet Training	14
Rest Time	15
Outings and Field Trips	15
Holidays and Cultural Celebrations	15
Birthdays	15
Toys from Home	16
Technology and Interactive Media	16

Home and School Communications	16
Limited English Proficiency	16
Partnership with Parents	16
Teacher Contacts	17
Parent Conferences	17
Parents with Classroom Concerns	17
Center Notices	18
Messages to the Center	18
Absences	18
Evaluations	18
Emergency Closings	18
Guidance and Discipline	19
General Procedures	19
Problem Solving	19
Positive Language	19
Physical Aggression	19
Discipline vs. Punishment	20
Time-Out	20
Bullying/Teasing	20
Biting	20
Behaviors that are Challenging, Unsafe or Disruptive	21
Nutrition	21
Meals	21
Infant Feedings	21
Parent-Provided Snacks	22
Excluded Foods	22
Eating	23
Allergies and Food Preferences	23
Clothing	23
School Dress	23
Extra Clothes	23
Health	24
General Information	24
Health Assessment	24
Illness in Childcare	24
Signs, Symptoms and Exclusion Criteria	25
Medication	25
Special Care Plans	26
Accident or Injury Procedures	26
First Aid with Blocked Airway or CPR Training	26
Emergency Information/Parental Consent Form	27
Treatment of Minor Injuries	27
Emergency Medical Care	27
Safety	27
Building Security	28
Arrival and Departure	28
Authorization to Pick Up	28

Right to Refuse Child Release	28
Stranger Awareness	29
Plastic Bags	29
Smoking Policy	29
Playground Safety	29
Field Trip Safety	29
Fire Safety	30
Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play	30
Traffic/Parking	30
Suspected Child Abuse	31
Prohibited Substances	32
Child Custody	32
General Center Policies	32
Parent Supervision	32
Elevator Use	32
Cell Phone Use	32
Late Departure Policy	32
Respectful Behaviors	33
Social Media	33
Employment of CHCC Staff	33
University Related Projects	33
Parent Teacher Organization	34
Administrative Staff	35
Board of Directors	35
Family Handbook Acknowledgement	36

CENTER PHILOSOPHY

The Carriage House Children's Center philosophy stresses many hands-on experiences, both child and teacher initiated. Our classroom programs are based on both developmental and individual appropriateness. Each classroom environment is rich with a variety of materials to stimulate, soothe, inspire and challenge the children. The established routines and schedules allow for a balance of quiet and active times, outdoor experiences, meals, snacks, and activity times based on an emergent curriculum--the High/Scope approach--in which children construct their understanding of the world from their active involvement with people, materials, and ideas.

MISSION STATEMENT

Carriage House Children's Center nurtures the lives of children and their families in an early learning environment that values exploration, problem-solving and each child's natural curiosity as the foundation for life-long learning.

CORE BELIEFS

- We believe in creating an inclusive community where all families, children and staff feel welcome and respected.
- We believe in building strong relationships with children to promote individual strength and acceptance as they develop a positive attitude towards self and others.
- We believe in developing the physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs of children through play-based curriculum that emerges from their interests.
- We believe in becoming trusted partners with families to respond to evolving needs.
- We believe in fostering a continuous learning environment for educators to become role models and mentors in an exemplary early childhood education setting.

GENERAL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Carriage House Children's Center was incorporated in June 1974 as a non-profit corporation to provide quality child care for preschoolers and their families. It opened in the carriage house of Benedum Hall on the Chatham College campus with a start-up loan from the college. The Infant-Toddler Center of Squirrel Hill was added in November, 1981 at the Wightman School Community Building to meet the needs of children from the ages of six weeks to thirty-six months. In May of 1986 Carriage House purchased the Wightman School Community Building, so that presently the infant-toddler and preschool programs are housed in the same building. In addition, the Carriage House has a management contract with The Children's Center of Pittsburgh, an affiliate of Magee-Women's Hospital, and is responsible for the staffing and programming of that Center, located at 327 Craft Avenue in Oakland.

The Center is dedicated to providing an enriching and positive experience for children ages six weeks through five years. We have been awarded a Four STAR rating by Keystone STARS, a quality improvement program funded by the PA Office of Child Development & Early Learning that recognizes child care providers who exceed state health and licensing requirements. In

addition, Carriage House is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which is a voluntary but very thorough process assuring quality programming. Carriage House is also licensed by the Department of Education as a Private Academic School to provide a Kindergarten program.

Finally, in January 2009 we received LEED GOLD certification in the *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) for an Existing Building* rating system. Our building is one out of two LEED® buildings in Western Pennsylvania. And, we believe we are one of the first (if not the only) childcare center in the country to be environmentally certified in an old facility.

So What Does This Mean?

Carriage House has made drastic improvements to the building and to our maintenance practices that adhere to environmental standards. Six major changes have taken place to assure an environmentally healthy building:

1. The entire heating and cooling system in the building was redesigned to provide optimum energy efficiency (93% efficient at a savings of 70% in natural gas cost) and to provide healthier indoor air quality for our children.
2. The lighting has been substantially improved by adding natural light from replacement windows and by using lighting products that are non-reflective and have a natural light quality. All lamps were chosen because they have lower mercury content.
3. The cleaning products that we use now are certified environmentally healthy and biodegradable—safer for people.
4. All paint sealants and finishing products were chosen because they contain low VOCs (volatile organic compounds).
5. We have instituted a building-wide recycling program. This has allowed us to teach children about “reduce, re-use, recycle”.
6. We have professionally removed and/or contained all indoor environmental hazards.

We are constantly striving to make our program “green”, both in our use of materials and the curriculum to which we expose our children. We value the environment and your child’s future, and are excited about our involvement in the *LEED®* program.

CHCC is licensed and regulated by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS). Regulations are very explicit and are outlined in a manual that we are required to follow. Sometimes parents may question our insistence on the completion of forms. Our license could be put in jeopardy if regulations are not followed, which is why your cooperation is essential.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Hours of Operation

Carriage House is open year round, Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. There are a variety of programs offered to meet both the children's and parents' individual needs. The Center is closed on major national holidays and for at least a week around the Christmas and New Year's holidays. There is also a short break before the beginning of summer camp and before the fall program starts so that staff can prepare for the new sessions. A new calendar is available to parents each year and can be found on our website.

Children's Schedules

Children's daily schedules are not to exceed 9 hours, giving working parents half an hour both before and after to travel to and from work. Parents complete a form each year letting us know the hours their child will attend each day. Changes to this schedule need to be cleared with teachers and the administration. We aim to be flexible, but we also understand the importance of consistent schedules for children. Staffing is also arranged based on your child's schedule, so changes to that schedule must be cleared with CHCC administration.

Staff:Child Ratios

Carriage House generally exceeds the ratios of staff to children recommended by NAEYC which is as follows:

<u>AGE (MONTHS)</u>	<u># STAFF</u>	<u># CHILDREN</u>
0-12	1	4
13-24	1	5
25-36	1	6
37 +	1	10

The Infant-Toddler Program provides 12 month full day care. Children are divided into age groupings as follows:

Infant Room	6 weeks - 9 months
Older Infant Room	9 months-12 months
Young Toddler Room	12 months - 18 months
Toddler Room	18 months - 30 months
Twos Room	24 months - 40 months

These age groups are approximate and vary according to the time of year a child is enrolled. Each child's developmental level is also a determining factor, rather than placement being decided by chronological age alone.

The Preschool Program is divided into a school year session and a summer camp session. The school year begins in early September and ends during the last week of May. Summer camp operates during June, July and August. Both half-day and full-day programs are available. Children are grouped by age and there is usually a full year's age range within a group.

Children enrolled in the school year session are divided into age groups as follows:

Half-Day Program

Program Name	Room #	Days of the Week	Time
Two Morning Twos (2x2s)	104	T/Th	9 am -12 pm
		(w/ lunch option)	9 am -1 pm

Program Name	Room #	Days of the Week	Time
Three Morning Threes (3x3s)	104	M/W/F	9 am -12 pm

		(w/ lunch option)	9 am -1 pm
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Half-Day/Full-Day Programs

In the following age groups, early morning and late afternoon extended day options are available from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm and curriculum planning is done by the teaching staff for the entire day. Keeping to a maximum daily schedule of 9 hours, parents can design their child's schedule according to their individual needs, keeping in mind that consistency is important for young children.

The **minimum attendance** required in order to provide this consistency is listed below:

Program Name	Room #	Days of the Week	Time
Threes	101	M-F (includes lunch)	9 am -1 pm
		3 Full Days (includes lunch)	9 am -3:30 pm

Program Name	Room #	Days of the Week	Time
Fours	102 & 107	M-F (includes lunch)	9 am -1 pm
		3 Full days (includes lunch)	9 am -3:30 pm

Program Name	Room #	Days of the Week	Time
Fours/Fives (Kindergarten)	108	5 Full days	9 am -3:30 pm

Summer Camp (for 3-7 year olds)

In addition to the school year program, we offer a summer camp for children during June, July and August. The Center is open daily from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm and a variety of full-time and part-time options are available. A separate application and signed financial agreement are required for children who attend the summer program.

ADMISSIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Eligibility

The Carriage House enrolls children from the general community who are eligible by age and development for the individual programs. The Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, creed or religion, national or ethnic background, veteran's status or disability, sexual orientation or political persuasion in administration of admission and program policies and practices. To begin the enrollment process, the parent should telephone the Center for information, request an application and inquire about visitation.

Visitation

The Center is open to visitation so that parents may observe children in the classroom environment. Parents are encouraged to visit with their child before applying. A prior appointment is necessary. Once enrolled, parents are welcome to visit the program at any time. We encourage parents to spend time in their child's classroom getting to know the other children

and teachers. Please talk to your child's teacher to schedule these visits.

Application Process for New Students

Applications for enrollment may be submitted with the application fee at any time during the year. Children may be enrolled throughout the year, provided space is available in the appropriate room. In order to secure a space, a designated non-refundable deposit is required after a child is accepted. This deposit is credited against the last tuition payment of the child's enrollment at the Center, provided all contractual agreements are met. You may also choose to donate the deposit to support our program.

Application Process for Returning Students

Once a child is enrolled at the Carriage House Children's Center, that child is eligible to attend any of our summer or fall programs. In January parents are asked to submit an Application for Enrolled Students, so that we can meet the needs of our Center families and give preference to returning students. Your initial deposit is applied to the next school year, guaranteeing your child's continued enrollment. No additional fees are required.

Enrolling Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs (e.g., developmental delays, impaired vision or hearing and/or speech delays) are considered for enrollment after consultation with the parents and any other professional involved. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his or her individual capabilities and needs. If the child's needs can be appropriately met at the Center and space is available, then enrollment takes place and on-going consultation with therapists and the appropriate health professionals is coordinated. Parents will be informed when support staff for children with special needs are present in the classroom on a regular basis. Confidentiality about all children and families will be maintained; information will be shared among CHCC staff as needed. Disclosure of information about a child's medical condition will require parental consent.

CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS

A financial agreement covering the agreed upon time a child is to attend the Center is required for every child. Payment may not be deducted for the time a child is not in the Center because of illness or during family vacations. Schedule changes must be made in conjunction with the child's teachers and the Center administration, and appropriate billing procedures will be enacted. It is essential that the arrangements of the financial agreement be followed and payments must be made on time (in accordance with the payment plan you have selected). Any questions about payment and/or necessary variances from this contract should be brought to the office's attention before payment is due.

Staff patterns are built around the schedule you request so that there will always be enough staff to care for your child. We require that you follow that schedule and make a request if you need to make a change, even for a day, so we can adjust staffing. All children must be picked up promptly by their scheduled departure time.

Tuition Policy

Upon admission to Carriage House Children's Center a \$250 deposit is required. This deposit may be credited against the last tuition payment of your child's enrollment at the Center, provided all contractual agreements are met. If circumstances necessitate withdrawing your child from the program before the end date of your contract agreement, you are responsible for two months' tuition after your child's last day unless a replacement is found. Additionally, your deposit is not refundable.

Parents receive a financial agreement at the beginning of the school year in September and the beginning of the summer program in June (preschool and summer camp only). Financial contracts for the Infant/Toddler program are for 12 months. Parents have the choice of paying their child's tuition monthly, in two payments or one payment. Monthly payments are due by the 5th of each month, two payments are due on September 5th and January 5th, and one payment is due on September 5th. Parents will receive a 3% discount for making a payment in full and a 1.5% discount for making two payments. A late fee of \$15 is charged for tuition received after the due date. An administrative fee of \$25 is charged if a change to the financial agreement is requested. Changes may include adding extra hours or days to a child's schedule; however, reduction in days and hours is not permitted once a financial agreement has been signed.

A sibling discount of 5% of the tuition for the oldest child is offered to families with more than one child enrolled. In order to receive the discount the children must be enrolled full-time for 12 months.

Field Trip Fees

Each year we are excited to offer our older preschool children a variety of fun and enriching field trip opportunities. These field trips are made possible by contributions from the Center, Parent-Teacher Organization, and parents. In the fall, parents of preschool children will receive a separate invoice to cover a portion of the costs. Examples of field trips include Tiny Tots concerts at Heinz Hall, The Children's Festival, and trips to local museums.

Forms and Confidentiality

Upon enrollment, parents are required to complete and review a packet of forms and materials. The following must be on file for each child:

- Emergency Information/Permission Form
- Application Form
- Signed Financial Agreement
- Current Child Health Appraisal with Immunizations
- Background Information Form
- Signed copy of our Medication Policy
- Signed Authorization for Release of Health Information
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Enrollment form
- *Infant packets also include a Food Permission Form and a SIDS notification.

All records pertaining to an individual child or family are confidential. Disclosure of the child's records beyond family members and staff shall require parental consent except in cases of abuse

or neglect. Children's records are kept in the main office and locked when school is not in session. These records are available only to teaching staff, the Executive Director, Program Manager, and office staff. Information in a child's records is shared among the Directors and teaching staff for the purpose of curriculum planning and providing appropriate care for the child. Office staff have access to children's files for the purpose of maintaining appropriate records required by our licensing agency, the DPW. Parents have a right to review their child's file and should make a request to the Executive Director if they wish to do so.

Withdrawal or Termination

Parents who choose to withdraw their child from the Center before the end date of the financial agreement are responsible for two months' tuition after the date of withdrawal if a replacement is not found by CHCC. The deposit is non-refundable in this case.

If concerns develop regarding a child's adjustment or development, the child's teachers and Program Manager will meet with the child's parents to discuss the situation and to jointly determine an appropriate plan to address the concerns. The plan will follow an established time line including ongoing communication between staff and parents. If it is determined that the Center is unable to meet the child's needs appropriately or that another setting would benefit the child, suggestions and referrals will be given to the family. An appropriate transition will be worked out with staff and parents.

When you know that you will be leaving the Center, it is important to tell the staff and Program Director so that the transition can be supported and provide a sense of closure for all. Good-byes are as important as Hellos!

CURRICULA AND LEARNING

The Carriage House Children's Center's early childhood program provides a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children. Teachers are guided by the High/Scope curriculum as well as by NAEYC's teaching standards. Parents will receive a specific room schedule and information about curriculum upon enrollment. Individualized information about children's daily activities is posted in classrooms for parents' information. In addition, each classroom has created a Classroom Portfolio containing detailed information about their room. This portfolio is available to families at any time.

Staff Qualifications

We value the diverse teaching styles of our unique and eclectic staff, and are proud of and excited about what each teacher brings to our program. Many teachers in the Carriage House program are college graduates with formal training in one or more of the following areas: early childhood, child development, psychology, human development, music, and family studies. Rooms are also staffed by experienced assistant teachers and aides, college work-study, and practicum students. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) requires that all staff persons in regular contact with children have the following clearances: PA Criminal History

check from the PA Department of Welfare; PA Child Abuse clearance from the PA State Police; and Fingerprint Clearance from the FBI. Additionally, Keystone STARS requires that each full time teacher receive 24 hours of Early Childhood training hours over the course of each school year. Finally, staff members are required to have a health assessment upon hire and every two years after hire; staff also must pass a TB test upon hire.

Classroom Environments

Carriage House classrooms are varied in size and layout, as well as in decorative style and general atmosphere. Each room is a model classroom, diligently arranged and maintained by the teachers with guidance from the Infant Toddler or Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ITERS/ECERS) and from NAEYC standards. Your child will be exposed in her classroom to materials that will stimulate growth in all areas of development; she will gain a sense of independence and responsibility as she is able to use accessible, child-sized containers and “read” labels; she will have positive, purposeful interactions with her classmates and teachers as she works and plays in a room that is designed to stimulate those interactions; she will be able to find a space that is quiet and private as needed; and she will learn about and practice health and safety routines that are built into the daily routine.

High\Scope

The teaching staff at Carriage House Children’s Center is motivated by the developmentally appropriate, child-centered approach of the **High/Scope Curriculum**, and implements this curriculum in each classroom, Infants through Kindergarten. Our use of the High/Scope Curriculum reflects our respect for children and our belief that play is valuable work. Through utilization of this inspiring curriculum, children are engaged in **Active Learning**; they are involved in important **adult-child interactions**; they spend their time in a carefully arranged **learning environment**; and they follow a **daily routine** that supports each of the above principles. **Key Experiences** are another important aspect of the High/Scope Curriculum, as is the **evidence collection** that the teachers at CHCC use both for tracking developmental growth and for planning. Included in your enrollment packet are the documents *An Introduction to High\Scope for CHCC Infant/Toddler Parents*, and *An Introduction to High\Scope for CHCC Parents*, for the preschool program. These documents will give you more specific details about our approach.

Assessment

Our goal for all children is to facilitate the development of self-esteem through positive social interaction with adults and peers, while encouraging self control, independence, and the development of a sense of competence and mastery. More specifically, our education goals include development in the following High/Scope Key Experience areas:

- Sense of Self/Initiative
- Social Relations
- Creative Representation
- Music and Movement
- Communication/Language and Literacy
- Exploration & Early Logic/Mathematics and Science

Assessment of your child’s development in these areas is crucial. Teachers observe, record, and document what children do and how they do it, and from these observations plan for and provide

materials and experiences to support growth in all areas of development. If, during the assessment process, any concerns arise around your child's development, a teacher will meet with you to discuss a plan and the possibility of additional support services.

Obtaining Support Services

In some cases, special needs (including social/emotional or behavioral needs) may be uncovered during a child's time at Carriage House. The teachers will make every effort to work with and accommodate a child exhibiting a special need. If it is determined by the teachers, Program Director and parents that additional supports are needed, parents will be encouraged and supported as they seek all available services for their child, such as screenings, evaluations, and therapeutic interventions. In some cases, inclusion support will be required because it is not always possible for the Center to provide extra staff to assist with the child's special needs. In the event that additional support services are not successful and it is determined that enrollment at Carriage House is not in the best interest of the individual child and/or other children, the Executive Director will work with the parents to find another child care arrangement.

Transitions

Your child's transitions in child care should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure that the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to Center: Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the Center, speak with or meet with a teacher, and visit the classroom. Depending on your child's age and needs, we will work with you to set up a visitation and transition schedule.

Transition between classrooms: At the end of each school year, children from the Infant-Toddler program spend a few days gradually being exposed to their upcoming classroom and teachers. You will be invited to meet with your child's new teachers and to learn about the classroom before your child transfers to the new room.

Children from the preschool classrooms generally need less time to transition, but they will be introduced to the new classroom and teachers before the first day; you are welcome to meet with the new teachers and visit the classroom as well, either before the year begins or at the Open House in October.

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure the toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities.

Please communicate with your child's teacher regarding this important part of your child's

life. We have found that when a child is ready, the process will be very quick. When pushed before ready, the process can be a long and needlessly stressful one for both your child and you. Please ask for the document *Toilet Training at Carriage House Children's Center* if you have questions.

Rest Time

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs without loose blankets or toys in their cribs.

After lunch, all children participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities. The Center provides a rest mat and sheet for each child. The sheet is washed weekly and the mat is cleaned monthly. You may provide a small blanket and stuffed toy for your child to sleep with; these items must be labeled with your child's name. Teachers will send personal items home to be washed at least monthly. Because our storage space is limited, please do not send pillows or large blankets.

Outings and Field Trips

The local community is an important component of our child-centered curriculum. One of the ways we incorporate the community into the Center life is through outings and field trips. Weather permitting, infant, toddler and preschool classrooms conduct supervised walking trips around the neighborhood. Additionally, preschool classrooms may plan trips to local places of interest such as farms and theaters. Families will be notified in advance of field trips. For safety information, please see the Safety section of this handbook.

Holidays and Cultural Celebrations

We encourage an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community. Carriage House teachers provide time for holiday celebrations in child-oriented ways that do not over-stimulate or overwhelm children, and which embody the human values of the holiday. We hope to provide experiences from which children can gain an appreciation for the richness of their own and other cultures. If you are interested in sharing part of your culture, please see a teacher. (Please note that religious instruction and worship are not provided at the Center; we recognize and celebrate holidays without presenting their religious aspects.)

Birthdays

Birthdays are special events that are often celebrated with sweet foods. Because we serve nutritious, low-sugar snacks on a daily basis, we feel that an occasional sweet birthday treat can be shared in the classroom. If you choose to send a sweet treat, please focus on nutrition as much as possible, and send small portions (mini cupcakes vs. regular sized; a small cookie rather than a large one). Remember that you should be providing a healthy grain and a fruit as usual, and the small birthday treat in addition.

If teachers notice that many children have birthdays within a short amount of time, they will suggest ways to keep the sweet treats to a minimum. Please consider the age of the children when selecting treats—no chocolate or heavy sugar for children under age 2, and consider plain cupcakes or muffins rather than frosted ones. Candy is not allowed. Be sure to note any classroom allergies before providing your child's birthday snack.

If you are hosting a birthday party away from the Center, please note that invitations should only be distributed in Parent Mailboxes if every child in the class is being invited. Otherwise, please send out invitations privately.

Toys from Home

Our classroom shelves are fully stocked with appropriate and engaging toys and learning materials. Because it is understandably difficult for children to take turns with their own personal toys, and due to the possibility of loss or breakage, we have created a policy around bringing toys from home to the Center. Except in cases of necessary security items such as a pacifier, small blanket, or special stuffed animal, we ask that toys and books from home be left at home. Sometimes a child cannot seem to get in the car without a home toy, and in these cases we request that the toys be left in the car. Being firm and consistent can insure that your child's day gets off to a good start. The exception to this is if your child's classroom has a Show and Share day. In this instance, the toy brought from home must not represent violence as such toys encourage violent play in group settings. Toy weapons or any toys with projectiles are included in this category. In any case when bringing an item from home, be sure to clearly label the item. We cannot be held responsible for lost or broken toys.

Technology and Interactive Media

Teachers at Carriage House recognize that children today are growing up in a world full of technology and interactive media that if used appropriately can support children's learning and development. Technology and interactive media can be valuable tools when used intentionally with children to extend and support **active, hands-on, creative and authentic engagement** with those around them and with their world. When incorporating technology into our curriculum it is our intention that teachers:

- allow children to create content rather than consume it
- provide opportunities that are active rather than passive
- use technology as a means to share information with families; communicate between home and school; and build stronger relationships with parents
- limit screen time to no more than 10 minutes per day in our pre-kindergarten classrooms (the use of non-interactive technologies and media for children less than 2 years of age is not allowed)

HOME AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Limited English Proficiency

Carriage House wants to ensure that all persons with limited English proficiency have meaningful and equal access to all communications. Carriage House is fortunate to have families, staff and friends who may be called to assist with communications for families who need language assistance.

If you have limited English proficiency, please notify the Executive Director or your child's teacher.

Partnerships with Parents

The Center endeavors to form a partnership with parents to assist them with the complex task of child rearing. A productive partnership can only develop in a community of trust and mutual confidence. To build that confidence, the Center works to provide good communications through informational meetings, newsletters, parent conferences, informal contacts and by providing opportunities for family fun and socializing. Parents reciprocate by sharing information with us regarding their children, by participating in conferences and CHCC events, and by adhering to classroom and Center policies, procedures, and regulations.

Teacher Contact

It is essential that teachers and parents communicate on a regular basis. We have found, however, that lengthy meetings with teachers during class tend to disrupt the classroom routine. If you have a specific matter to discuss with one of your child's teachers, please make an appointment to do so outside of class. Out of respect for children's feelings, staff try to avoid discussions about children in their presence, and we ask that parents do the same.

At times it may be necessary for you to contact a teacher during classroom hours. Please respect the teachers' time and the busy classroom schedule, and ask the office staff to relay a message. A teacher will get back to you if necessary. If you must speak with a teacher immediately, staffing will be arranged so that a teacher can take the call.

One teacher will be designated as your main contact, initiating meetings with you to inform you of your child's progress during the year. Please share with us any family events or problems which may affect your child at school so that we can understand any behavioral changes. We want you to be involved in decision-making about your child, and we want you to share with us the goals you have for your child. You are our main source of knowledge and information regarding your child, so it is important for us to communicate regularly. If at any time you have a concern about our curriculum or practices, we encourage you to bring it to our attention so that your child can participate successfully in our program.

Parent Conferences

Teachers schedule two conferences with parents during the school year, usually in December/January and April/May, to share ideas about the total program, to discuss your child's progress and individual needs and to respond to any questions you may have. Other appointments may be scheduled with the teacher any time you wish to discuss a particular matter. If you find it difficult to talk about a specific issue with the teacher, please speak to the Program Director in order to resolve the problem.

Parents with Classroom Concerns

Understandably, families will at times have questions or concerns regarding classroom policies or procedures. In such an event, parents are encouraged to set up a time to speak directly with their child's teacher(s). (Depending upon the circumstances, the parent or teacher may request the presence of the Program Director at such a meeting.)

If the parent's concern or question has not been satisfactorily answered, he or she is encouraged

to contact the Program Director, and if there are still concerns, the Executive Director should then be contacted.

In all situations, please do not discuss sensitive matters in the presence of any children. Private meetings away from the children should be arranged.

Center Notices

Each parent has a mailbox for notices from the Center. These mailboxes are an important link in the communications system at Carriage House, and we encourage you to check your mailbox daily and to reply promptly to notices when appropriate. Additionally, we communicate frequently through email. Please be sure your email address is up-to-date. Important information can also be found on the Carriage House website (www.carriagehouse.org) including the school year calendar, updated tuition information, etc.

Messages to the Center

Messages that concern you or your child at school should be in writing as often as possible. To facilitate written communication, each classroom is equipped with a daily log in which you or a teacher may write information that affects a child's schedule. Messages that need to be relayed to a teacher during classroom hours should be given to the office; an office staff person will then relay the message to the classroom at an appropriate time.

Absences

Please notify the Center by 10 am if your child will be absent on a day he or she normally attends. We appreciate knowing whether your child is ill or absent for another reason. Also, if your child will arrive later than 10 am, please call the Center.

Evaluations

Parents have a chance to evaluate the Carriage House program at the end of every school year (and earlier when we are going through re-accreditation) via an anonymous survey designed by NAEYC. We welcome parental comments and suggestions at any time.

Emergency Closings

Even if the weather is severe we make every effort to open and stay open. It will be necessary to close if there is a A State of Emergency declared, requiring everyone to stay off the streets, or if our building is in some way not functional.

Please realize that in severe weather some staff may find it difficult or prohibitive to come in, or may be late arriving. Under some circumstances we may need to combine groups of children and it may be necessary to supervise with staff who are less familiar to your child.

We utilize REMIND, a communication platform that sends out real time text messages to our families. The REMIND system is only used for notifying families of scheduled closed days and any emergency notifications.

In addition, the local TV stations, their websites, and radio stations will have our announcements

if we are unable to open, need to delay opening or close early. Please do not call the office to find out about closures, as this ties up phone lines unnecessarily and takes office staff away from other important duties.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

General Procedures

Respect for children underlies all guidance and discipline. We aim to carry out types of guidance that support, not undermine, a child's self-esteem. We believe that children need to feel that adults care for them, but will also help them to control themselves. Teachers assist children to understand and observe limits by stopping unacceptable behavior, encouraging acceptable behavior and modeling behavior they value as adults; that is, treating others with respect and physical gentleness and using words to resolve conflicts.

Problem-Solving

When children are involved in inter-personal conflicts, we find it most beneficial to facilitate the children's negotiations rather than to impose our own solutions on them. If two children are arguing over a particular toy, we help them to verbalize the problem, and then we help them to come up with solutions to the problem. With younger children teachers may make suggestions such as finding a duplicate toy; as children get older teachers may help the children to ask for a turn or come up with a way to use the toy together. Giving children some control over who gets to use what and when can often dispel a conflict quite quickly, with the added benefit of helping the children become involved in solving their own problems.

Positive Language

Adults are encouraged to correct children by using positive words and a calm tone of voice. For instance, rather than saying, "No, no, get off the table," we let children know what we do want them to do by saying, "Feet stay on the floor." Gently helping the child to put her feet back on the floor can help the child learn that adults are in control and will keep them safe. In carrying out discipline we may try several alternatives, depending upon the particular situation:

Explaining why a child cannot be allowed to engage in a certain activity: "It's not safe to carry toys on the steps"; "Biting hurts."

Redirecting inappropriate expressions of emotions: "You can pound the play-doh"; "You can kick the ball."

Sitting with a child for a short period of time and talking about the unacceptable behavior: "I will hold you for a while because I can't let you hit Bobby. Hitting hurts."

Physical Aggression

A child's first language is physicality, and she often resorts to being physical when in a stressful situation. When children hurt each other at Carriage House, the teacher's role is to calmly keep everyone safe, help the hurt child express himself, and help the aggressor find alternative ways to solve her problem.

With preverbal children, we speak for them:

"Ouch! Jamie doesn't want you to pull his hair. Use gentle hands."

With verbal children, we help them express themselves:

“Do you want her to push you? You can stay ‘STOP!’”

We reinforce the hurt child’s words and let the other child know it is not okay to hurt:

“She’s saying she doesn’t like that! I can’t let you hurt other kids.”

We help the aggressor find other ways to communicate:

“It looks like you wanted to use that toy. Can you ask her how many minutes she’s going to be using it?”

Discipline vs. Punishment

Discipline and punishment are not the same. We DO NOT use any type of physical punishment at the Center. Instead, we help children work through conflicts and problems, and we at times provide logical consequences to certain actions (such as removing a toy or redirecting a child to another activity when she is repeatedly mistreating the toy). In situations that require a child to be removed due to physical aggression, we provide time and space for the child to re-gain control.

Time-Out

We find that though Time-Out can help with classroom management, it often does nothing to help a child gain true control, understand, or stop a behavior. Often it simply shames them or gives them attention they may have been seeking. If a child has a particularly difficult time stopping a behavior we may offer a cooling off time, or we may redirect a child to another activity or area until they can gain control. Depending upon the child’s age, we may speak with them briefly when they are calm and help them understand what alternatives exist to the aggression or misuse of materials.

Bullying/Teasing

Carriage House Children’s Center teachers do not allow bullying or teasing. Because young children cannot normally empathize, it is difficult for them to understand how unkind words or actions might make another person feel. Typically when adults perceive a young child to be teasing or bullying, the child does not actually have a cruel intention—he or she is just learning to understand the world in which we live. Teachers treat these uncommon situations as they do any other guidance issue. Children are helped to express their feelings, and aggressors are helped to stop the unacceptable behavior.

Biting

The Center recognizes that biting is a common behavior among toddlers (and sometimes preschool age children) who do not yet possess the cognitive and verbal skills necessary to handle conflict in a more acceptable manner. Center staff treat biting as any other unacceptable behavior by giving corrective guidance to the biter and comfort (and first aid if necessary) to the bitten child. The Carriage House policy is to keep the identity of the biter confidential. Carriage House feels that this knowledge can breed ill will between the parents and children involved, and prefers to work quietly with the biter and his/her parents to correct the problem. If biting occurs in your child’s classroom, you will receive more specific information about how we address this type of behavior.

Behaviors that are Challenging, Unsafe, or Disruptive

We expect young children to engage in a certain amount of behaviors that require some teacher intervention. Teachers will use positive behavior support strategies to work with children having difficulties at the Center, so that they may participate safely, and the safety and well-being of all children is protected.

When a child is not responding to the positive support strategies the teachers will inform parents of these behaviors, so that everyone can work together to develop an individualized plan that will support the child's inclusion and success in the classroom. Teachers will inform parents about the child's progress through a weekly or bi-weekly update. This update will take the place of a daily report, so that other aspects of the child's day can be focused on rather than the negative behavior becoming the main topic of discussion.

Under certain circumstances, recurring negative behaviors will require additional support. Please see the **Obtaining Support Services** section for more information. Additionally, there may be times when a child's behavior is detrimental to the safety and well being of the other children and staff. In such cases, a parent may be asked to pick up their child when our methods are not stopping the behaviors from occurring.

NUTRITION

Meals

All food is prepared in our state of the art commercial kitchen by our food coordinator and her assistant. The Center is aware that children need well-balanced meals and snacks that are low in sugar and fat. The Center participates in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and food served conforms to federal guidelines. Please notify the Center of any food allergies or other dietary restrictions your child may have.

The Center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program of the USDA, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Complaints about discrimination may be submitted to the USDA at the address on the poster located in the office.

Lunch as well as morning and afternoon snacks are served to all children at the Center. A lunch menu is emailed to parents monthly. The Center provides the morning snack and lunch to children in the Young Toddlers, Toddlers, and Twos groups, while parents are responsible for bringing a nutritious afternoon snack for their child's class on a rotating schedule. The Center provides lunch and an afternoon snack to children in the preschool groups (including 2X2s and 3X3s), and parents are responsible for bringing a nutritious morning snack for their child's class. Parents must provide lunches for preschoolers during summer camp programs, due to the frequent schedule changes that occur due to weather and field trips. For nutritious snack ideas, please see the **Parent-Provided Snacks** below.

Infant Feedings

Through the CACFP the Center offers one choice of formula and several baby food choices to enrolled infants. Parents of infants may instead choose to furnish food for their children (breast milk, formula, cereal, and infant foods when age appropriate). It is very important for parents to

label all containers brought from home (including bottles, bottle tops, and jars) so that children get the foods intended for them. As children begin to eat table foods, teachers and parents plan together which foods each child may eat from the Center's kitchen.

Infants are fed “on demand” to the extent possible. Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Additional information will be provided in your child’s enrollment packet.

Parent-Provided Snacks

Parents of toddlers and preschoolers are periodically asked to bring a nutritious snack for their child's group. This gives the children an opportunity to share with their friends and provides variety in food.

The CHCC Snack Policy includes suggestions of healthy snacks appropriate for your child's age group. Parents are also made aware of any food allergies or diet restrictions among their child's classmates in order to avoid inappropriate foods for that group. Each classroom distributes a snack rotation schedule for parents at the beginning of each month.

CHILD FRIENDLY SNACK IDEAS:

Suggested Grains

Low-sugar cereals (i.e., Cheerios, Life)
Fruit breads
Whole wheat Muffins
Whole wheat Mini Bagels
Mini Whole Wheat Pitas
Whole wheat English Muffins
Unfrosted Cereal bars (Fig Bars)
Graham Crackers, Animal crackers
Whole grain crackers

Suggested Fruits

Fresh fruit of all types—berries, melons, apples, oranges, bananas, **sliced** grapes, pears, etc.
Natural applesauce (no sugar added)
Fruit cups (packed in water, juice or light syrup)
Dried fruits (pineapple, raisins, mango)

Excluded Foods

Certain foods are not served, or are modified for safety, at Carriage House. Please follow these guidelines when packing your child’s lunch in the summer, or when providing snack to the classroom:

- *Grapes and grape or cherry tomatoes must be sliced for children under the age of 4
- *We do not serve hot dogs.
- *Popcorn and pretzels are not served to children under the age of 4
- *Hard vegetables are steamed slightly before serving

Grains to avoid

High-sugar, frosted cereals
Pop-tarts
Iced/frosted breads or muffins
Rice-Krispie treats
Potato or tortilla chips
Pretzels
Popcorn

Fruit products to avoid

Fruit canned in heavy syrup
Fruit roll-ups
Fruit gummies
Jello

Eating

We try to have a relaxed attitude about the amounts of food children eat. We find that we can trust them to know if they are hungry. If they do not eat much at snack time, they usually make up for it at lunch. Food for Toddlers and Preschool children is served "family style" and children are encouraged to serve themselves. Teachers invite children to taste all foods, but do not demand that they do so. We draw attention to the nutritious and colorful food that has been prepared for them.

Allergies and Food Preferences

If your child has a food allergy, you must list it on your Emergency Information/Parental Consent form upon enrollment. In addition, you must fill out a Special Care Plan for your child. Your child's teacher will discuss this plan with you. With your permission, your child's allergy will be posted in all food preparation areas. Any medications needed for the treatment of exposure to the allergen(s) will require a doctor's prescription and a Medication Log to be filled out (see **Medication**, page 26). Depending upon the severity of the allergy or the number of allergies a certain child has, the family may be asked to provide their child's meals. In many cases, Carriage House will provide alternative foods for the allergic child. Your child's teacher will discuss options with you.

If your child has food preferences such as vegetarianism, or if you would like her to avoid certain foods for religious or other reasons, we will attempt to accommodate you by providing alternatives or by omitting certain foods from her plate. In some circumstances (such as when wheat or dairy is the omitted food), it will be necessary for the family to provide alternatives.

Children with allergies, sensitivities, or food preferences will be treated in an inclusive way, and will not be separated from other children except in cases of severe allergies.

CLOTHING

School Dress

Please dress your child in casual, comfortable, washable clothing appropriate for the weather, "messy" art activities and outdoor play. Your child should feel free to become involved without being concerned about ruining good clothes. Clothing should also allow your child to use the toilet independently. Shoes with gripper soles, appropriate for running and climbing, such as sneakers, are the safest and most appropriate. Flip flops are not appropriate; covered toes are preferred during all seasons. *If your child is not wearing safe shoes, he will be restricted from certain equipment on the playground or gym.* Avoid articles of clothing with drawstrings, which can pose a strangulation hazard to your child. Names must be in all articles of clothing that are worn to the Center: coats, sweaters, jackets, mittens, hats, shoes, and boots.

Extra Clothes

Each child must keep a change of clothes at the Center: undershirts (if worn), outer shirts, pants, socks, and underpants (as appropriate). All items must be clearly labeled with the child's name and placed in his or her bin. For children who are potty training, please provide at least 3 sets of extra clothes, including socks. Please wash and return any clothing that your child has borrowed from the Center. Parents provide all diapers, wipes, and creams for children not yet using the

toilet. These items must also be labeled with the child's name.

HEALTH

General Information

The health and well-being of everyone involved at the Center is very important to us. Our goal is to **promote health**, to **prevent illness**, and to **manage illness responsibly** to the best of our ability. We are committed to meeting this goal by providing a clean environment, healthful food, rest and developmentally appropriate activities. The Center staff is trained in Pediatric First Aid with Blocked Airway, and to recognize symptoms of illness in children. Both children and staff are educated about correct and conscientious hand washing, which is the most effective preventative measure to stop the spread of illness. We use guidelines and procedures for managing illness developed in consultation with our licensing agencies and health professionals.

Health Assessment

At the time of enrollment, parents must provide the Center with a completed Health Assessment form signed by the child's physician. Subsequent health appraisals are to be completed according to the schedule for routine health supervision and immunizations as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are Department of Public Welfare requirements and help to ensure early detection, treatment and prevention of health problems. The Center is unable to provide care if this requirement is not met. Staff members are required to have a bi-annual health appraisal.

Illness in Children

Carriage House Children's Center

CHILD HEALTH POLICY

The health and well-being of everyone involved at the Center is very important to us. Our goal is to **promote health**, to **prevent illness**, and to **manage illness responsibly** to the best of our ability. We are committed to meeting this goal by providing a clean environment, healthful food, rest, and developmentally appropriate activities. The Center staff is trained to use first aid and CPR and to recognize symptoms of illness in children. Both children and staff are educated about correct and conscientious hand washing, the most effective preventive measure to stop the spread of illness. We use guidelines and procedures for managing illness developed in consultation with our licensing agencies and health professionals.

Parents must provide the Center with a completed Health Assessment form signed by the child's physician within one month of enrollment. Subsequent health appraisals are to be completed according to the schedule for routine health supervision and immunizations as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are Department of Public Welfare requirements and will help to ensure early detection, treatment and prevention of health problems. If your child is overdue for any routine health services you must provide evidence of an appointment stating when those services will be completed. Any child who is under-immunized because of a medical condition must have supporting documentation from a licensed health professional. The Center is unable to provide care if these requirements are not met. Staff members are also required to have a bi-annual health appraisal.

As mindful as we are, children do become ill. Each case of illness is different but our focus remains on the child's needs, the possibility of contagion, and the ability of staff to manage the situation given the particular symptoms and conditions. For example, a child with a mild cold and low fever but with a normal activity level can generally be included; a child with a very stuffy nose, persistent coughing, and fever, who is very uncomfortable and irritable, is unable to stay. We observe children closely for signs of illness as they are greeted and throughout the day. Parents should tell the staff if their child was ill at home prior to attending on a particular day and if medication has been given. If a child becomes ill at the Center, parents will be contacted immediately. **Please keep emergency contact phone numbers up-to-date so someone can be reached at all times.** Using the Center guidelines and procedures, the staff and parents work together to decide if the Center can accept the responsibility of caring for an ill child. If a child is to be sent home, he or she will be kept comfortable and quiet in the presence of a familiar caregiver, usually in an area separate but not isolated from other children.

Parents must plan ahead for alternative care for an ill child. In the case of most mild illnesses, the **Get Well Room** at The Children's Center of Pittsburgh (412-641-1990) can be used. For more information, please stop by the office to pick up a Get Well Room Fact Sheet.

These are some guidelines used for determining situations when children must be excluded:

- A. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in normal play activities including going outdoors.
- B. The illness results in a greater care need than the child care staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- C. The child has any of the following conditions that indicate a contagious disease or an immediate need for medical evaluation.

Signs, Symptoms and Exclusion Criteria

In addition, a *Signs, Symptoms and Exclusion Criteria Chart* can be found in your child's enrollment file.

Medication

In order to keep our children as safe and healthy as possible, Carriage House policy limits the use of medication. Parents are asked to request the administration of medicine only at those times when absolutely necessary. Please follow the guidelines below when determining whether to ask us to medicate your child.

A signed and dated "Medication Log" form (available in each classroom), defining dosage, directions, and reason for administering the medication, must be completed by the parent/guardian before any medication can be administered at the Center.

Prescription medication is given only when there is a medical need due to illness; and/or when there is a standing order from a doctor *with a specific start and end date*. This medication must be in the original container and labeled with the child's first and last

name, name of the drug, dosage, directions for administering and storing, date of the prescription, and the physician's name.

Non-prescription (OTC) medication is given on a very limited basis and its use is discouraged at our Center. Examples of OTC medications that might be deemed necessary include Benadryl for allergies, or an anti-itch cream for a skin disorder. *The same information that is provided for a prescription medication is required for an OTC medication.* A **Non-Prescription (OTC) Medication Request Form** is available in the front office; it or its equivalent must be completed before the medication can be administered.

Tylenol/Ibuprofen: These types of medication fall under the same regulations as other OTC medications, and must be accompanied by a form with a specific start and end date as well. Tylenol/ibuprofen can be given only under the following circumstances:

1. Upon parental request, for an axillary (under the arm) fever of 100 degrees or above, when the parent or guardian is on the way to pick up their child from the Center.
2. When there is a medical condition (such as a broken bone) and a doctor has signed a note with a specific start and end date.
3. Teething in infants after other comforting methods are taken and a doctor has signed a note with a specific start and end date.

The staff member administering the medication will complete the second half of the Medication Log indicating the time it was given, the dosage, her/his initials, and other information specified on the sheet. S/he will insure that the amount/dosage listed on the Medication Log matches what is listed on the prescription label. If it does not, s/he will confer with the parent.

All medication will be kept under lock and key. Medication requiring refrigeration will be kept in the kitchen refrigerator in a labeled container. Parents are asked to make staff aware of the need for refrigeration when the medication is brought to the Center.

Special Care Plans

If your child has a medical concern (including but not limited to Asthma; allergies to any food, medication, dander, etc;) you must fill out a Special Care Plan. After filling out the plan, please arrange a time to meet with your child's teacher to discuss the plan.

If your child's medical condition requires a life-saving medication or device; a medical device; special diet or food; or other medical aid, we must have access to that required item at all times when the child is on the premises.

ACCIDENT OR INJURY PROCEDURES

First Aid with Blocked Airway or CPR Training

Every teacher is required to attend classes in Pediatric First-Aid with Blocked Airway soon after being hired, and to renew their certification at the intervals specified by the Red Cross or the American Heart Association.

In addition, at all times there is at least one staff member certified in CPR on CHCC premises in case of a child with a condition that could require CPR.

Emergency Information/Parental Consent Form

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) requires that each child attending the Center have an Emergency Information/ Parental Consent form completed and on file at all times. Emergency phone numbers and information about your child's health, medical care provider, and allergies (food, medication, sunscreen, etc.) are all to be recorded on this form and must be readily available in case of accident or injury. The original form is kept in your child's file in the CHCC office; another copy is kept in the classroom and accompanies the class wherever it goes.

The DPW requires that this form be reviewed and updated every six months. If any of the information on this form should change (e.g., your home, work or emergency contact telephone number, or persons to whom your child may be released), please notify the office immediately to update the information. It is vital that we can locate parents or other designated adults quickly in an emergency. It is important to be able to contact a parent any time their child is in the center. If you will not be available, please let the staff know whom to call if the need arises.

Treatment of Minor Injuries

Teachers are trained in injury assessment (minor vs. serious, etc.) as part of their required first-aid instruction. Teachers use soap and water to clean all superficial wounds. Band-aids are applied to protect the wound. An ice pack may be applied to a minor bump or swelling. Parents are contacted if there is any question about a child needing further medical treatment. Parents are notified of all minor injuries requiring first aid treatment via an Injury and Incident Report form and by verbal communication.

Emergency Medical Care

In case of a serious accident or injury we will make an immediate attempt to contact the parents. If parents cannot be reached, we will call the emergency contact person. If we still can't locate a parent we will call the child's physician. If necessary while trying to locate the parents we will call 911. The child, accompanied by a staff member, will be transported by the Pittsburgh EMS to the hospital (designated by the parents on the Emergency Information/ Parental Consent form) or to the hospital which the EMS designates for emergency medical treatment. We will continue to attempt to notify parents to have them meet us at the hospital.

SAFETY

Building Safety

Carriage House is committed to providing a safe and secure environment so that our families feel secure in the knowledge that their children are safe and protected in our care. We are able to do this by controlling entry points into the building, locking doors during school hours, and having a set of eyes to monitor individuals as they come and go.

All entrances to the building are locked from 7:30am to 6pm. Parents are given a four digit code which can be used at the parking lot side door and the front entrance. Any visitor wishing to enter the building during school hours will need to be buzzed into the building by Carriage House office staff. A handicap and stroller entrance is available at the parking lot entrance.

Arrival and Departure

Always accompany your child into the building in the morning. Adults are to open and close gates and doors—please do not allow your child to do so. Children must be brought into their room upon arrival by a parent or other adult, so that both adult and child make contact with a teacher. Children should never be dropped off outside the building and left to go inside without an adult. When leaving, make contact with a teacher so that he or she is aware that your child is leaving.

Please remember to sign in and out on the arrival and departure sheet in your child's room. It is essential to have a completed class roster every morning and every evening, as it serves as the main attendance system in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation.

To insure the safety of all children at the Center, we ask that parents observe the following safety rules:

- 1) **Never** leave children unattended, even for a moment, in the Preschool Hall, lobby and hallways, or AP rooms. If you find an unattended child in one of these areas, please stay with that child until his or her parent or teacher is located;
- 2) Instruct children to walk (not run) in Carriage House hallways;
- 3) Do not allow children to climb up or play on the stairs in the main hallway;
- 4) When leaving the building, hold your child's hand as you cross the parking lot or walk in the alley;
- 5) Be sure your child is following the safety rules when you are on a playground or in a classroom with him or her;
- 6) Do not allow your child to press the elevator buttons or to ride the elevator without you;
- 6) Do not allow children to climb or play on the fire escapes or ramp; and
- 7) Never leave a child unattended in a car, even for a few minutes.

Authorization to Pick Up

No child will be released without authorization by the parent. We must have written or verbal notification of changes in those permitted to pick up your child. Please keep the Emergency Information/ Parental Consent forms in the office and classroom up-to-date. Even when the person picking up your child is designated on the emergency form, you must notify the classroom ahead of time and name the specific person who will be coming. Persons picking up your child who are unknown to our staff will be asked for proper identification.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in a way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency Contact person pick up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Stranger Awareness

The Wightman School Community Building is a public building. Because the Center is unable to partition itself from the rest of the building, teachers as well as parents are encouraged to take an active role in the stranger surveillance system at Carriage House. Visitors to the Wightman School Community Building who come to participate in non-Carriage House programs are encouraged to avoid Carriage House areas. Parents should make an effort to recognize as many other CHCC parents as possible to facilitate the identification of strangers. Parents can approach strangers themselves or alert Center personnel to do so. The approach should not be confrontational; asking "May I help you?" shows that Carriage House areas are being watched and, of course, can be helpful to the visitor.

Plastic Bags

For safety as well as environmental reasons, we do not allow plastic bags on the premises. When transporting anything to and from the Center such as extra clothes, bottles, lunch or snack items, please use a paper or re-usable cloth bag. Plastic bags are extremely unsafe to have around children and we cannot allow them to enter the classroom or any Center space.

Smoking Policy

For everyone's health, safety, and comfort, smoking is not allowed anywhere on the Center premises. The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies. Therefore the indoor and outdoor Center environments are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the Center premises.

Playground Safety

- 1) The play yards are secured with latched gates. For their safety we do not allow children to unlatch the gates. We require that parents follow this school policy when dropping off or picking up their children.
- 2) Children are not permitted to climb on or over the fences. For this reason we ask your cooperation in taking children in and out of the gates, rather than lifting them over the fence.
- 3) We only allow children to ride wheeled tricycles on our soft surface, so we do not require the use of helmets. However, we talk about helmet safety and encourage families to use helmets with their children.
- 4) In the summer, parents are required to apply sunscreen to their child before the school day begins. For full-time children, a container of *non-aerosol* sunscreen, in its original container and clearly labeled with the child's first and last name, should be left at the Center for reapplication as necessary. Sunscreen allergies should be reported on the Emergency Information/ Parental Consent form, and a Special Care plan must be filled out for this and any other allergy; state guidelines require that a Sunscreen Permission form be completed for each child's specific sunscreen.

Field Trip Safety

Parents are informed of all field trips involving car pools, buses, or walks to local attractions (Squirrel Hill library, parks) in advance of each event. Infants, young toddlers, toddlers and twos

may take impromptu walks around the block in which children are either confined in strollers or held by the hand; permission for such trips is given by signing the appropriate section on the Emergency Information/ Parental Consent form.

Before each field trip, teachers review the Emergency Information/ Parental Consent forms for each child; a first aid kit and copies of all Emergency Information/ Parental Consent forms accompany each class wherever it goes. Each child wears a tag or T-shirt containing the name, address and phone number of the Center while away from Carriage House (but not on neighborhood walks). Teachers notify office personnel of their destination, time of departure and expected time of return, and check in again upon returning to the Center. A notice is attached to the classroom door with the destination (e.g., field trip, playground, etc.) before departure.

At least two staff members accompany children on a field trip, no matter how small the group. Otherwise, the required staff/child ratios are maintained in vehicles and at the field trip destination. In the event of an accident or injury away from the classroom, one staff member will remain with the injured child to administer first aid, while another will seek appropriate assistance (call the school, 911, etc.; a mobile phone accompanies classes to the playground across the street from Carriage House). Remaining staff members attend to uninjured children.

Fire Safety

All Carriage House personnel are required to undergo fire safety training once a year. A city Fire Safety official inspects the Center as part of this yearly training. Smoke detectors are placed in every room and at other required locations throughout the building. Fire extinguishers are located on every floor. Fire drills are conducted bi-monthly, and evacuation routes are posted in each classroom. In the event of evacuation in which shelter is required (e.g., extreme weather conditions), children will be taken to the following locations:

Infant Room, Older Infant Room, Young Toddlers, Toddler Room - City Parks
Wightman Annex at 5621 Solway Street

Rooms 104, 105, 101, 107 - The Children's Institute at 1405 Shady Avenue

Rooms 102, 108 - Chatham University-Athletic and Fitness Center on Woodland Road

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Please send your child in labeled weather appropriate clothing and outerwear. Children are expected to go outside when the forecast temperature/wind chill is above 25 degrees, the forecast temperature/heat index is less than 90 degrees, there is no precipitation falling, and there is no current air quality alert.

Traffic/Parking

We ask your cooperation in overcoming traffic and parking problems. Please drive slowly and be aware of pedestrians, especially children, and other cars near the school. The 5600 block of Solway Street where the Center is located, is exempt from street cleaning parking restrictions. Street cleaning takes place on all side streets from April through November, on the 4th

Wednesday and Thursday of each month, 8 am to 2 pm.

Parking in the two alleyways beside the school is prohibited (Arco Way and Colma Way) for safety purposes and to not block our neighbors' parking areas.

The areas parents can utilize for drop-off/pick-up locations are:

1. CHCC Parking Lot
2. The loading zone in front of Carriage House
3. Street parking surrounding the building

Areas that should not be used for drop-off/pick-up:

1. Arco Way (Pre-school playground side)
2. Colma Way (Parking lot side)

Close and secure the gate as you enter and leave the Carriage House yard to prevent children from running out into the adjoining street.

Please do not block the CHCC dumpster shed or the driveway leading to the dumpsters. City trash collectors will not collect the trash if the dumpsters are blocked. This presents a health hazard given the large amount of food and disposable diaper waste that accumulates in our dumpsters.

Remember that the handicapped parking space in the CHCC lot is reserved for those who truly need it. Keep in mind that the Wightman School Community Building has many visitors who need to use this space.

Infants and young children must never be left unattended in your car. If you need to run into the building, ask someone you know to watch your child for you. If you see a parent or child who needs assistance, offer to help.

In order to keep everyone safe, younger children accompanying parents to and from the building should either be carried or have a hand held. Older children walking alongside parents should be instructed to always walk (not run) in the parking lot.

Carriage House has adopted a no-idling policy to protect the health of our children, parents, teachers and visitors to our building. Please turn off your car when parked in the parking lot or designated drop off/pick up areas. Also, because drop off/pick up parking spots are in high demand, please do not sit in your car to text, read emails or make phone calls.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our Center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the Center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is not court documentation.

GENERAL CENTER POLICIES

Parental Supervision

While on Carriage House property, until you have signed your child in or out of his classroom he is under your care and supervision. Please be sure your child is with you at all times, and is following the safety and other guidelines mentioned throughout this handbook. If you have older or younger siblings with you, please be sure that you are also supervising them at all times. While dropping off one child, do not leave your other child(ren) in the Preschool Hall or AP rooms to play. When other classrooms are using those spaces, teachers cannot be responsible for your child; when those spaces are not being used, it is not safe to leave your child alone.

Elevator Use

Please do not allow your child to press the elevator buttons or to ride the elevator by herself.

Cell Phone Use

The time you spend in the Center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with one another about your child. Cell phone conversations are a barrier to the effective, face-to-face communications that we value at Carriage House, and can also be loud or disturbing to others. Please finish your calls before entering the Center so that you are free to greet your child and converse with the teaching staff. Because cell phone use is not allowed at the Center, all adults are able to be attentive to the children and other adults who may wish to communicate with them.

Late Departure Policy

The Center closes promptly at 6:00 pm. This means that all parents, children and staff are leaving the Center, promptly, at 6:00 pm. Please arrive by 5:45 so that you can have a smooth, unrushed exit with your child. If a child cannot be picked up by 6:00 pm, the Center must be informed by telephone. There is a \$5 minimum charge for late departure after 6:00. After the first five minutes, additional minutes will be charged at the rate of \$1/minute. In the event of late arrival, parent and staff member complete a "Late Arrival" form and the parent will be billed by

the office.

The same policy applies to children who are scheduled to be picked up at 1p.m. At that hour, staff are scheduled to go home, to attend a staff meeting, or to go on break. There is a \$5 minimum charge for arrival after 1:00. You will then be charged an additional \$1 for every minute after 1:05.

It is vital that you leave the play yards and the pre-school hall promptly at 1p.m., as this is rest time for all the children staying for the afternoon. We suggest that you use the playground across the street if you or your child wishes to continue socializing with friends.

If you intend to talk to a teacher or know that your departure will be delayed at any of the pick-up times, plan to be at the Center 15 minutes early, so that you and your child can leave on time.

Respectful Behaviors

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

Social Media

Social media are defined as online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the internet to share information. Some of the most popular social media are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn and Digg. In order to protect confidential information about other staff members, our organization, and any child or family involved in our care, Carriage House teachers and administrators are not allowed to ever post information about those subjects on any social media site. We ask that Carriage House families follow the same policy.

Employment of CHCC Staff

Although we provide a list of staff members who are willing to babysit your child, we do request that you adhere to the following guidelines when using this list:

- Please do not make arrangements with a staff member during classroom hours.
- We are not responsible for Carriage House Children's Center employee's behavior outside of their work hours.

UNIVERSITY RELATED PROJECTS

The Carriage House Children's Center is located in the environs of four colleges and universities. Because we offer an excellent setting with unique scheduling and programming, the Carriage House is often called on to be a site for work experience, educational pursuits and research projects. Throughout any school year, in addition to the consistent regular staff, our children meet and interact with work-study students from area colleges; practicum students from child development and early childhood education programs; volunteers from the community; and with

students and academicians from various related disciplines who are doing research or observations at the Center. Our experience has been that these adults enrich the school experience of children and increase the number of positive adult/child interactions that occur. The children look forward to these special people, special activities and special times.

The Executive Director or Program Manager meets with all persons who are interested in observing or interacting with your children. All work-study, practicum students and volunteers receive an orientation and are assigned to specific groups of children and to a staff person for supervision. Each research study is required to have a written explanation of the study and to obtain parental permission for each child involved. Periodic meetings between the students, teachers and Program Manager occur to discuss goals and ways of providing positive experiences for the children. A research and review committee helps to determine which projects are most beneficial for the children, the Center and the researchers. Explanations of goals and methods are required. Any project that is inappropriate for the children will not be permitted. Confidentiality is maintained at all times during university related projects. The Emergency Information/ Parental Consent form also contains a section for parents to grant or deny consent for their child to be photographed, which may occur during a university study.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) strives to involve administrators, teachers, staff, and parents in a variety of activities which support the philosophy of Carriage House. The goal of the PTO is to draw representatives from all these groups to work closely together to augment Carriage House programming through fund raising and parent services.

The PTO publishes a quarterly blog, to cover PTO and Center activities, organizes several fund raising events during the school year, and coordinates the recruitment and activities of Room Parents at the Center. Room Parents are parent volunteers who serve as liaisons between parents and teachers and among parents. Although Room Parent involvement is determined by the preferences of the teachers and parent volunteers in each classroom, common Room Parent activities include: creation of a classroom phone tree to facilitate communication among room families, assisting teachers with special projects, and planning periodic room parties.

The PTO meets year-round, with meeting dates and times determined each year. All parents and staff are invited to attend, and a phone-in option is provided for those unable to attend. Additional information about the PTO, including a summary of the year=s fundraising events, is included in the PTO packet of information which is distributed to parents at Orientation in September.

Various Fund Raisers are organized each school year to help support Carriage House programming. These may include a spring or fall festival, Family Fun Nights, Silent Auctions and a Book Fair. The PTO bulletin board outside the main office has posted information about year-round fundraisers such as Giant Eagle Apples for Students and Box Tops for Education.

The officers of the PTO welcome your ideas, suggestions and comments. We also appreciate parents volunteering -- there are lots of opportunities for everyone to participate! Please feel free to contact us either by telephone or e-mail; our numbers and addresses are listed in the PTO information packet.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Sharon Amick	Executive Director
Emily Stimmel	Assistant Director
Debbie Welch	Program Director
Karen Mendlowitz	Business Coordinator
Linda Holsing	Administrative Assistant
Lindy LaDue	Administrative Assistant
Cathy Palmisano	Accountant
John Buzilow	Building Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Gretchen Love	Chair
Azadeh Block	Vice-Chair
Vacant	Secretary
Jason Kushner	Treasurer

MEMBERS

Donna Kruman
Kate Black

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Sharon Amick	Executive Director
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Carriage House Children's Center Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement and return it to the center within your child's first month of enrollment. The handbook may be updated from time to time, and notice will be provided as updates are completed. Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the Carriage House Children's Center Family Handbook. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask Center management any questions I may have regarding any policy, procedure or information included therein.

Recipient Name

Child's Name

Recipient Signature

Date

Revised: December 2019