

# Employee Handbook

## Welcome:

Welcome to the Children's Center at USC. The center is a model center of excellence in early care and education. As an employee of the center you will be expected to exemplify excellence. By following the guidelines in this handbook combined with the NAEYC Code of Ethics, you will be well on your way to meeting the goal of excellence. This handbook is just a broad tool for conduct. You will be oriented on more specifics with ongoing professional development to help guide decision-making and best practice. Always keep the NAEYC Code at the forefront of all decisions concerning children, families, and colleagues.

## Purpose of the Children's Center at USC:

The center serves a three-fold purpose. First, The Children's Center at USC strives to provide a high quality environment and experience for families. Second, the Center is a lab site with the mission of preparing USC students to work professionally with young children in a variety of settings. As a model childcare center, it operates on the philosophy of NAEYC. Third, the Center serves as a training site for statewide mentors in the field of early childhood education.

## At-Will Employment:

This Handbook is prepared to provide you with information and guidelines. It is not a contract of employment between The Children's Center at USC and you as the employee. Since South Carolina is an at-will employment state, you are not under contract for employment. Thus, employment with The Children's Center at USC is not for a definite term. The center or you may terminate employment at any time, for any reason or for no reason.

## Statements of Policy:

The Children's Center at USC strives for each employee to be treated with respect and in a fair and just manner. In keeping with this policy, all persons will be considered for employment, promotion or training on the basis of qualifications without regard to race, age, handicapping condition, color, creed, sex, or national origin.

The Children's Center at USC guarantees fair treatment of all employees. The Children's Center at USC strives to maintain a work environment in which all staff are free from harassment, and expressly prohibits any form of unlawful harassment of employees and co-workers on race, color, religion, creed, gender, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, sexual orientation, or the presence of handicaps or disabilities. However, all employees must have a physical statement signed by a health official testifying that the employee is physically able to safely supervise young children.

# Policies and Procedures

## State Licensing rules and regulations:

All staff are expected to be knowledgeable in State Licensing Rules and Regulations for Child Care, and are expected to follow all procedures as outlined in the Rules and Regulations for care of children. Failure may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## Curriculum:

West Ed and High Scope Curriculum are designed to provide all teachers with the instructional guidelines necessary for developmentally appropriate learning activities for children. Please see the attached synopsis of both of the above listed curricula.

## NAEYC Guidelines:

All teachers are expected to follow the NAEYC GUIDELINES. All staff are expected to adhere to the NAEYC code of ethics at all times. The code is attached for review.

Teachers must provide warm, nurturing interactions on the child's level. Such interactions should provide guidance and developmentally appropriate early education. Direct Supervision of every child is expected at all times. Failure to provide supervision will be subject to discipline up to termination.

NAEYC ratios are important indicators of quality. The center strives to keep NAYC ratios at all times. However, there may be times of the day when only the DSS ratios can be attained. Please be sure that you always adhere to the DSS ratios. Report numbers to administration when they go beyond the NAEYC guidelines. Make sure that you receive additional help when the number of children approaches the DSS legal limits. Ratio adherence is a dual responsibility between teachers and management. Never leave your group out of ratio for any reason other than an extreme child emergency that requires leaving the group for emergency assistance. Call the front desk for assistance when you need to leave the group and the total number of children in attendance exceeds the safe ratio.

## Confidentiality:

Due to the sensitive nature of information that you will know as a teacher of young children, it is imperative that you keep sensitive information confidential. Any information about children or their families must be shared on a "need to know" basis only. Thus, be very sensitive about discussing children's developmental needs and family information in public places such as the lounge or hallway. Others that do not have a need to know could hear such information. Follow the NAEYC code of ethical conduct when deciding to share information. Protect the interests of each child and family by keeping confidentiality.

Also strive to be supportive of center efforts by avoiding negative or malicious discussions about center issues. Together we can achieve great early care and education. Stay positive and focus on the early childhood needs of the children in your care.

## Standards of Appearance and Demeanor:

Your use of discretion in style of dress and behavior is essential to illustrate your professionalism. Therefore, while performing duties for the Center, you are expected to dress in attire appropriate to the business environment, and you are expected to behave in a professional and businesslike manner. You will use good judgment in your behavior, at all times, to best represent yourself and the center.

**Jewelry** should be conservative. Long chain necklaces or pendants should not be worn as they can present a safety hazard to small children. Earrings should also be small, conservative, and secure, to prevent children from grabbing and pulling loose.

**Shoes** must be neat and in good repair at all times. Tennis shoes or flats are best. Since you are expected to engage the children in activities on the playground then shoes should be appropriate for the situation. Open toe or open heel shoes are not recommended for safety reasons.

**Clothing** should be clean and in good repair at all times. You are hired to work with children and being down and on the floor frequently is part of the job responsibility. Clothing must be appropriate to engage children in all types of activities throughout the day. Jeans are allowed; however, they must fit loosely with no holes or lavish accessories. Use a conservative outlook when deciding upon apparel.

**Smoking** is not permitted on the center premises at any time.

## Accidents:

All accidents must be reported immediately to your supervisor. Accident reports must be written, signed by an administrator, given to parents, and copied for the child's file. Close supervision of children is the best anecdote to accidents. Use risk management to keep the environment safe and hazard free. The Children's Center at USC strives to provide the best equipment, the best maintenance, and the best working conditions so all children will be safe while they are in our center. Please report or remove any unsafe equipment from your classroom or playground areas. Safety is a joint effort that requires all of us to become risk managers.

## Telephone:

Calls for or by you should be conducted either before or after a shift, or on a lunch break. Cell phones are not to be used in the classroom or on the playground. They should only be used on breaks when off the clock. Personal calls cannot be forwarded to classrooms. Please make arrangements to receive calls at home. In emergency situations, please advise administrators and they will be happy to make other arrangements.

## **Staff Schedules:**

All staff schedules are posted at the front desk. Hours of work are subject to change by administration to meet the needs of our families. Any requests for days off must be given in writing two weeks in advance for approval. Requests for special days at the last minute will be honored whenever possible and when coverage is available.

## **Calling in Sick:**

Call offs must be done at least two hours before the start of your scheduled shift to allow time to obtain a replacement. In cases of emergency, you should call as soon as possible. Excessive absences will result in disciplinary action, up to, and including termination.

## **Overtime/Clocking In and Out:**

Overtime is paid to non-exempt employees for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours per Monday through Friday workweek. Overtime pay is one and one half times your regular hourly rate of pay and must be authorized by center management. It is your responsibility to clock in and out properly. Any failure to clock in or out properly may result in a delay in payment of wages due.

## **Paychecks:**

Paychecks are distributed on the 15<sup>th</sup> and last day of every month at the Children's Center at USC Child Development Center. Your management team will distribute paychecks no later than noon on the designated days. You do have an option for direct deposit, which will be deposited, in your bank account by the morning of payday.

## **Meals:**

Your own meals are to be eaten in the lounge or other area where no children are present. You are to clock out for your lunch break unless otherwise authorized by the manager to work through the break. When the center is serving family style meals, staff is expected to participate by eating with the class during mealtime in order to model appropriate behavior, nutritional choices and manners. You are expected to only eat center food that is offered to all children in your care while in the presence of children. If you bring food from home or order out, please consume such food on your break away from the children. You would not want someone to eat something that smells delicious in your presence and not offer to share the food with you. Always avoid drinking hot beverages around the children to avoid possible burns. Any beverages other than those being offered to children must be consumed from a closed container and kept away from the children. Keep respect for all of the children at the forefront of decisions regarding food.

### **Orientation:**

All new employees are oriented to the Children's Center at USC's policies and procedures. Such an orientation should begin on the first day of employment and continue throughout his/hers first 30 days. Each staff member will be assigned a mentor to make sure that all procedures are explained and demonstrated. The 90 day review will evaluate an employee's performance of all expectations explained during orientation. Any staff member may ask the mentor or administration for further explanation or clarification of policies at anytime. It is each staff member's responsibility to uphold center expectations at all times.

### **Coaching and/or Progressive Disciplinary Action:**

You are expected to follow all policies and procedures for smooth operation and safety of the children in your care. However, everyone occasionally makes mistakes or needs guidance for optimal performance of teaching duties. When an employee needs guidance progressive discipline procedures will be followed. Those procedures may include, but may not be restricted to the following: oral coaching or warning, written warning, written improvement plan, administrative leave with or without pay, up to termination. Nothing in this policy or in the handbook is intended to limit in any way the center's right to terminate at any time, with or without cause and with or without advance notice.

### **Gross Misconduct:**

Some offenses are so serious that they can result in termination without previous warnings. The following examples are listed for the guidance of all. This list is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all prohibited activity. The following actions may result in immediate termination:

1. Neglect or physical abuse of a child
2. Withholding of food, nap or other comfort from a child
3. Yelling or the use of harsh tones of voice
4. Failure to report to work three consecutive workdays without proper notification
5. Falsification of center records (i.e. employment application, time clock, and your records)
6. Conviction of a felony for any offense committed while employed by the center.
7. Receiving a DUI if the you transport children for The Children's Center at USC
8. Leaving a child unattended (inside or outside)
9. Allowing a child to leave the center with an unauthorized person
10. Sleeping while supervising children
11. Excessive or habitual absenteeism or tardiness from work
12. Insubordination that shows gross disrespect such as threatening, cussing, or yelling at administrators

## **Conflict Resolution/Grievance:**

When a concern arises, please discuss with the person involved first to seek a resolution. If the concern is not resolved, discuss with a program or associate director to seek mediation. If an agreeable settlement cannot be reached, a formal grievance may be submitted to the Chairperson of the Advisory Board for review. In extreme cases, the President of the Development Foundation can review the grievance as well. After review, a final recommendation will be made.

Every effort is made to provide a respectful and professional working environment. The expectation is to respect colleagues and support each other in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethics.

## **Benefits**

### **Group Health Care:**

Group health care provided by Cigna is available to all full-time employees working at least 32 hours per week. Enrollment must occur within 30 days of employment or during open enrollment annually. Dental and Vision insurance is also available to full time employees.

### **Life Insurance:**

Life insurance is offered to all employees and is paid by the center.

### **Childcare Benefits:**

Full time hourly employees are eligible for free childcare for the first child and a 50% discount off the regular tuition for additional children. Enrollment will be offered as space allows within NAEYC ratio and group size. Priority shall be given to employee's children as space becomes available. All staff parents must adhere to the same enrollment and attendance policies that regular customers observe, and the child or children must be the natural/adopted child or children of the employee, or must have legal guardianship to qualify.

### **Paid Vacations:**

Vacation pay is earned after a year of service. Vacations are paid to employees who work a minimum of 32 hours per week and are considered full time. After the first anniversary date of hire, you earn 1 week (40 hours) and after the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary date of hire the employee earns 2 weeks (80 hours). All vacations must be requested on a leave authorization form and approved by administration. An employee can accrue vacation from one year to the next at a maximum of 200 hours. Any employee, who leaves in good standing with proper notification, can have pay in lieu of taking accrued time off. Leave of absence without pay may be granted when coverage is available.

### **FMLA:**

The center will follow the Family Medical Leave Act as needed for illness of an employee or employee's family member. Such leave shall be requested in writing and granted within the extent of the law.

### **Paid Holidays:**

The Children's Center at USC grants holiday time off to all full time employees for the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. You must work or have approved leave for the day before and the day after the specific holiday to qualify for holiday pay.

### **Sick Leave:**

Sick leave provides employees with paid time off due to illness. Full time hourly employees are eligible for 2 (two) days per calendar year. An employee may submit a physician's note and request additional days from the PTO sick leave bank when missing more than three consecutive days due to illness. The PTO will pay upon administrative recommendation, as funds are available.

### **Jury Duty:**

Jury Duty is considered part of your civic duty, and thus the center will pay the difference between your regular pay and jury duty pay. If the center has a hardship during your assigned time, you may be asked to take the teacher pardon with help from administration. Proof of attendance for Jury duty attendance must be submitted for the pay subsidy.

### **Funeral Leave:**

Bereavement time will be paid to all full time employees for up to three continuous days for scheduled time lost due to death of an immediate family member, including: parent, spouse, child, brother, sister or spouse's parent.

### **Conclusion:**

We welcome you to our staff family. We are proud to have you as a member of The Children's Center at USC Child Development Center staff. Good luck and best wishes for a long and satisfying career with our center. Share your passion for children daily and your rewards will be many!

Please sign the attached forms that document your understanding of the enclosed policies.

### **Attachments:**

- Child Abuse and Neglect Policy
- Child Guidance Procedure
- Employee Handbook Statement
- NAEYC Code of Ethics Statement
- Job Description
- Orientation Training Log

## The Children's Center at USC

### Employee Orientation/Training

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Orientation Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Policy and Standards</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Employee</b>	<b>Trainer</b>
Mission/Philosophy Statement			
Reporting Abuse and Neglect			
Supervision of Children			
Attendance			
Background Checks			
Confidentiality			
Dress Code			
Employee Accident Reporting			
Evacuation Procedures			
Employment at Will			
Job Description			
DSS Files and Records			
90 Day Probation			
No Smoking Policy			
Overtime			
Performance Evaluations			
Merits			
Training Hours			
Continuing Education			
Severe Weather Procedures			
Attendance/Record Keeping			
Visitors			
Conflict Resolution			
Insurance/Benefits			
Direct Deposit			

<b>Policy and Standards</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Employee</b>	<b>Trainer</b>
Leave Policy			
Employee Childcare Benefit			
Holiday Pay			
NAEYC Standards and Quality			
Interactions			
Curriculum			
Environment			
Health and Safety			
Family Style Dining			
Zoning for Safety			
Opening Room			
Closing Room			
USC Student Supervision			
Primary Caregiving			
Assessment and Portfolios			
Family Partnerships			
Conferences			
Transitions			
Model of Excellence			