



Early Learning

Family Handbook

2017

4205 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

215-222-5480

fax 215-222-5487

www.parentinfantcenter.org

Table of Contents

Welcome to The Parent-Infant Center.....	4
PIC Philosophy	
Accreditation	
Non-Discrimination Policy	
Educational Program.....	5
General Curriculum Information	
The Creative Curriculum	
Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach	
Reggio Emilia Inspiration	
Diversity/Anti-Bias Approach	
Environmental Stewardship	
English Language Learners	
Classroom Management/Discipline Policy	
Assessment/Assessment Plan	
Ages and Stages Assessment	
Documentation	
Child Support Teams	
Outside Evaluations for Children and Families	
IFSPs and IEPs	
Confidentiality	
Television	
Teaching Children about Physical and Sexual Development	
PIC in the Community.....	12
PIC As an Educational Resource.....	12
Family Involvement at PIC.....	13
Parent-Teacher Conferences	
Board of Directors	
Program Evaluation	
Family Life Activities	
Visiting PIC	
Parent Participation Program (PPP).....	14
PPP FAQs	
Development.....	15
Fundraising Events	
Grants	
Contributions	
Center Communications.....	16
Family Mailboxes	
Newsletters	
Website	
Facebook	
Email	
Bulletin Boards	
Hours and Closings.....	17
Drop-Off time	
Pick-Up Time	
Late Fee Policy	
Attendance Policy for the Pre-K Counts Program	
Snow Closings or Emergency	

Emergency Preparedness and Parental Notification	
Tuition.....	19
Facilities Fee	
Childcare Expenses and the IRS	
Part-Time Care.....	20
Vacations.....	21
Summer Extended Leaves	
Other Vacations	
Orientation.....	21
Mentor Program.....	21
Your First Day at PIC.....	22
Everyday at PIC.....	22
Food	
Food in the Leapfrog and Starfish Classrooms	
Naps	
Diapers	
Clothing	
What NOT to Bring to PIC	
Lost and Found	
Moving to New Classrooms.....	24
What to Do If You Have a Concern.....	25
PIC Traditions.....	25
PIC “Push”	
Birthdays	
Holidays	
Special Events	
When It’s Time to Leave PIC.....	27
Kindergarten Transition	
Health Policies.....	27
Handwashing and Shoe Removal	
Exclusion of Sick Children	
Medication at PIC	
Examinations and Immunizations	
Special Care Plan	
Mandated Reporting	
Emergency Medical Attention	
Security and Safety.....	30
Parking.....	30
Transportation.....	31
Environmental Health.....	31
Air Quality	
Smoke-Free Environment	
Fire-arms Free Environment	
Sanitation Standards	
Safe Outdoor Play	

Welcome to The Parent-Infant Center

The Parent-Infant Center supports parenting by enabling children to grow and learn in a safe, stimulating, loving environment.

PIC provides an enriching environment of love, security and community to children from the age of 6 weeks until fifth grade, their parents and their families who work and/or live in the diverse community of West Philadelphia. Through developmentally-appropriate experiences, our children learn respect for others, self-confidence, social skills, to develop curiosity about the world and to appreciate people who are different from them. They grow emotionally and physically and they build a foundation of competence and confidence that prepares them for everyday situations and, ultimately, for school.

All of us connected with the Center think that PIC is a pretty special place. The years of early childhood are formative ones for children and their families. PIC believes that quality child care is a learning experience for parents and children alike, and it is from this philosophy that our Center derives its name and its unique approach. The families and staff of The Parent-Infant Center hope this handbook will be a useful resource as you get acquainted with the Center. It will provide you with a guide to the Center's structure, policies, and procedures. We hope it answers all of your questions, but if it doesn't, just ask the Executive Director, another staff member, or a parent.

PIC serves children from six weeks to fifth grade. Younger children are enrolled in our Early Learning Program and children in kindergarten through sixth grade attend the After School Center (ASC). We are generally able to provide an adult:child ratio of 1:3 in the Infant/Young Toddler rooms, 1:4 for Two's room, between 1:6 and 1:8 in our pre-school age rooms and 1:10 in the School-age program. In all cases, these ratios exceed those required by the Commonwealth. We believe this makes an important difference in the quality of child care because it allows individual attention for children who need it.

PIC is licensed by the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS.) We are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National AfterSchool Association. PIC holds a 4-star designation, the highest level, within Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS quality initiative.

We select staff for their education, experience, creativity, sensitivity in working with young children and skill in communicating with families. Our Executive Director is responsible for administrative and educational supervision of the Center, and she functions as the primary liaison between staff and parents. All staff members undergo background checks and Mandated Reporter Training as required by law, and all classroom staff are trained in pediatric first aid, CPR, as well as in water and fire safety.

The Parent-Infant Center values diversity among our families and staff. The center enrolls children and employs staff regardless of race, religion, sex, gender identity, age, ancestry, national origin, family structure or gender identity. We will do our best to adapt our program for children with special needs, and to accommodate the special needs of our staff. We welcome families in publicly funded child care and maintain a modest tuition assistance fund, created for families who do not meet eligibility requirement for subsidized child care but for whom the full cost of care is just beyond reach.

Contact information:

Address: Parent Infant Center

4205 Spruce Street

Philadelphia, PA 19104

Phone: 215.222.5480

Fax: 215.222.5487

Website: www.parentinfantcenter.org

Executive Director: Debbie Green

Executive Director email: dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org

Enrollment Coordinator: Grace Piaña

Enrollment Coordinator email: gpiana@parentinfantcenter.org

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Educational Program

The goal of our Early Learning Program is to provide a supportive and caring environment that allows children to play and learn at their own developmental rates and to prepare for school success. By establishing good communication with families, we try to establish consistency between the Center's approach and home practices.

Teachers plan a curriculum that is geared to the specific needs of our children. There is a balance of active and quiet play, with both individual choices and planned teacher-directed activities to promote skill development. A mix of ages reflects family life and provides younger and older children a chance to learn from one another. The children develop trust through responsive and consistent interaction with our staff in a safe and secure environment. Weekly schedules and lesson plans are posted in the classrooms so that you know what your children will be doing during the day. For Two's and older classrooms the first part of the morning is free choice time, followed by a morning meeting, morning snack and outdoor play. Lunch is followed by a rest time, afternoon snack, often another group meeting, and more free choice or outdoor play.

Our Infant/Young Toddler classes, for children from 6 weeks to about 2 years, are designed to provide lots of sensory stimulation through individual and group play, spontaneous and planned activities. There is plenty of time for cuddling, reading stories, and playing outdoors. The routine is flexible and can be adapted to your child's needs, although children 14 months and older tend to follow the same routine.

Children move to a Two's classroom at about age two, or as space becomes available. In our Two's classrooms, a more structured day is planned. Activities help foster independence, socialization, cooperation, and decision-making. While there are group activities, a child who prefers not to participate in the planned project may choose to play with other toys or books nearby. Many children begin or master toilet learning during this year.

Children move to our Preschool-age classrooms between their third and fourth birthday, as space becomes available in those classroom. We offer full day and part-day options in our mixed age (3-5) classroom. For preschool age children, activities are planned to encourage independent dramatic play, block building and manipulative activities. Art, music and movement activities encourage creative expression. Through their play activities, children develop fine and gross motor skills, pre-reading and writing skills, and social skills that are important to school success. Children learn to use books for pleasure or learning. Planned activities help children learn about the ways people are different and alike. Excursions become an important part of the curriculum.

Through all these experiences, the important thing is that children view learning as a wonderful adventure. The program is housed in three buildings. The Sweet Building, along Locust Street at 42nd, has one Infant/Young Toddler and one Two's classroom; four preschool classrooms; and administrative offices on the ground floor level (Executive Director, Accounts Manager and Enrollment Coordinator) plus an Administrative Assistant on the first floor. The Spruce Building, east of the Penn Alexander School, has three Infant/Young Toddler classrooms, two Two's classrooms, two Preschool classrooms, and the school-aged program for grades K-1. The Infant- Toddler Program Coordinator, the Preschool Program Coordinator, the Director of School Age Programs, the Facilities Manager and the Managers of Development and Communications are located in the Spruce Building. The Stucco Building, south of the Spruce Building, houses the school-age program for grades 2-5.

General Curriculum Information

The focus of our Early Learning Program builds upon the sense of joy and curiosity that children bring to their first school experience. Young children are natural learners - their curiosity and pleasure in discovery set the scene for exploration of all kinds. Small group, large group and individual learning experiences take place in a creative learning environment where the individual pace of a child is honored and respected. Trusting relationships encourage the development of self-confidence and independence. A child's growing independence fosters a greater awareness of the self as a valued individual and a competent learner. Children learn to be responsible members of a family, classroom school and community. Families are included as important partners in the life of the classroom and the center.

Emphasizing a **developmentally appropriate** approach in a child-centered, project-based curriculum, children are given many opportunities to expand their cognitive abilities through hands-on, open-ended exploration. Children develop their thought processes leading to greater understanding, awareness, and curiosity through investigation, research and exploration, utilizing a variety of resources and references. Experimentation with tools, materials and manipulatives encourages children to observe, compare, describe and to explore questions and discover solutions.

Children learn to appreciate literature for pleasure and knowledge, as well as develop and understand the relationship between the spoken and written word. Engaging in meaningful conversations with peers and teachers, children develop respectful listening skills. Children develop language skills to convey wants, needs, ideas, thoughts, and feelings by expressing themselves through words, drawings, stories, and dramatic play.

Through a variety of visual arts, music, drama, literature and creative movement activities, children learn to appreciate the expressive arts and cultures of diverse people, places, and times. Children engage in creative movement activities using music and drama to develop coordination and rhythm.

Children have many opportunities to develop physical coordination and fine and gross motor skills and to explore with the five senses. Daily outdoor play and community walks allow children to develop stamina and strength. Children are also encouraged to develop good habits in the areas of health, nutrition, safety, hygiene, and manners.

The Creative Curriculum

At PIC, we use the Creative Curriculum (published by Teaching Strategies, Inc.) as the foundation of our curriculum and then build upon this foundation with other ideas and approaches. The Creative Curriculum follows the philosophy that children learn primarily through play and through ongoing interaction with the environment. The Creative Curriculum guides our thinking about room arrangement and thus, each of our classrooms are separated into “learning centers” that include the following areas: dramatic play, blocks, sensory, art, writing, library/literacy, science and math manipulatives. The core element of the Creative Curriculum is that children freely move about these learning centers and that these areas are regularly changed to reflect the current classroom theme or study.

Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach

In the Early Learning Program (specifically with our preschool-age rooms,) we follow an Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach and accordingly, our themes, projects and studies most often come from the ideas and interests of the children in each class. Therefore, seldom are classrooms all engaged in the same topic of study at the same time nor do classrooms repeat the same themes year after year. For example, a project on transportation may emerge after teachers initially observe the children playing with vehicles in the block area, and this theme continues to emerge in other aspects of their play. A study of birds may emerge as the children notice and discuss many different birds on walks around the neighborhood. Project study ideas may also be introduced by the teacher. The general idea is that the curriculum is not planned far in advance by the teacher, but “unfolds” based upon the children’s interests. The theory of the Emergent Curriculum/Project Approach is that children will be far more interested in a topic that is meaningful and important to them. A particular topic is studied in great detail and thus, children cover fewer themes over the course of any given year, but learn much information about the topics they are involved in (often referred to as “depth rather than breadth.”) Teachers are seen watching and listening to children, documenting their play with photos and notes and offering resources to support and extend the topic of study. More information on the Project Approach can be found at www.projectapproach.com.

Reggio Emilia Inspiration

Similar to the Project Approach, the Reggio Emilia philosophy has inspired thinking about quality early care and education throughout the world. Reggio Emilia is a small region in Northern Italy that has become internationally known for its philosophy and approach to early childhood education. Notable among the many features of the Reggio Emilia approach are:

- A deep respect for the potential of young children.
- Rich environments that are engaging, welcoming, organized, beautiful, and supportive of the work of children and teachers.

- Many forms of documentation to make visible the learning and the voices of the children.
- Emergent curriculum and small group work based on both children's and teachers interests.
- Long-term studies of the topics with periods of uninterrupted time throughout the day for exploration.
- Children and teachers constructing knowledge together through exploration and problem solving (not a pre-set curriculum with little room for such exploration.)
- The use of many expressive "languages" to represent ideas, questions, and learning, such as clay, paint, wire, drama, play, music, graphic arts materials and many more.

In the Early Learning Program we are continuing our learning about the ideas from the schools of Reggio Emilia as we further our commitment to providing the highest quality care and education to young children. More information on the Reggio Emilia approach can be found www.reggioalliance.org or www.narea.com

Diversity/Anti-Bias Approach

At PIC we believe that when children are taught to appreciate diversity and spend time in a diverse environment, they will develop respect for and value the differences among us and feel comfortable being themselves.

The following is the Diversity statement created by the PIC Diversity committee:

PIC celebrates and values diversity and is committed to creating an environment where all families, teachers/staff, administrators and board members feel welcome. At PIC, we believe that children who are taught to appreciate diversity and who spend time in a diverse environment will both develop respect for and value the individual differences among us all and feel comfortable being themselves. All members of the PIC community are responsible for advancing an understanding of, and a respect for, diversity.

While acknowledging that diversity is ever-changing, PIC feels it is important to identify and recognize some of the ways in which diversity can be celebrated. The following is a non-exhaustive list developed in conjunction with a recent diversity survey completed by the PIC community: race, ethnicity, economic status, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, family model, education level, abilities, learning differences and age.

We incorporate non-sexist, multicultural, and anti-bias learning experiences in our classroom life and in our curriculum. We continually strive to provide materials, activities and an environment that reflect a respect for, and celebration of diversity. Our goal is for every child and family to feel welcomed, reflected and supported in our program. Throughout the curriculum and the Early Learning Program, we engage the children in the active exploration of themselves, their families, and their communities.

The Diversity committee meets regularly at PIC and consists of both family members and teachers interested in advancing this important topic. If you are interested in attending, please see one of the Program Coordinators for more information.

An important resource for all teachers on the topic of diversity is *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* by Louise Derman Sparks and Julie Olson Edwards (former editions titled *The Anti-Bias Curriculum*.) This resource sites *four core goals of diversity work* and these goals should be considered when planning interactions and curriculum at PIC. Regardless of the age group you are engaging diversity and anti-bias work should be reflected in your work with children.

Goal 1 Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and a positive self identity.

Goal 2 Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity and learn to appreciate the similarities and differences among people.

Goal 3 Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Goal 4 Each child will develop skills to work against unfairness.

Environmental Stewardship

At PIC, we want to be good stewards of the Earth and want to teach our children to do the same.

Children learn to love and care for the Earth through sustainable and green practices center-wide at PIC. This starts with developing an appreciation of nature. We are so fortunate to be located in an urban neighborhood in West Philadelphia and

also be blessed with located on a beautiful green campus with the opportunity to grow a variety of trees, plants, flowers, and vegetables. We strive to create opportunities to educate children and families about green and eco-healthy practices.

Along with our children's garden in the Magic Circle nature playground, PIC also has garden beds tucked away for the After School Center, a butterfly garden facing our neighbor, the Penn Alexander School, and numerous small garden beds for planting flowers or herbs. On the infant playground planters bring nature to the children's level.

Every classroom and common area has a blue recycling bin. We recycle mixed paper, cardboard and plastic. No food debris should be discarded in the blue recycling bins. Children gather leftover vegetable scraps from lunches for our worm bins, which produce castings to enrich soil in the gardens. Excess scraps are delivered to our friends at the Dirt Factory, a project of the University City District.

Many of our classrooms have a strong commitment to recycling and "less trash" lunches. We work with Crayola and TerraCycle, which are dedicated to the collection and reuse of non-recyclable, post-consumer waste. Some classrooms have formed a TerraCycle *Recycling Brigades* to collect waste that usually goes to landfills. By collecting items used toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, diaper packages and markers the classrooms are helping to turn trash into useful objects! Teachers are asked to encourage our families to bring these recyclables to their children's classroom. If you'd like to start a Brigade see the Facilities Manager.

Through partnerships with our property management company Jones Lang LaSalle and PIC vendor W.B. Mason, we have held shredding and electronic recycling events at PIC and maintain a printer cartridge recycling program. Families and staff contribute items from home, while PIC works to responsibly handle materials used for business.

We have created a *PIC Recycleteria* on the 2nd floor of the Spruce building. In this room are collections of various items that are either recycled materials or natural materials. Teachers use items in their classrooms as either "loose parts" in the various learning centers or as materials for use in the art center. We welcome families to collect items to place in the various containers in the Recycleteria. *Items of specific interest that we would love families to bring in: ribbons, yarn, baby food jars, styrofoam meat trays, wooden spools or spindles, old cd's, corks, wood scraps, paper towel and toilet paper rolls, sea shells, pine cones, pieces of bark, interesting rocks, plastic and metal jar and bottle caps, and jewelry boxes with lids. Basically if it looks interesting to you, it is probably interesting to our children.*

English Language Learners

Children sometimes come to PIC speaking languages other than English. When children are immersed in a classroom culture with language that they do not speak or hear at home, they are immersed in English-language learning. It is important that teachers support the development and maintenance of children's home language whenever possible.

We welcome families to share their home languages in many different ways in the classroom, from reading or sharing stories to providing written examples of the home language.

Classroom Management/Discipline Policy

At PIC, all children are treated with dignity and respect. Discipline is considered an opportunity to foster and support the development of self-control and to allow the child to assume responsibility for his or her own actions. Discipline measures are appropriate, positive and encouraging and are not punitive in nature.

Children in our program are never allowed to hurt themselves or others. Young children do not yet understand that hitting hurts or that they should be "nice" or "polite." They do understand that hitting, grabbing toys, throwing objects other than balls, and biting are not allowed.

Often, adults are tempted to have children say, "I'm sorry" as a way of resolving a conflict or problem. However, young children's experiences with regret are often more related to not having gotten the toy that they wanted than remorse for their actions. Very young children are still learning about cause and effect. Although adults may feel better hearing children say, "I'm sorry," helping children find alternative things to do or say in expressing angry feelings is a more effective way of

developing a conscience.

You also help to build their consciousness by setting firm and consistent rules. The ultimate goal is self-discipline/self-regulation. PIC teachers are skilled at mirroring and reflecting children's emotions, drawing attention to the effect of their actions, and encouraging the child to ask, "How can I help you feel better?", all excellent ways to help children move toward self-discipline.

Teachers use many strategies to guiding children's behavior, including:

- Planning ahead to prevent problems.
- Establishing clear and consistent rules with the children.
- Redirecting children by diverting their attention.
- Encouraging and reinforcing appropriate behaviors by praising, supporting and coaching.
- Offering limited choices (i.e. "Do you want me to help you with your coat or do you want to do it yourself?")
- Using motivation and humor (i.e. "Where does your coat go?" rather than "Hang up your coat.")
- Preparing children in advance for what will happen next.
- Guiding children to resolve conflicts by sharing feelings, using words, and developing a plan of action.
- Speaking clearly and firmly in a modulated voice.
- Role-playing and practicing acceptable behavior.
- Modeling self-control and respect.
- Using eye contact, body language and facial expressions to express concern.
- Allowing for logical and natural consequences of behaviors.
- Not expecting young children to behave like adults, or even older children.

Assessment

In the Early Learning Program, we believe that it is critical that the assessments we use with children are closely related to our philosophy and our curriculum. We use a "continuum" approach to curriculum planning, and likewise, a "continuum" approach to assessment. Both our curriculum continuum and our assessment continuum are based upon The Creative Curriculum (Dodge, et al, *Teaching Strategies*, 2002.) We understand that children do not master a particular skill all at once. There is a sequence of steps to expect as children progress toward reaching developmental milestones.

Assessment Plan

Purposes- Assessments help us to gather information about a child's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health, physical development and self-help skills. This information helps the teachers with curriculum development and planning. In some instances, it may provide us with important information about additional resources a child may need. The information gained from assessments enables us to arrange for appropriate developmental screenings and referrals for diagnostic assessments when necessary. We are able to use this information to identify children's interests and needs, to set goals for individual children, to describe the developmental progress and learning of each child, to improve curriculum, to adapt teaching practices, to make adjustments to the environment and to help with planning program improvements.

Procedures - Teachers are always be assessing and evaluating the children in their classrooms. Teachers also are constantly observing and documenting each child's play, behaviors and interactions to assess their progress. Informal methods of assessment include observations, checklists and collections of children's' work. Activities and achievements are often documented with photos. More formal assessments are conducted three times per year. The Early Learning Program uses Teaching Strategies GOLD (published by Creative Curriculum, Inc.)

Uses - The results of assessment will be used: a) to adopt and improve the curriculum as well as specific teaching approaches and practices and individual strategies to meet the individual needs of the children and to provide the optimal learning environment and b) to inform overall program development and improvement, and c) to arrange for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment for a child when indicated.

Conditions under which children will be assessed - Children are assessed in their classroom groups and occasionally one-on-one with a teacher in the classroom.

Timeline associated with assessments - Although gathering information occurs throughout the year, the “official” times for developmental screenings are as follows: October 15, February 15 and May 15.

Procedure to keep individual child records confidential - Information should be organized in individual children’s files and in the Individual Child Portfolios. Results of screening and assessment should be accessible and discussed only with those who have a right or a need to know (typically the child’s parents or guardians, the Program Coordinator other teachers and specialists who may work with the child.) Only with the parents’ written permission will assessments be shared with anyone outside of PIC.

Ways we involve families in planning and implementing assessments - Families are the best source of information about their children. Upon enrollments, we ask that families complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (see below) and a Child Profile at the beginning of each year. These assessments ask detailed questions about their child’s growth and development, interests, strengths, challenges, etc. This is very helpful information for the classroom teachers in getting to know and understand each child.

Methods to communicate assessment information to families - Family conferences are offered three times per year and are scheduled times to discuss the developmental progress of each child.

Ages and Stages Assessment

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (third edition) is a set of questionnaires designed to be completed by parents or other primary caregivers for children between 2 months and 5 ½ years of age. There are 21 different questionnaires for different ages of children, and they contain 30 developmental items relating to the areas of communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social. The appropriate questionnaire is included with enrollment paperwork sent out by the Enrollment Coordinator for all new children enrolling at PIC. The original copy is given to the Lead Teacher as one of several documents and a copy maintained in the child’s file in the Enrollment office. The teaching team reviews the questionnaire for their information.

Documentation

Teachers regularly document children’s activities and classroom projects. It is the goal to make visible the life of the Early Learning Program through careful observation, reflection and documentation of each child and classroom’s experiences together.

Child Support Teams

Children and families may need additional support for any number of reasons. If a parent has a concern, he or she may reach out to the teacher to schedule a conversation. Likewise, a teacher may request to meet to discuss classroom observations about a child’s behavior or needs. Sometimes the teacher or family may feel the need for more focus on the child, and may request a Child Support Team be convened. Child Support Teams consist of parents or guardians, teachers, the Program Coordinator, and may include outside support professionals as applicable. The goal is to increase support and communication around children about whom teachers or families have concerns. At the Child Support Team meeting, strategies for home and school are developed as well as any follow up with outside supports. Outside supports may include accessing the publicly funded services through the Intermediate Unit or private evaluations and support services. Child Support Teams can meet as often as necessary.

Outside Evaluations for Children and Families

We understand the importance of outside evaluations for some children. These may occur through private therapists, or through publicly funded programs. For children birth through 2, Childlink provides free evaluations and services for those children who qualify. Their intake link is 215-731-2110. Elwyn SEEDS is the provider for children ages 3-5. Their intake line is 215-222-8054.

PIC will fully support the evaluation process. This may include teachers completing questionnaires, or classrooms hosting observers so that a support professional can observe a child in the school environment.

If a child is evaluated by a specialist or the Intermediate Unit, we ask families to share with us the results of the evaluation. This information can be helpful in developing strategies for supporting the child at school and can create greater continuity between home and school. Such evaluations can be shared upon entry to PIC, when the family receives the information, or in the context of a Child Support Team to allow for conversations about the best ways to support the child's growth and development.

IFSPs and IEPs

Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs, for children birth through age 3) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs, for children age 3 to 5) are plans for individual children who have been determined to be eligible for special education services. Children who need extra support are 1) those for whom screening evidence indicates apparent difficulties with speech and language, motor development, sensory-motor integration, or serious emotional problems, 2) those for whom screening indicates physical impairments such as blindness, deafness or conditions requiring a wheelchair, or 3) those who have diagnosed with autism, cerebral palsy, or other conditions that require special care or program modification. The IFSP and IEP plans are developed by teams made up of the classroom teachers, family members and often a professional from another agency such as the Philadelphia County Intermediate Unit. Both plans are governed by federal laws pertaining to the education of individuals with disabilities.

An IFSP is a plan for young children that detail the child's strengths and areas that require attention. The team writes goals and objectives to address areas in which a child needs help to make progress at school and at home. Meetings take place regularly to evaluate progress. IEP's are written for children's transition to formal schooling.

The results of any evaluation (or IEP or IFSP) are confidential and are not shared with anyone other than the classroom staff who are directly working with the child.

We welcome therapists and support professionals to work in the classroom with children to meet any goals in the IFSP or IEP. Research has shown that incorporating such intervention into the classroom (as opposed to sessions outside the classroom) can be the most effective means of support. Young children do not typically perceive these services as strange or different, rather, the child and their peers love having another adult to play games and tell stories.

Given we have the full cooperation and collaboration with families, PIC strives to meet the needs of all children in our care. However, there may be times when PIC cannot meet a child's needs. The Executive Director holds the right to make the final determination if a child might be better served in another environment.

Confidentiality

- At PIC, the following protocol has been established for record handling and confidentiality:
- All information pertaining to the children's home and educational records are kept in locked files in the office of the Enrollment Coordinator.
- Parents need to sign a release/consent form allowing records to be reviewed by any outside party.
- Persons who have access to these records include parents, teachers, and support professionals.

Television

At PIC, we support the philosophy that children learn best through active exploration of their environment. This knowledge, coupled with the understanding that television, as a rule, is not an interactive medium, is the foundation for the policy that *we do not provide open television viewing for children*. A wide variety of other opportunities and activities are available for children when they need quiet or restful time.

Teaching Children about Physical and Sexual Development

The children in the Early Learning Program will grow and experience many physical changes during their time at PIC. We recognize and respect family members as the primary source of education in a child's life. Children also need adults to be

accurate and honest about sexual development issues. The information that children receive should be factual and developmentally appropriate. If the discussion involves judgments of a moral nature, teachers are careful to provide an unbiased response and should support children in addressing these questions with their families. We use correct names for all of the body parts and functions so that children receive accurate information. Teachers also explain differences between private and public behavior, appropriate touches such as back rubs as rest time and inappropriate touches. Teachers help children to establish personal physical boundaries and teach them that it's ok to say "no" to touch.

At certain ages it is developmentally appropriate for children to explore sexuality, sexual development and differences through touch, observation and play. Teachers respond to these situations in a respectful, open and non-shaming manner. This may include answering children's questions, re-directing behavior, bringing in resources such as books and visitors and confirming personal choice and boundaries. Teachers, the Program Coordinators or the Executive Director are available to answer questions families may have and give further information. When appropriate, families are notified of these discussions and explorations.

PIC in the Community

PIC considers involvement in its West Philadelphia community to be an important part of its role. We have chosen to be in a diverse community because we want our children and their families to experience the richness that such an environment offers.

For the children, this means frequent walks around the neighborhood to the nearby shops, ethnic groceries, firehouse, or playgrounds. The children like to visit the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, where they can see their grownup friends and climb on outdoor sculptures or visit museums. The Biological Research Pond at Penn is also a favorite site for exploration.

For grownups, this involvement means that some PIC families and staff are involved in local community groups and events. We have provided meeting space for community organizations. Our staff provides leadership in a variety of area early childhood organizations.

Our Board and staff are always interested in exploring other ways we can support parents in our community by working with them to find solutions to parenting problems. The After School Center and Summer Camp Program grew out of parents' need for care for older children. Our parent-child playgroups introduces parents of young children to one another and enables their children to have some of their first group experiences. Currently our playgroups gather on Mondays and Fridays at PIC from September to June from 9:30 to 11:30 am. We occasionally sponsor special events open to all neighborhood families.

We also believe in advocating for quality, affordable child care for all families who need it. We encourage parents to participate in the local, state and federal electoral and legislative processes, including lobbying policy makers to improve the quality and accessibility of child care. We think that, in the long term, the best solutions to the child care needs of families lie in partnerships between government, employers, and families. If you are not a registered voter, you may pick up a registration form at PIC.

PIC as an Educational Resource

The Center serves as a practicum and research site for high school and university students in a variety of fields. We host several student teachers from area colleges each year. Anthropology students observe the development of language skills; psychology students test the development of cognitive skills; nursing and medical students learn about child development. High school students gain experiences that will make them better babysitters or parents. Students may also be fulfilling professional internships or practicums.

Requests for observations or research are always cleared with the Executive Director. If a project involves working with specific children outside their regular classroom activity, parents will receive a letter describing the research and asking for written permission to have their children participate.

Family Involvement at PIC

Our Board and staff are committed to the idea that the best child care involves the entire family. In a variety of ways, every member of each child's family is drawn into the Center's activities.

Parent-Teacher Communication

Regular communication between families and teachers is an important element of this partnership. Each group posts the schedules of its teachers and the schedule for the day on a bulletin board outside the room. You will also find posted lesson plans. Teachers of infant/young toddlers provide daily information about feedings, naps and diapering. Teachers of older children send regular emails that include information about classroom activities and adventures.

Please let us know about important events in your child's life—a visit from relatives, a special outing, teething or sleeping problems, times of unusual stress such as a family death or divorce. This information will help us be more responsive to your child's needs.

There is a classroom phone so you can easily contact your child's teachers for a quick message (215-222-5480.) It's best to schedule a time to call during nap time, from about 1:30 to 3pm. Sometimes there is time to exchange news at the beginning and end of the day if the children do not need the teachers' attention.

Parent-Teacher Meetings

The quality of our care for your child will be influenced by the quality of our communication with you. Receiving accurate, frequent information about your expectations, needs, and feelings about your child's care enables us to do our job more effectively. Please do not hesitate to drop a note, send an e-mail, or arrange short conference times with your child's teachers, the Program Coordinators, or the Executive Director, especially when you have been unable to stop and chat with the classroom staff at drop-off or pick-up time.

We encourage all parents to schedule a conference with the staff in a new classroom within the first month. This will give you a chance to talk about how your child is adjusting to the group and ask questions of one another. Teachers perform developmental assessments three times a year. You will receive written copies of these assessments and an invitation to meet with the teacher about assessments.

At private parent-teacher meetings, parents and staff can candidly discuss a child's development. We strongly recommend that all caregivers attend parent-teacher conferences. Many times parents find these discussions helpful in answering their own questions about subjects such as toilet learning, bedtimes, or limit setting. It's helpful if you have thought ahead about questions you have for the teachers.

In the fall, the teachers will schedule a classroom parents' meeting and potluck supper to discuss plans and answer questions. This is an excellent time for parents to talk about ways you can get involved in your child's classroom.

Board of Directors

The Center is managed by a Board of Directors made up of family and community representatives. The Board hires and supervises the Executive Director and works closely with her to make program and policy decisions, develop and oversee the budget, and organize fundraising efforts. The Board and its committees provide a direct opportunity for families to influence

the program of the Center. Those who are interested in serving on the Board or committees are encouraged to attend meetings and to make us aware of their interest. We want to have a Board that represents all of our programs, reflects the diversity of our families, and has the skills needed to run a good business. Parents are welcome to attend Board meetings, which are listed on the PIC website calendar. The Board of Directors is elected annually by PIC membership and an Annual Report is sent electronically.

Program Evaluation

Every spring parents are asked to evaluate our program. Parents will receive an electronic Family Feedback Survey. The responses to the survey allow us to update and adjust our program to fit the needs of our families.

Family Life Activities

PIC has a strong Parent Involvement Committee whose mission is to motivate parents to be involved in the life and direction of the center, and to build a stronger community of families at PIC. There also are Room Parents, overseen by a subcommittee of the Parent Involvement Committee, who establish and sustain center-wide connections in order to strengthen the PIC community and promote the best possible experiences for children and families.

Throughout the year, staff and parents plan social activities to encourage parents and children to get to know one another. These events may happen in the classrooms, center-wide, or in the community. Parenting is tough work and we all benefit from having others to talk with about the challenges and joys of raising our children.

Visiting PIC

We welcome visits from the families of children enrolled at PIC. While parents are welcome to drop in at any time, we appreciate knowing ahead of time if you're bringing grandparents or friends to stay awhile and see what goes on in your child's day at PIC. With a little advance planning, we'd love learning about our visitors and sharing their interests and family traditions with our classes.

You'll find that some children tolerate visiting family more easily than others. For some children it's hard to share visitors or it may be tough to have them leave. You and your child's teachers will want to plan so that these visits are fun for everyone.

Parent Participation Program (PPP)

Active parent participation is one thing that makes PIC different from most other child care programs and it's one of the features we consider very special about PIC. Parent participation contributes to a greater sense of community among our families and builds a strong sense of ownership of the Center and its programs.

Each two-parent family in the full-day early learning program is expected to invest 24 hours per fiscal year (July 1-June 30), regardless of the number of children enrolled. Single-parent families invest 12 hours. Two-parent families enrolled in the part-day program invest 12 hours per year, and single-parent families in this program invest 6 hours. Two-parent After School Center families have a 10-hour commitment, while single-parent ASC families have a 6-hour commitment. There is no PPP requirement for families enrolled only in the summer camp.

Our PPP system is being reviewed during the 2016-17 school year by an internal PPP Task Force that will be eliciting feedback from both families and teachers. Our hope is to both maintain the best parts of our PPP system, while at the same time re-imagining what may work best in today's climate.

These are some of the jobs parents do to support the work of the Center:

- making small and large repairs
- maintaining playground equipment
- laundering dress-up clothes
- making games cleaning painting
- serving as a room parent
- marketing and publicity organizing fundraising events
- providing legal services and medical advice
- taking photographs
- chaperoning trips
- teaching children about special cultural events

- fixing computers
- grocery shopping
- writing grant proposals
- serving on the Board or one of its committees
- organizing family social events and parenting workshops
- helping with a special interest club in the ASC
- putting new equipment together
- gardening
- running errands
- organizing refreshments for special events
- ...and many more

Requests for assistance are announced in the weekly emailed newsletters, posted on bulletin boards or in your classroom, or emailed to you from your teachers or room parents. You may see a task that needs doing yourself or have an idea for a special project. Talk with your child's teachers or one of the Center administrators about your idea.

PPP FAQ's

Here are the answers to some of the most frequent PPP questions:

HOW are records kept?

When you do a project, record the task and the time spent give to the Facilities Coordinator (via e-mail, stop by her office, or drop in any tuition box). Hours are recorded and you receive quarterly updates of your PPP standing in your parent mailbox.

WHAT IF we work the hours and forget to record them?

Record them when you remember within the fiscal year. They don't expire. Hours beyond your commitment carry over to the following year

WHAT IF I say I will work but can't make it? What if I don't manage to get all my hours worked during the specified time?

If you have made a commitment to work and are unable to fulfill your responsibility, we expect *you* to find another parent to fill in for you. Whether it's a workday, a class trip, or a special project, other people have made plans that count on your involvement. You are expected to complete your hours by the end of the fiscal year. You will get reports 3 times a year that record hours completed. At the end of PIC's fiscal year (June 30), you will be billed for any outstanding hours at the rate of \$15 per hour.

WHAT IF I purchase items for the classroom? Does that expense count toward PPP?

No. The time you devote to a project may be counted (ie, shopping). Please submit receipts for monies expended and you will be reimbursed for approved expenses (example – fruit shopping).

WHAT IF I still owe hours when our family leaves PIC?

The hours owed will be deducted from your tuition deposit before it is returned to you.

WHAT IF I volunteer in classroom or go on field trip, do I need special clearances?

For one-time or sporadic visits, you do not need clearances.

If you wish to volunteer *regularly* (i.e. multiple times a month) OR you wish to chaperone a field trip, you must complete a Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, Criminal Background Check (both free for volunteers) and a Disclosure Statement. You may also need to complete and FBI Fingerprint Clearance Form. These clearances will be kept with your child's file, and must be updated every 5 years. Please see Program Director for details.

Development

While the Center generally meets its operating expenses from fees paid by families, we depend on contributions and fundraising events for scholarships and capital improvements. Special projects are generally funded by grants.

Fundraising Events

We count on the participation of all PIC families to assure the success of our annual fundraising events – the spring plant sale and the fall silent auction. Our annual plant sale supports our tuition assistance program. ArtStart, our fall fundraiser supports

programs and activities throughout the center. Parent committees provide critical support in planning these events and volunteers lend their hands-on help at each fundraiser.

Grants

We are able to support many capital and program innovations by applying for grants. We appreciate parents' sharing information they have about funding opportunities. We are also grateful when parents volunteer to help with program development grant writing. This is a great way to invest your special skills at PIC.

Contributions

PIC is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization and contributions are tax deductible. Gifts are always welcome and make unbudgeted extras possible.

PIC is eligible to receive funds through the United Way Donor Choice plan. We hope you will keep this in mind the next time you are urged to give to the United Way. Our number is 2671. In the Penn's Way Campaign, our number is 55-2671. You can also designate PIC through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Each year PIC conducts an annual appeal to friends and alumni of the center to raise funds for capital improvements and scholarships. You may be invited to suggest names of friends or relatives whom you think we should include in this appeal.

We appreciate donations of gently used toys and dress-up clothing for use in our classrooms. If you see great deals, take a chance; we can probably use it. Watch the trash or check out yard sales for great surprises. If you would like a record of your contribution for tax purposes, please give the Development Manager a list of the items you have contributed.

When children graduate from the Center, some families choose to designate their tuition deposits as a contribution to our fund for scholarships, capital improvements, or the staff development fund – a thoughtful farewell gesture that is always appreciated. You will receive a letter about your escrow deposit at the end of your enrollment.

Center Communications

Family Mailboxes

Each classroom has a system for family communication. In some classrooms, these are cubbies for families. In other classrooms, file box with folders that serve as our "mailbox" system. Each child/family has a labeled folder.

We will place any hard copies of information that we want to disseminate in the folders. Please regularly check your file folder or cubby.

Newsletters

The Center's weekly electronic newsletter, *PIC Weekly News*, and the monthly electronic newsletter *PIC in the Classroom*, include news of classroom activities, announcements of upcoming events, public policy updates, and other information. Parents are welcome to contribute articles to share information, express concerns, or make suggestions. We also publish a semi-annual mailed newsletter for the broader community to reach current and alumni families, PIC neighbors, business and professional contacts, legislators and policy makers. The spring community newsletter functions as our annual report.

Website

PIC's website, www.parentinfantcenter.org, contains a copy of this handbook, and basic information about the center and its programs, events, a staff roster and profiles, phone and e-mail contacts. The website's photo gallery shows classroom activities and documents special events such as PIC parades or celebrations.

Facebook

We invite you to visit PIC's facebook page and "like" us for center updates, interesting articles, and general happenings around the center and community!

E-mail

We value the quality of communications between parents and staff, and we believe that face-to-face communications are best when discussing important issues concerning your child. *E-mail may not be used to report a child's absence, in lieu of medication consent forms, or for any activity requiring your signature.*

PIC's Enrollment Coordinator maintains an e-mail list for general announcements and queries to parents. Classroom teachers and Room Parents use e-mail for reminders or special announcements. All PIC teachers and staff have PIC email addresses which can be found at the bottom of the "Keep In Touch" page for your classroom.

Bulletin Boards

To find information about center and classroom activities, check the bulletin boards near entrances and outside classrooms. The bulletin board inside the Small Gym is the place to post notices for the community at-large.

Hours and Closings

Our regular program hours are from 8AM until 6PM, Monday through Friday. For a small additional fee, parents can arrange to drop off their children between 7:30AM and 8AM. We are closed on the following days:

Martin Luther King's Birthday

President's Day

Memorial Day

July Fourth

Labor Day

Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving

Christmas Day through New Year's Day (and at least part of December 24)

We also close for In-service Days, two days around Labor Day and one day in the Spring.

Drop-off Time

Children should arrive before 10AM so they will have a chance to be personally greeted. This also allows parents and staff a chance to exchange information and gives the child some important free-choice play time. Children who arrive in the middle of an activity often feel out of sync with their friends. If your child will not be coming to school, or if he/she will be dropped off after 10AM, please call the teachers and let them know. Occasionally the teachers will let you know that children need to arrive at an earlier time for a class trip or neighborhood excursion..

Adults must always accompany their children to the classroom to be sure that they safely reach their destination and so that you can sign in for the day.

Pick-up Time

The Center closes promptly at 6PM. This means that you should arrive by 5:45PM to allow adequate time to hear about your child's day, watch his or her latest accomplishment, collect belongings and chat with staff and other parents. Please plan to leave the building by 6PM in consideration of our staff who must lock up before they leave. You are welcome to stay and play on the playground as long as you like.

If, because of an emergency, you cannot arrive before 6PM, please call ahead. Staff can reassure your child by explaining what has happened and can adjust their own plans, if necessary. Children who have not been picked up in their classrooms by 6PM will be taken by a staff member to the Small Gym of the Spruce Building.

The part-day program ends at 2PM. Please understand that teachers may have a scheduled break or other commitments after

that time, so we ask that you respect the closing time and exit the classroom by 2PM.

Only parents/guardians or those listed on the emergency contact form are permitted to pick up children. We require that the pickup person be at least 16 years of age. Verbal release of a child to someone not on the emergency contact list is possible only through approval of a PIC administrator. All persons picking up must present a valid identification.

Please remember that nobody likes to be interrupted when busy. Your child may resist leaving his or her friends and activities when you arrive. We encourage you to warmly greet your child and tell him or her that you will gather belongings and check with staff about the day so that there will be a few more minutes to play. This notice often prevents difficult struggles when it's time to leave.

When you arrive for pick-up, please remember that you are responsible for your child, even though staff members are present. This clarification of *who's in charge here?* is important to prevent disruption of program and potential problems that can occur at transitions when there is confusion about responsibility.

Parents must sign their children out at the end of the day. For some families, permitting the child to "sign out" with your assistance becomes a helpful leaving ritual. Sign-out is still required when picking up children outside as many families congregate after hours on the blacktop and playground. Staff must be assured that your child is your care.

Late Fee Policy

Any child who has not been signed out by 6PM (2PM in the part-day program) will automatically be charged

\$15.00 per family for any part of the first 15 minutes and \$5.00 for every part of each additional five minutes thereafter.

Remember that cell phones are an accurate timekeeper if there is a question about lateness. You, along with the staff member waiting with your child, will be asked to sign a "late fee" form, and the fee will be billed to your account.

Attendance Policy for the Pre-K Counts Program

Some children at PIC participate in the Pre-K Counts program, a state-funded part-day preschool program. This program has additional guidelines as it is administered by the School District of Philadelphia.

All children must attend school for the required number of hours. This means that they must arrive between **8 and 8:30 a.m.** For those not enrolled in extended day, the pick-up time is promptly at **2pm**. For those enrolled in extended day, we ask that children are picked up by 5:50pm. Pickup between 5:50 and 6pm will be in the Small Gym.

Children in the Pre-K Counts program can miss no more than 20 of days for any reason. This includes absences for illness, religious holidays, or travel. The state is very strict about this, and if you exceed this amount, you may lose your place in the Pre-K Counts program. If you are approaching the limit, the Program Coordinator will be in touch with you to develop an attendance plan to make sure your family can continue to participate in the Pre K Counts program.

Extended Day Options for Pre-K Counts

Many of our Pre-K Counts families who qualify for Pre-K Counts also qualify for subsidized child care through CCIS. This subsidy can be used towards extended day care (3-6pm) and summertime enrollment. We highly encourage all families who might be interested to talk to Grace Piaña, our Enrollment Coordinator, for information on this excellent program.

Snow Closings or Emergency

PIC will continue to work hard to stay open in inclement weather. However, we will use these protocols in making the decision to close:

- We will follow the decision of the University of Pennsylvania. If they close, we will also close (Penn is our landlord and responsible for our snow and ice removal).
- If the Mayor closes city buildings due to snow/ice, we will consider following that lead. Often that decision is made because Septa routes are out of service, which has a huge impact upon PIC staffing.

- We will not follow the decision of the School District to close, as their benchmarks for closing are different than ours.
- When the school district closes and PIC does not, our After School Center will be open.
- If the school district closes early, our ASC will be open for care IF the district gives us ample notice to bring in ASC staff. We will then pick up the children when the schools close. If enough notice is NOT given, we will communicate with families that we cannot open before our regular afternoon start time.
- If we call for a 2-hour delayed opening, we will open at 10AM.

Our School Messenger program is used to notify families by email of school closings, early closings or delayed openings. You will be invited to “opt in” if you also wish to receive this information by text message. We will also post information about closings or delays on our website and voicemail by 6:30AM. We will continue to use the TV announcements for channels CBS3, 6ABC, NBC10 and Fox29. Parents may also listen to KYW News Radio 1060 AM or visit their website for school closing information. **Our school number is 3018.**

PIC may also close due other emergency such as loss of power or water or other weather related event. We will use School Messenger to communicate closing or delayed opening.

Emergency Preparedness & Parental Notification

As part of our responsibility to assure the safety of the children in our care, we have developed an Emergency Response Plan that provides for all types of emergencies – weather, utilities failures, or catastrophe. Depending upon the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions for which we have occasional drills:

- Building evacuation: All children and staff will be evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, smoke, or related emergency.
- Evacuation away from Building: If grounds are not safe all children will be taken to another building nearby. Locations are (progressively): the adjacent Penn Alexander School; St. Mary’s Nursery School (Locust Walk at 40th Street) and the Penn Children’s Center (3160 Chestnut St.).
- In-place sheltering: Sudden occurrences, weather, or hazardous materials may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- Modified Operations: Circumstances may dictate cancellation and/or postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building issues, however, they may be necessary in a variety of situations.

In an emergency we may communicate in a variety of ways, including local television/radio stations, our website (www.parentinfantcenter.org), e-mail and texting notification (if possible), and telephone calls (if possible). We ask that you **not** call our main number during an emergency. This will keep the telephone lines free to contact the local emergency response support. We will call you to let you know if we’ve taken one of the protective actions and when it is safe for you to pick up your child.

We will reach you using the telephone numbers that you have designated on your emergency contact form. We will release your child only to persons whom you have listed on this form. Please check to be sure that your telephone numbers and escort lists that we have on file are always up-to-date. *You must verify and sign this form at least every 6 months.* The safety of the children in our care is our first priority. Thank you for your support and cooperation regarding our plans. Should you have additional questions regarding our emergency operating procedures, please speak with our Executive Director.

Tuition

The budget of the center is based on 12 months of operation and takes into account our practice of closing for the above mentioned holidays and for a week before the New Year holiday. Tuition is payable in advance and is due on the first business day of the month. A late fee of \$10 per week will be assessed on all payments not received by the 5th business day of

the month. You will receive a mid-month reminder if you have forgotten to make a payment. All families receive statements at the end of the month; statements are e-mailed unless you would prefer a printed statement delivered to your PIC mailbox.

Tuition checks should be made payable to the Parent-Infant Center (or PIC) and placed in locked tuition mailboxes designated for that purpose in the Spruce Building (outside the ASC Director's office, on the second floor or by the ground floor reception desk) or Sweet Building (near the Administrative Assistant's office, first floor). If there is something unusual about the amount of your payment, it's helpful if you write a memo so we know what you have added.

PIC accepts credit card payments for all tuition and other center expenses (minimum charge \$10). Tuition payments made by credit card, or automatic withdrawals from your credit card, will be assessed a 2% surcharge to cover banking fees. There is no surcharge for automatic withdrawals from checking or debit accounts. We also have a "click to pay" feature which shows on your emailed tuition bill. Use a bank account for the click to pay feature to avoid a surcharge.

If circumstances require a special payment plan, please discuss this with the Accounts Manager.

Tuition deposits are held in escrow and returned by the Center upon withdrawal, less any outstanding tuition payment or PPP obligation. You will get a letter about your escrow deposit towards the end of your enrollment. The deposit is \$750 per child for children in the full-day program; \$350 per child in the half-day program; and \$250 per child in the After School Center. Families with more than one child enrolled at PIC pay the full deposit for the youngest child and one-half of the usual deposit for each additional child enrolled. The deposit is \$100 for families receiving child care subsidy.

Facilities Fee

Families are billed an annual fee in the amount of \$100 (\$50 for families receiving child care subsidy.) Families will see this charge in the September billing. This fee goes directly to funding PIC facilities needs and improvement projects

Child Care Expenses and the IRS

Many employers have adopted programs that enable employees to tax shelter their child care expenses. Ask your employer, as it will be a significant savings. IRS rules may also allow you to deduct child care expenses on your federal tax return; check with your tax preparer for current deductions. Your monthly statement from PIC should satisfy any need to document child care expenses; our Employer Identification Number is 23-2151143.

Part-time Care

Though PIC primarily provides full-time care for working parents, we recognize that many families need only part-time child care. We want to support such arrangements as much as possible. However, in order to maintain a balanced budget, we have to maintain careful control over part-time enrollments so that all our classes can be filled. Several rules apply to part-time enrollment:

There is minimum of three days a week for part-week enrollment. When enrolling your child, please specify which three days you prefer. While we strive to honor your request, we cannot guarantee that those specific days will be available.

You may not change those days from week to week, or even month-to-month. Additionally, you may not "swap" one day for another in any given week. If it becomes necessary to make a change to your schedule of days for an extended period of time, please check with the Enrollment Coordinator to see whether there is a space available on your preferred days. This policy is in effect to assure a comfortable routine for the children, as well as to maintain classroom routines.

If your child is absent, due either to vacation or sickness, you may not make up those days by coming another day and you are required to pay for your regular days. Except for the winter break, families enrolled less than five days per week are allowed to make up days that they miss because the Center is closed. If the Center is scheduled to be closed on one of your regular days, you may substitute another day *within two weeks before or after the closure*. You must arrange the make-up day with your child's Lead Teacher; she/he will work with you to select a day based on maintaining appropriate teacher:child

ratios in the classroom.

If you need to add an unscheduled day, you may do so IF there is room in your child's classroom that day. You must consult with the Lead Teacher to see if your request can be accommodated. If you add a day, you will be billed at the drop-in rate for an extra day. If you expect to need extra days with any frequency, you may want to consider adding a day to your regular schedule to simplify record keeping, and to be sure those extra days are available.

Because the Center counts on a reasonably steady income, children may not ordinarily be switched back and forth from full-time to part-time during the fiscal year, and the number of part-time days may not be changed from month to month. If a family seeks to switch from part-time to full-time, every effort will be made to accommodate that request. **A decrease in the number of days requires 30 days' written notice.** Exceptions can be made, at the discretion of the Executive Director, if a change in parent's job status or the birth of a sibling suggests that a switch is appropriate.

Our part-day program is designed to accommodate families with children ages 3 to 5 whose childcare needs are limited to the hours of 8:30AM to 2PM. The same policies regarding part-time enrollment outlined above apply for children enrolled in this program.

Parent participation requirements are the same for part-time and full-time families. We think it's just as important that those parents build a relationship with staff and other parents and that they have that important feeling of ownership. This also helps keep the cost of part-time care as close to full-time hourly rates as possible. While part-time children don't come every day, many of the costs of enrollment are the same regardless of the number of days a child attends: enrollment and orientation, parent conferences, storage space, bookkeeping, notices and communication—these don't vary.

Vacations

The Center depends on tuition to meet its operating expenses and cannot afford to hold open unpaid slots. Families must, therefore, pay fees as usual during vacations and all other absences. Nevertheless, it is a great help to the Center to know of absences in advance and we urge you to give us as much notice as possible whenever your child will not be in attendance.

Summer Extended Leaves

- Families will be permitted to take Summer extended leaves-of-absence under the following circumstances:
- Four- to ten- week leaves of absence may be taken between June 15 and August 31 **only**.
- Families must notify the Center *in writing* of their extended vacation plans no later than March 1st.
- Families must pay, in advance, two weeks' tuition (designated on your bill as a "placeholder fee.")
- Families must settle all financial and PPP accounts before departure.
- An effort will be made to return a child to the same classroom, *although space in the same classroom cannot be guaranteed*. Occasionally, this transition time is used as the time to move the child to the next classroom.

Other Vacations

Arrangements may be made, on a case-by-case basis, for extended vacations due to maternity leave, planned sabbatical, or some other form of extenuating circumstances, through consultation with the Enrollment Coordinator and the Executive Director.

Orientation

If you have not already had a tour of the program, it is recommended that you arrange one with the Enrollment Coordinator before enrollment. Before you begin you must complete all forms and submit your child's health assessment form.

The Enrollment Coordinator will put families in touch with the child's Lead Teacher about a month before enrollment

officially begins so that families may arrange at least one visit (or more) to the classroom with the child. These visits allow you to get to know the classroom teachers and classroom routines, as well as letting the teachers get to know you and your child before the official first day. Families will also be welcomed by the Room Parents from the child's classroom and are another resource for new families.

Mentor Program

If you feel you want additional guidance you may opt-in to our mentor program. Another parent will contact you for a playdate or other meeting of your choice. Mentor will keep in touch for your first few months and serve as a point of contact for questions or concerns.

Your First Day at PIC

On your first day, you may go straight to your child's classroom unless other arrangements have been made. You will already have been put in touch with the classroom teachers and may have visited in the classroom ahead of the official enrollment day. The teachers will have set aside a cubby for your child's clothing and extra supplies and will have assigned a crib or cot for nap time and a space to store diapers if needed. Please note that all Infant/Young Toddler classrooms have a "shoes off" policy and we request that you remove your shoes or wear the disposable "booties" provided in the classroom.

On the first day, please plan to spend a part of the day with your child. As your child explores the classroom and becomes familiar with the staff and children, it's reassuring to have you there. You will want to talk with the staff about classroom routines and tell them everything you want them to know about your child. Your child's teachers will usually have read the developmental history you have provided prior to your arrival, and they may have questions. We welcome any additional information you would like the staff to have.

At the end of the first day, discuss with the staff the plan for the following day. Sometimes it's the parents who need a little more time getting comfortable at the Center, and sometimes the children need some additional time getting to know new friends. Many families find it helpful to stay for a shorter period on the second and third mornings. You and the teachers will be the best judges about how long this process should take. Remember that when you leave, you are welcome to call the Center to inquire about your child's adjustment. Thereafter, once your child has entered into an activity or gotten connected to a staff member, you may say a casual good-bye, reminding your child that you will return at the end of the day. It's best not to hover at the door because children get confused about whether you are staying or leaving.

On the first day, be sure to have these **LABELED** items for your child:

- two changes of clothes
- diapers and wipes, if appropriate
- bottles and formula, if appropriate
- sheet, blanket for nap time, maybe a soft toy for reassurance
- photo of your child and one of your family
- lunch in lunchbox
- toothbrush for toddlers and preschool children

Every Day at PIC

Food

Families provide lunch each day for their children. We encourage healthy foods at PIC and teachers may offer advice or suggest resources if they see that a child's lunch could be more nutritious. There is a refrigerator in the classroom. If you

wish to send something warm, please send it in a thermos. Due to health concerns, PIC does not use classroom microwave ovens to heat lunches. Please cut foods into appropriate size portions when packing it so staff will have an easier time preparing all the lunches. Children do not master chewing until around age 4, so foods should be cut into bite-sized pieces (no larger than ½ inch, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics). Parents of infant/young toddler sometimes bring food for a week at a time.

If a child has a food allergy, warnings will be posted inside and outside the child's classroom. For the health and safety of our children, we appreciate your understanding and must insist on your cooperation in following rules about excluding foods that could cause a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. **PIC is entirely peanut and tree nut free, so please do not send any peanut or tree nut products in your child's lunch.**

Please label everything - lunch boxes, bottles, cups, thermoses, plastic containers, etc. Two year olds and pre-school age children should also bring a toothbrush; please remember to replace it regularly.

Every Thursday is Pizza Day. If you want your child to have pizza, you can order a special pizza lunch, which includes fruit. *You must pay for this each week with cash, or you can register to have this fee billed with your tuition.*

Nursing parents are welcome to come and nurse their babies. Some enjoy sitting in the classroom to chat with the children and staff, while other parents prefer a quiet, private visit with their children. You are also welcome to use our Parent Resource Room on the second floor of the Spruce Building.

We purchase some snack foods centrally to take advantage of bulk purchase savings. However, each classroom has funds for making additional snack purchases that will tie in with program themes or food preparation activities. Teachers are encouraged to follow USDA snack guidelines, and we hope that you will do the same at lunchtime. In amounts varying with age, lunches should include one serving of fluid milk, two servings of fruit and/or vegetable, one serving of bread or grains (bread, pasta, noodles), and one serving of meat or meat alternative (eggs, cheese, beans, yogurt, tofu). You can find information about food and nutrition and ways to create nutritious snacks and meals on the USDA website: <http://www.nal.usda.gov>. Though we all break these rules occasionally on special occasions such as birthday parties, good food habits are learned at an early age! Working together we will establish healthy habits that last a lifetime.

Food in the Leapfrogs and Starfish Classrooms

All students enrolled in the state-funded Pre-K Counts programs received hot lunch daily. It is provided by an outside vendor, Lintons Managed Services, and meets the USDA guidelines above. This lunch is also available to other children in the Leapfrogs and Starfish classrooms, at a modest fee. See the Accounts Manager if you are interested in enrolling your Leapfrog or Starfish in the lunch Program

Naps

We provide cribs, and cots for napping, and children are supervised when sleeping. You are expected to bring bed linens, including a crib-sized sheet, seasonally appropriate covers, and a *small* pillow if your toddler or preschooler uses one. Infants under a year must sleep in a "sleep sack" if covers are needed. If your child over 12 months has a special blanket, or stuffed toys that will help in settling down to sleep, send that along, too. Bed linens should be taken home and washed weekly.

Please label everything.

In keeping with recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics to reduce the risk of SIDS, babies are placed on their backs when napping. If your pediatrician recommends another sleeping position, you must provide a written note from the doctor.

Diapers

You may bring your own diapers and wipes, or sign up for our Diaper Program which provides disposable diapers and wipes in our Infant/Young Toddler and Two's classrooms for a monthly fee. If you would like us to use other diapering products, please bring them along. If you bring your own, your child's teachers will inform you when supplies are running low. If you

use cloth diapers rather than disposables, please make arrangements with the teachers for storing and picking up soiled ones.

Clothing

Your child will have his or her own “cubby” for storing extra clothes. Children of all ages have occasional accidents. Two complete changes of clothing should be brought to the Center on the first day and should be replaced as needed. This supply should include a warm layer like a sweater and extra shoes and socks. Many children will need to have extra pairs of pants and underpants. The type of clothing should be appropriate to the season. **Please be sure to label all articles of clothing clearly.** Use first name and initials- there could be several Matthews or Samiras! Staff do their best to keep children’s belongings together, but it is significantly harder without name labels.

Children should wear sturdy, comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing in which they can play. Please remember that our play is sometimes dirty. **The children go outside all year round**, so be sure they are dressed warmly in the winter and that they have mittens and waterproof boots. In summer, don’t forget a hat and sunblock. All children should keep a pair of rubber boots at PIC (and consider investing in rain pants too!), so that they are always available for outdoor puddle jumping or mud play.

Parents of walkers or crawlers should send children in sneakers or other soft-soled shoes. Sandals are not good for climbing. Waterproof beach shoes should be provided for summer, when children are playing in the sprinkler, so they need not run around barefoot.

The Center welcomes donations of children’s clothing to keep on hand when someone runs out of clean clothes. If your child comes home in unfamiliar clothes, please launder and return them. We also collect stray mittens for children to use when they’ve lost theirs.

What NOT to bring to PIC

To avoid problems, children may not bring candy, gum, money, or toys to the Center. Sharing is so hard when you are young! Even when meant to be left in the cubbies, toys mysteriously find their way into other children’s pockets, get broken or lost, or present sharing challenges. Toys from home are just too hard for children to deal with and for grownups to keep track of. The only exceptions to this rule are soft toys for naptime, or items brought to share that are related to a special classroom project.

Lost and Found

PIC’s lost-and-found box is located by the Facilities Manager’s office on the ground floor of the Spruce Building and near the Administrative Assistant on the ground floor of the Sweet Building. *You will be surer to find lost items if they are labeled with your child’s name.*

When classes are closing outdoors, each group places its things along the fence. Check those locations before you leave to be sure you have everything. If you leave it behind, it will probably be placed inside the Spruce Building.

Moving to New Classrooms

Children develop differently, so moving a child from one classroom to another is determined by the child’s chronological age and individual signs of readiness as assessed by the Lead Teachers. When a child exhibits the behaviors of the next developmental stage, a move may be indicated. Other factors that influence the decision to move a child to the next classroom are seniority and space availability. The Enrollment Coordinator plans for the new placements and transition dates in consultation with the Lead Teachers and Program Coordinators. She will notify the Lead Teachers of the new placements and transition week dates. We ask that families do not request specific teachers and to trust that decision to the discussions that happen among the teachers, the Program Coordinators and the Enrollment Coordinator. We do try to honor the request that a younger sibling be placed in the same classroom (or with the same teacher) that an older sibling had as, in this

circumstance, a comfort level and/or a teacher relationship has already been established.

A Move-Up Orientation session is generally held in the late winter offering families a chance to hear more about the transition process and to ask questions.

The Lead Teacher will notify parents when their child has been identified to move up. Before the child moves, you may schedule a time to observe in the new classroom and arrange a get-acquainted conference with the classroom staff. For younger children, there is a designated “transition week.” During the transition week, the child visits the new room with a familiar staff member and classmates, spending an increasing amount of time in the new setting until she or he is essentially integrated into the class.

Please remember that a good deal of time is spent on making room assignments. We try to balance ages, genders, races, cultures, personalities, as well as new and familiar children. Since it is impossible to give all variables equal weight, we make professional judgments about the best matches.

What to Do If You Have a Concern

Occasionally, a parent will find he or she has some concerns about something happening in the classroom or the center. Open communication usually solves most problems in the classroom. If you are comfortable talking with the Lead Teacher, that is the place to start. If you would prefer to speak with someone outside the classroom, it is best to schedule an appointment to talk with the Program Coordinator who is responsible for supervision of your child’s teachers. She can help you think about how best to address the issue or speak directly with relevant staff members. If she is not able to help solve the problem, please feel free to speak with the Executive Director. Your Room Parent(s) may also help you locate the appropriate person to address your concern.

PIC Traditions

PIC “Push”

It is a PIC tradition for children to “push” out their parent or caregiver from the classroom door in the morning. Perhaps this provides some closure for the child whose adults are leaving for the day. Perhaps the children are saying “Now, I have my work to do, and you should go and do yours” or “Don’t worry, folks, I’ll have a good day and will see you later.” Whatever the case, for many children at the center, this is a helpful ritual that you may want to adopt. Or your child may devise his or her own!

Birthdays

Perhaps there is no day more exciting than your very own birthday! Three-year-olds may spend the entire year inviting and un-inviting people to the celebration. We appreciate the celebration of birthdays as landmark events and recognize the importance of sharing a special activity with others. We ask that you plan your child’s birthday observance with the classroom staff. Eating a birthday snack together isn’t the only way to make the day special. An interesting game, excursion, or unusual experience is also quite meaningful. Your child may have some very specific ideas! Some families like to observe our tradition of giving the classroom a book in celebration of a birthday. This tradition promotes the importance of reading and sharing while helping to build the classroom library. The birthday celebration can then focus on sharing and reading the birthday book. Lead Teachers can make suggestions about appropriate books for the classroom.

We ask that families NOT bring hats, balloons, candy or party favors for birthday celebrations. Special or costumed personalities are not a good idea, as they often frighten small children. Birthdays will always be special occasions for our children, but a simple and controlled celebration in a loving and caring setting will be best for all the children.

Birthday parties at PIC may not be the only celebration of your child's special day. We ask that you not distribute invitations to home parties at the Center unless your plans include all the children in the classroom. Hurt feelings happen among even very young children and can easily be avoided. PIC's Small Gym may be used on weekends for a donation to cover cleaning and staffing. Contact the Facilities Manager to schedule a party.

Holidays

We take a low-key, community-based approach to the celebration of holidays, recognizing that families may or may not choose to celebrate various holidays in their homes. The way we think about holiday celebrations at PIC is significantly different than most programs. In many programs, holidays become the curriculum. At PIC, with such a diversity of families who celebrate a multitude of different holidays, it would be impossible to include the celebrations of every holiday represented. For various holidays, we focus on the value at the core of the holiday (i.e. community, peace, togetherness) and down-play any commercial aspects (such as Santa at Christmas or witches at Halloween.)

The words "holiday" and "celebration" mean different things to different people. We believe that while it is appropriate for children to *learn about* holidays that are celebrated by their peers, it is not appropriate to *celebrate* all holidays, especially when the holidays celebrated by some are not celebrated by all.

Learning about holidays can be as simple as a group discussion after reading a book or inviting a family member to come in to share the family's cultural celebration.

We believe that holiday activities at school can serve the following goals and functions:

- To validate children's and families' holiday experiences and traditions at home.
- To expose children to different ways of celebrating the same holiday.
- To expose children to celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own.
- To foster respect for celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own.
- To build a sense of community, family and togetherness.
- To provide accurate information about holidays in a developmentally appropriate manner.

We have taken significant time to re-examine our previous holiday celebrations and make decisions that make sense for the entire PIC community. For example, we have moved the celebration of Halloween to a celebration fall and hold an annual Fall Family Festival. We look at the winter holidays (Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa) as an opportunity for children to learn about the holidays and traditions celebrated by others in their classroom community.

We invite families to come to our classrooms and share something about their own holiday celebration or winter tradition (i.e. sharing a favorite holiday book or CD, making a family favorite snack, doing a craft with the children, lighting the menorah, or telling the story of Christmas or Hanukkah.) During other holidays such as Eid, Easter, Rosh Hashanah, Diwali, Passover, Ramadan, Lunar New Year, St Patrick's Day, etc., teachers may choose to read a book about the holiday, but it does not make sense from an inclusiveness perspective to celebrate them as a community.

At PIC, we have a very diverse community of families, and many of our families do not celebrate these traditional North American holidays. Similarly, we leave the celebration of Mother's Day and Father's Day to each individual household. We have children from alternative family structures that do not celebrate these days in their homes, and instead of encouraging with the commercialized aspects of the holidays, we prefer to foster the children's engagement in our classroom studies.

The following are considered signs of good practice in acknowledging and recognizing (rather than celebrating) holidays with young children:

- Is it developmentally appropriate for those in the group?
- Why is it important to specific children and families?
- Are activities connected to specific children and families in the group? This connecting helps children understand holiday activities in the context of people's daily lives.

Both children and teachers honor every group represented in the classroom. This respect does not require that every holiday of every group must be celebrated; otherwise, classrooms would be celebrating holidays all the time. It does require, however, that when classrooms do acknowledge holidays, none should be treated as though they are unusual. Children should recognize that everyone's holidays are culturally significant and meaningful.

If you are not comfortable with your child's participation in any PIC activity, please discuss this with your child's teacher.

Special Events

Among our other traditions are these activities we "always" do:

- Classroom Potlucks in the Fall
- Fall Family Festival in October
- "Grandfriends" Days for grandparents and special friends during Thanksgiving week
- Winter Open House in December
- Get Involved event with the Board of Directors in February
- PIC Community Potlucks in the late winter
- Earth Day Parade in April
- Family Picnic in late spring
- Summer events that include our "Lemonade Lull," "Watermelon Wednesday" and our "Spoil your Supper Ice Cream Social"

We like to try new experiences, but it's reassuring to have a few things you can count on!

When It's Time to Leave PIC

Though we hope you will stay in touch with your PIC friends for a long time, the day will come when you outgrow us or are moving away. **Families are required to give 60 days' written notice of your intention to leave the Center and pay tuition for two months, so that we can have adequate time to fill your child's space.** Your deposit, minus any fees and a charge for uncompleted PPP obligations or unreturned key fobs, will be returned about a month after you leave the Center at your request. When children leave the Center to kindergarten, some families choose to designate their tuition deposits as a contribution to our fund for scholarships, capital improvements, or staff development—a thoughtful farewell gesture that is always appreciated.

Kindergarten Transition

As children prepare for kindergarten, teachers and children frequently engage in class conversations about what changes may be coming. Sometimes "veteran" kindergarteners may come share their wisdom, or a visit to the kindergarten classrooms at Penn Alexander next door may be arranged.

PIC doesn't have a graduation, since there is no single time when all the children leave for kindergarten. However, each classroom finds special ways to wish departing classmates, "Good Luck!" on their new adventures.

We know that from PIC, children go to many different schools, from their local public schools to independent school in the city. Some schools ask for teacher recommendations as part of the application process, and your child's teacher is happy to help with that. Once you know where your child will be attending, please let your classroom teacher know, as we like to support each child in the next step of their journey.

Health Policies

Handwashing and Shoe Removal

In addition to regular check-ups and immunizations, good nutrition and plenty of rest, we know that handwashing is the best

protection against the spread of germs. Teachers and children wash hands before and after meals, and nose wiping, and at other appropriate times. **We ask that families assist children with handwashing at classroom sink when you arrive for the day.**

Since our infants spend much of the time on the floor, we ask that all adults remove their shoes before entering the Infant/Young Toddler classrooms. These practices help reduce the amount of germs brought in from the outside.

Exclusion of Sick Children

Young children have frequent colds and other illnesses. Classroom staff, in consultation with the Program Coordinators, must consider whether a child's symptoms require temporary exclusion from the program. If so, we will call you to pick up your child. Please arrive within an hour. This decision is made considering the health and comfort of the individual child and the routine requirements and needs of the other children in the group, as well as the state regulations for child care programs.

Children who are brought to the Center while ill present several problems in the classroom:

1. Your child will not get well as quickly as she or he will in a more isolated, quiet, home environment.
2. There is an increased chance of other children and the staff getting sick.
3. Staff who are giving extra attention to sick children cannot give adequate attention to the rest of the children in the classroom.

Please be considerate of your child's needs as well as those of the rest of the children in the classroom and the staff by preparing for those occasions when your child may not come to the Center or will have to be taken home in the middle of the day.

Our policies have been developed in consultation with pediatricians and the available literature on illness in early childhood settings. We ask you to carefully review the following criteria to determine whether your child is well enough to attend the Center:

1. Any of the following conditions suggest possible severe illness: fever (temperature of 101) accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness, lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or other manifestations of possible severe illness, such as a quickly spreading rash. If any of the above occurs while at PIC:
 - a. You must pick your child up immediately and take him/her home.
 - b. Your child may not return to the Center until his or her condition and **temperature have been normal for 24 consecutive hours without medication.**
2. Children with persistent coughs and runny noses that do not improve may need to be seen by a doctor. A doctor's note may be requested to prevent exclusion from daycare if such symptoms extend beyond that commonly seen in this age group.
3. Diarrhea is defined as loose, watery stools of at least twice the normal daily frequency. There are infectious and noninfectious causes. If it is not contagious and if the child has no other symptoms, we *may* allow his or her continued attendance at the Center. However, sometimes the added demands on the staff, or stress for the child, may suggest that the child be sent home. When diarrhea is accompanied by fever or a negative change in behavior we ask that children be kept at home until **stools are normal for 24 hours.**
4. Mouth cold sores are infectious in beginning stages, particularly in children who cannot control their secretions (drooling). Your child must stay home until the sores are dried.
5. If your child shows signs of conjunctivitis, such as pink or red, swollen, or purulent eyes, you must see a doctor and obtain a doctor's note before returning to the Center. A child with bacterial conjunctivitis may return once the course of treatment has begun. A child with viral or allergic conjunctivitis may return with a doctor's note.
6. Head lice are common among young children. Lice are transmitted through direct contact with an infected person or their personal belongings, especially clothing or head gear. Treatment is complicated, so we urge each family to make regular head checks at home. When a child is infested and treatment has been completed, we will continue to check for nits, as you should. Once a child has been treated they may return to school.

7. **Illnesses requiring a doctor's note for readmission include, but are not limited to: hepatitis, scabies, ringworm, pinworms, scarlet fever, strep throat, or treatment for exposure to shigella, salmonella or E. coli bacteria.** Please inform your child's teacher as soon as your child becomes ill at home from any cause. We can warn other parents to be alert to similar symptoms or take appropriate preventive measures. It is important that you also let us know if your child ever needs hospitalization.
8. Nearly every day our activities include outdoor play. Children well enough to be at the Center are expected to be well enough to go outside. We generally don't have enough staff to be able to have a caregiver inside with one child while the others are outdoors. If your child's medical needs require an exception to this rule, we will require a letter from the pediatrician specifying the circumstances under which a child is to be kept indoors.

Medication at PIC

Prescribed medications or Tylenol/Motrin/generic substitute ("GS") may be administered at PIC. **Staff will not administer any other over-the-counter medications without a doctor's note.**

The following policies govern administration of prescribed medicines:

- Written permission from a licensed physician and a parent/guardian.
- Prescribed medication is provided in its original container with the prescription indicating the dose and frequency to be given; and
- A "Medication Consent and Log" form is on file in the classroom giving teachers permission to administer the medicine, including exact instructions, amount, and time of administration. This should be signed by the parent and dated each day.
- All medication must have child's full name, name of medication, prescription date/date of expiration and name of prescriber.

Medication consent forms are available from classroom staff. All medicines will be placed in a locked container that is not accessible to children. Medicines must not be put into a child's lunchbox or cubby. If medicine needs to be refrigerated, be sure to include that information on the "Medication Consent and Log" form.

Staff administer non-prescription medication such as Tylenol, Motrin or GS for the onset of a fever or pain. Examples of pain include: teething pain, ear pain from a diagnosed ear infection, or pain after immunizations. The following policies govern the administration of Tylenol/Motrin/GS at PIC:

- A signed Special Permissions form, including the dosage needed, must be in your child's permanent file. These forms are completed at enrollment and when a child moves up to a new age group.
- A Medication Consent Form, complete with dosage, must be on file in the classroom. Forms are available from the teacher.
- If your child requires Tylenol or Motrin (or GS) for one of the reasons listed above, then you will be asked to fill out a form each day this medication is required.
- PIC will not administer Tylenol or Motrin (or GS) to "prevent" a fever. A fever may be a sign of illness and needs to be recognized.
- Diaper cream/ointment and sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher must be provided family and will be applied as needed, with prior consent. We ask that sunscreen be applied before school. Teachers will reapply as needed.

If you have been called to pick up a sick child, with your permission, the staff will give a dose of Tylenol, Motrin or GS to bring down fever while awaiting your arrival.

Examinations and Immunizations

We require an **annual** medical examination of your child older than 2 years by his or her physician on our medical examination form. Children under 2 must have a health assessment **every 6 months**. We will remind you of this by providing you with a new form when the old one is about to expire. We appreciate your assistance in making certain that your child receives regular examinations and all necessary immunizations. Because this is a licensing requirement, we may exclude

children from the Center whose parents fail to return completed forms. If, for medical or religious reasons, your child is not immunized, you must complete an exemption form to attach to the health form. These can be obtained from your pediatrician.

Special Care Plan

When the parent or legal guardian informs PIC staff that the child has a special need (such as an allergy, asthma or other chronic conditions) or disability, a special care plan needs to be completed and signed by a parent and/or health care provider(s). This is kept in your child's file by the Enrollment Coordinator. If your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), please provide a copy for your child's file. You are encouraged to invite your child's teacher to future IEP or IFSP meetings. We welcome therapists to PIC to work with individual children who need services.

Mandated Reporting

Staff are required by law to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect. All suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect will be reported to PA ChildLine

Emergency Medical Attention

In case of a medical emergency, we will contact 911 and take your child to the Emergency Room at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 34th and Civic Center Blvd. We will call you immediately, and you can meet us at the hospital to authorize treatment. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP YOUR HOME, BUSINESS, AND EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS CURRENT AT OUR OFFICE.**

Security and Safety

All PIC entrance/exit doors are kept locked and are monitored by security cameras, as not all administrators monitoring the doors will recognize all of the children and families entering. All families in the Early Learning Program are issued a key fob so that they can enter without waiting or the bell to be answered. *If you do not have your key fob and you need to ring the bell for entrance, please let the person who answers know who you are and whom you are arriving with or picking up. If arriving with your child and needing to ring the bell, it is not enough for your child to say his or her name, as not all administrators responding to the bell know the names of all children.* Be certain to close the door securely behind you. Be sure you know anyone whom you are inviting to enter with you.

Families are asked to abide by the following rules concerning security and safety of all children:

- Drop-off time: All children must be brought into the classroom by a parent or another responsible adult. Please be sure that a staff member knows that your child has arrived and that you have signed in.
- Pick-up time: When you pick up your child at the end of the day, you must notify one of the regular staff that you are signing out and taking your child home.
- Change of escort: Please notify the teachers ahead of time when there is someone new who will pick up your child, and make sure that person is added to your Emergency Contact form. Any pick-up person not known to the staff will be asked to show identification.
- **Contact information: You are responsible for reporting any change in address or phone numbers or changes in employment to the Enrollment Coordinator. Remember to keep the information for your Emergency Contacts up to date (verified every 6 months). It is essential that we know where and how to reach you at all times.**
- If you wish to ask another Center parent to pick up your child(ren), please call those parents ahead of time to make that request. It is not appropriate to ask classroom staff to negotiate those plans for your family. Also, please be sure that that parent is listed on your consent for pick-up form, and inform the classroom staff of the change.

- Key fobs: There is a \$50 fee to have the key fob replaced and it must be returned for the full return of your deposit. See the Facilities Manager for a key fob.

Parking

There is no parking allowed on PIC property. Between the hours of 8AM and 10AM, and then again from 4PM to 6PM, the parking spaces halfway down the blocks on both 42nd and Locust Streets are designated as 20-minute loading zones. At other times, those spaces are available for parking for an extended period. Many parents find the loading zones to be convenient for drop-off and pick-up. If you expect to spend more than 20 minutes dropping off or picking up your child, you'll avoid being fined by the Philadelphia Parking Authority if you park in one of the 2-hour parking spaces on our neighboring blocks. Spaces adjacent to the Penn Alexander School are designated "no parking" areas between the hours of 7:30AM and 4:30PM on school days. **Please do not park in the "driveway" at the corner of 42nd and Locust – this is a No Stopping Zone.**

Transportation

PIC has three vans to transport children on trips. All of our drivers are over 25, are insured and have a safe driving record. All occupants must use seat belts at all times. Passengers in the van under age 8 years or 80 pounds are required to use age-appropriate child safety restraints which PIC will provide. If a trip requires renting another vehicle, it is our policy to rent buses equipped with seat belts.

When classes take trips, preschoolers may ride in the van. One adult must be present in addition to the driver. Teachers may recruit parent volunteers to drive their own children, as the vans cannot accommodate an entire class.

Some children come to PIC by stroller. Please park strollers for infants on the ground floor of the Spruce Building or the Sweet Building, or in the "corral" in the Small Gym. We ask that you fold your stroller so that there will be room for others, too.

If you or your child rides a bike to PIC, we ask that these be parked and locked at the bike rack on the playground. Stroller areas are not designed to accommodate bicycles. PIC is not responsible for loss or theft of bicycles, especially if left overnight.

Environmental Health

Air Quality

Adequate ventilation, humidity and temperature control promote physical well-being. Teachers take the children outside daily for fresh air except in extreme weather conditions. Windows are opened for ventilations. All classrooms are supplied with an air condition system for temperature control, and maintenance requests are submitted if there are issues. All air quality systems are maintained in accordance with national standards.

Smoke-free Environment

Second hand smoke has a severe effect on the health of children, families and staff. Furthermore smoking is prohibited in schools by the PA Department of Human Services. Therefore smoking is not permitted on the grounds of PIC nor within fifteen feet of the entrances. The no smoking policy applies all staff, family members and visitors while on PIC property.

Fire-arms Free Environment

Firearms are not permitted on PIC grounds, in any building, or in any vehicle owned by PIC.

Sanitation Standards

The Department of Human Services completes an annual certification for compliance with disinfection standards. PIC contracts with a cleaning services that sanitizes the facility on a daily basis. We follow NAEYC standards for ongoing scheduled cleaning of classroom equipment, furniture and supplies. Teachers follow standards for reducing the spread of infectious diseases and store any hazardous materials in a locked cabinet.

Safe Outdoor Play

PIC follows weather watch alerts to determine safe temperatures and weather conditions for outdoor play. Since we encourage classrooms to go outside daily except in extreme conditions, we do ask families to provide weather appropriate clothing including but not limited to rain boots, layered clothing for cold weather, snowsuits, snow boots, hats gloves, sun hats, swimsuits, swim diapers and water shoes.