



# **Early Learning Family Handbook 2021-22**

4205 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

215-222-5480 | fax 215-222-5487

[parentinfantcenter.org](http://parentinfantcenter.org) | [facebook.com/parentinfantcenter](https://facebook.com/parentinfantcenter)

*PLEASE NOTE: This document has been modified due to added policy and practices that were put in place during COVID-19. It is meant to be used in conjunction with PIC's COVID HANDBOOK.*

# Early Learning Classrooms

## Infants/Young Toddlers

**Bumblebees** ... *Spruce, first floor*  
**Caterpillars** ... *Spruce, first floor*  
**Doodlebugs** ... *Sweet, first floor*  
**Wild Things** ... *Spruce, first floor*

## Older Toddlers

**Moonbeams** ... *Sweet, first floor*  
**Rainbows** ... *Spruce, second floor*  
**Sunshines** ... *Spruce, second floor*

## Preschoolers

**Blue Jays (3-5 year olds)** ... *Spruce, third floor*  
**Butterflies (3-5 year olds)** ... *Spruce, third floor*  
**Chipmunks (3-5 year olds)** ... *Sweet, third floor*  
**Fireflies (3 year olds)** ... *Spruce, third floor*  
**Grasshoppers (4 year olds)** ... *Sweet, second floor*  
**Hummingbirds (3-5 year olds)** ... *Spruce, third floor*  
**Leapfrogs (3 - 5 year olds)** ... *Sweet, third floor*  
**Roadrunners (4 year olds)** ... *Sweet, second floor*

**Information about current practices that has been added to this handbook is HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW.**

**Page numbers may not be exact.**

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# Welcome to The Parent-Infant Center

## PIC Mission Statement

PIC works to provide and increase access to high-quality early childhood education and school-age programs that:

- give children opportunities to learn through play.
- are led by valued, professional educators.
- and actively engage and support parents and families.

## Values

We believe in **COMMUNITY** as the basis for child, family, and educator growth, development, and learning.

We focus on **LEARNING THROUGH PLAY** as our foundational approach.

We emphasize the importance of **NATURE** as a home for children's play and learning.

We adhere to a **BEST PRACTICE APPROACH** based on solid research in the fields of education and child development.

We pursue **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION** in classrooms and on educator and leadership teams

We promote **EQUITY** through practice and advocacy, in education access and educator compensation

We support the **PROFESSIONALISM** of our educators.

## Contact information:

<b>Executive Director:</b>	<b>Deb Green</b> , <a href="mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org">dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org</a>
<b>Assistant Executive Director</b>	<b>Jessica Carter</b> , <a href="mailto:jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org">jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org</a>
<b>Enrollment Coordinator:</b>	<b>Grace Piaña Silow</b> , <a href="mailto:gpiana@parentinfantcenter.org">gpiana@parentinfantcenter.org</a>

## **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. 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.

We 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, ask a Room Parent, Teacher, Program Coordinator, the Assistant Director, or the Executive Director.

PIC serves children from six weeks to fourth grade. Younger children are enrolled in our Early Learning Program and children in kindergarten through fourth 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 the Older Toddler rooms, between 1:6 and 1:8 in our Preschool rooms, and 1:8-1:11 in the School-age program. In all cases, these ratios exceed those required by the Commonwealth. This makes an important difference in the quality of child care and allows more individualized 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 Council on Accreditation (COA). 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. All staff members undergo required 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 for families who do not meet eligibility requirements for subsidized child care, but for whom the full cost of care is just beyond reach.

## The PIC Campus

PIC is housed in several different buildings including the Sweet, Spruce, and Stucco Buildings, and the Aviary.

The **Sweet Building**, on your right as you walk down the driveway at the corner of Locust and 42nd Streets, houses six classrooms, the **A-Z Room** (indoor gym space), and **administrative offices** of the Assistant Enrollment Coordinator (on the ground level) and the Executive Director, Accounts Manager, Enrollment Coordinator (on the lower level).

The **Spruce Building**, east of the Penn Alexander School, houses nine classrooms and **administrative offices** (the Assistant Director, the Infant-Toddler Program Coordinator, the Preschool Program Coordinator, the Operations Manager and the Managers of Development and Communications).

Our shared indoor gross motor spaces are the **Small Gym**, located on the ground level of the Spruce Building, and **Big Gym** located on the third floor between the Sweet and Spruce Buildings (can be accessed from either building).

The **Tot Lot**, our outdoor play space for infants and young toddlers is located on the north side of campus and can be accessed from Locust street. When inside the Spruce building, enter at the end of the lower-level hallway that houses the infant/young toddler classrooms.

The **Magic Circle Nature Playground** is our certified outdoor classroom nestled in between the Spruce and Sweet Buildings off of the blacktop. It is a wonderful playspace used by our toddlers, preschoolers, and younger afterschoolers where they interact with nature and natural materials in a variety of ways.

The **Stucco Building**, south of the Spruce Building, houses our younger school-age classrooms. The *Dragontails* are our kindergarteners in our Afterschool and Summer Camp programs.

The **Aviary**, located at the corner of 43rd and Spruce Streets, is the new home of the *Falcons*, *Hawks* and *Eagles* classrooms (1st through 4th grade) in our Afterschool Center and Summer Camp programs.

## Our Classrooms

Our four infant/young toddler classrooms are the *Bumblebees*, *Caterpillars* and *Wild Things*, all located on the ground floor of the Spruce Building and the *Doodlebugs*, located on the 1st floor of the Sweet Building. In September, the children in these classrooms range from 6 weeks of age through two years.

### Continuity of Care in Infant/Young Toddler Classrooms

At PIC, we engage in a system of primary caregiving that establishes an environment in which meaningful and lasting relationships can develop between teachers and children.

Continuity of care means that children and teachers remain together for more than one year, often for the first two years of the child's life. Children remain together in the same room in a mixed-age group in which children who enter as infants gradually become the "big" kids, and are often over the age of two by the time they "move up" to the next age group. Even moving a cluster of children to the next age group, rather than moving children individually, contributes to some continuity of care.



Keeping children and teachers together for two years has several benefits. Close relationships between children and their primary caregivers can flourish. The classrooms resemble more of a family-like setting with children of different age groups.

**Our three older toddler classrooms** are the *Rainbows* and *Sunshines* (on the 2nd floor of the Spruce Building) and the *Moonbeams*, on the 1st floor of the Sweet Building. In September, the children in these rooms range in age from 2-3 years.

**Our 3-year-old room** is the *Fireflies*, on the north side of the 3rd floor of the Spruce Building. In September, the children in this room range from 3-4 years of age.

**Our two 4-year-old rooms** are the *Grasshoppers* and the *Roadrunners*. Both rooms are located on the 2nd floor of the Sweet Building. In September, the children in these rooms range from 4-5 years of age.

**Our five mixed-age group rooms** are the *Chipmunks* and *Leapfrogs*, both located on the 3rd floor of the Sweet Building, the *Butterflies* and the *Hummingbirds*, both located on the south side of the 3rd floor of the Spruce Building, and the *Blue Jays*, on the north side of the 3rd floor of the Spruce Building. In September, the children in these rooms range from 3-5 years of age. Most of the children in these rooms will be in the room for two years. The *Chipmunks* room is a part-day room for families who opt for their children to be picked up by 2 p.m.

## 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 our older toddler and preschool 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.

The rooms for our infants/young toddlers are designed to provide lots of sensory stimulation through individual and group play, as well as spontaneous and planned activities. There is plenty of time for cuddling, reading stories, and playing outdoors on our Tot Lot. The routine is intentionally flexible and can be adapted to each child's needs, although the children 14 months and older tend to follow a more set routine.

Children move to a two's classroom at about age two, or a few months younger or older. Children most often move to the next age group in the summer or early September. In these 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.

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.*

## **Curriculum Overview**

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 sets the stage 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, fine and gross motor skills, and 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 more 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](http://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.
- 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 and teacher interests.
- Long-term studies of the topics with periods of uninterrupted time throughout the day for exploration.
- Children and teachers construct 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 at [www.reggioalliance.org](http://www.reggioalliance.org) or [www.narea.com](http://www.narea.com)

## **Documentation : Making Learning Visible**

A key component of the Reggio Emilia Approach and the Project Approach, teachers regularly document children’s activities and classroom projects. Our goal is to show the life of the Early Learning Program through careful observation, reflection, and documentation of each child and his or her classroom experiences.

## 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.

In June of 2021, the Board of Directors put out a Diversity and Equity Statement:

*A commitment to social justice and diversity have been core values at PIC since our founding. This past year's social, health, and economic injustices have brought renewed attention to the systemic racism, white supremacy, and other forms of inequity and violence experienced by BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized communities—which has also brought a renewed urgency to responding to these profound challenges within our community.*

You can read the complete statement on our website at: <https://parentinfantcenter.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-board-statement>

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 PIC Diversity and Equity Committee meets regularly at PIC and consists of both board members and teachers interested in advancing this important topic.

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 outlines *four core goals of diversity work*:

- **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 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 Tot Lot 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 is discarded in blue recycling bins.

Many of our classrooms have a strong commitment to recycling and "less-trash" lunches. Children gather leftover vegetable scraps from lunches for our compost and worm bins, which produce castings to enrich soil in the gardens.

From time to time, classrooms may initiate a recycling drive to collect non-recyclable, post-consumer waste, such as toothpaste tubes, diaper packages, and dried markers. The classrooms help *to turn trash into useful objects!*

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. At those times, families and staff can contribute items from home, while PIC works to responsibly handle materials used for business.

We have created a **PIC Loose Parts Room** on the 2nd floor of the Spruce building. In this room are collections of various items that are either recycled, upcycled 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 invite families to bring in: *ribbons, yarn, baby food jars, styrofoam or cardboard meat trays, wooden spools or spindles, old cd's, corks, wood scraps, paper towel rolls,, seashells, 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.*

We ask that families do not leave cars idling while dropping off or picking up children. Even if someone is waiting in the car while a second person goes into PIC to drop off or pick up their child(ren,) idling vehicles are a great environmental concern.

## **English Language Learners**

We have many children and families in our PIC community who speak 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 our priority to support the development and retention 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.

***A Useful Tip:***

*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.

***Why?***

Assessments help us 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. In some instances, it may provide us with important information about additional resources, developmental screenings or referrals for diagnostic assessments a child may need. We 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 guide curriculum, to adapt teaching practices, to make adjustments to the environment, and to help with planning program improvements.

### ***How?***

Teachers are constantly assessing and evaluating the children in their classrooms as they observe and document 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, around **October 15, February 15, and May 15**. The Early Learning Program uses Teaching Strategies GOLD (published by Creative Curriculum, Inc.) for these formal assessments. Children are assessed in their classroom groups and occasionally one-on-one with a teacher in the classroom. After these assessments are completed, **family conferences are offered three times per year and are scheduled times to discuss the developmental progress of each child and next steps at home and school to support the child's growth.**

**Uses** - The results of assessment are used: a) to adopt and improve the curriculum, specific teaching approaches and practices, 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.

### **Ages and Stages Assessment**

Families are the best source of information about their children. Upon enrollment, we ask that families complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire 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 information helps classroom teachers get to know and understand each child better.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (3rd 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 is maintained in the child's file in the Enrollment office. The teaching team reviews the questionnaire for their information.

### **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 agreed upon 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 evaluations provide both families and PIC with additional information to best meet the needs of the child, and may occur through private therapists or publicly-funded programs. For children birth through 3, Childlink provides free evaluations and services for those children who qualify. Their intake line 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 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 details the child's strengths and areas that require attention. The team writes goals and objectives to address areas in which a child needs added supports 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 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 that a child might be better served in another environment.***

## **Confidentiality**

Information is organized in individual children files and in the Individual Child Portfolios. Results of screening and assessments are accessible and discussed only with those who have a right or 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.

## **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 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 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, redirecting behavior, bringing in resources such as books and visitors, and confirming personal choice and boundaries. Teachers, 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 grown up 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 PIC families and staff involved in local community groups and events can request the use of 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. Our twice-weekly parent-child Playgroup (open to families in the community) introduces parents of young children to one another and enables their children to have some of their first group experiences. Currently our Playgroup gathers 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. **While the COVID-19 pandemic is still upon us, Playgroup will not meet. We look forward to reconvening the Playgroup when we can.**

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 help them explore career options. 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, families will receive a letter describing the research and asking for written permission to have their children participate. **Currently, no students or outside visitors (other than early intervention specialists) are permitted in the classrooms. We look forward to working closely with students again.**

## 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.

### Family-Teacher Interactions

Regular communication between families and teachers is an important element of our partnership. Each classroom 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, or 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 teacher's attention.

We recognize the importance of our work with parents of very young children, often new parents, and often first out-of-home care experiences. Thus, we hope our teachers share their experiences in working with children and offer a shoulder to lean on or a sympathetic ear when it comes to parenting, child rearing or just dealing with the everyday life stresses. We hope that parents and teachers can work as a cooperative team on every issue

## **Communication and General Conversations**

The quality of 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. In general, teachers communicate with parents in brief informal conversations at drop-off and pick-up times, during telephone conversations, at conferences, and through written communications.

If you have a specific concern regarding your child or your classroom, please email your child's teacher.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

**During this time, all parent-teacher meetings will be held via Zoom.**

**Teachers schedule a conference with families within the first month a child is in a new classroom.** This is 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.

**Due to COVID-19 restrictions around gatherings, each classroom will host an evening Info Session via Zoom.**

## **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. The Board of Directors is elected annually by the PIC membership, and an annual Director's Report is sent electronically to all PIC members.

## Program Evaluation

Every spring families are asked to evaluate our program. Families 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 Room Parent network, charged with sustaining center-wide connections in order to strengthen the PIC community and promote the best possible experiences for children and families.

Parenting is tough work and we all benefit from having others to talk with about the challenges and joys of raising our children. 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. **During the pandemic, opportunities for family activities have been limited. We are working to foster community while keeping everyone safe.**

## 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 during your child's day at PIC. With a little advance planning, we love learning about our visitors and sharing their interests and family traditions with our classes. **During the pandemic, we are not allowing family members or visitors into the classrooms.**

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 sets PIC apart 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, benefits our children, and builds a sense of ownership of the Center and its programs.

Each two-parent family in the early learning program is expected to invest 12 hours per fiscal year (July 1-June 30), regardless of the number of children enrolled. Single-parent families invest 6 hours. Two-parent After School Center families have a 5-hour commitment, while single-parent ASC families have a 3-hour commitment. There is no PPP requirement for families enrolled only in the summer camp.

Parent participation requirements are the same for part-time and full-time families. **At this time, parent participation opportunities are greatly diminished due to COVID. We continue to seek out ways we can**

### **foster community among families and staff.**

These are some of the ways that families can receive PPP hours:

- attending PIC community events
- serving as a Room Parent
- serving on the Board or one of its committees
- helping with fundraising events
- making small and large repairs
- maintaining playground equipment
- laundering for the classroom
- minor facility improvements
- equipment and furniture assembly
- organizing family social events or parenting workshops
- providing legal services and medical advice
- taking photographs
- chaperoning trips
- reading in the classroom
- teaching children about special cultural events
- helping with a special interest club in the ASC

Requests for assistance are announced in weekly emailed newsletters, posted on the website 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. **At this time, we welcome any creative ideas for families to be involved in classroom and center life. This past year, some families recorded themselves reading a children's book that can be shared with the class.**

## **Development**

*We believe that maintaining a socio-economically diverse enrollment benefits everyone at PIC, and that all children deserve the same quality start in life.* We enroll families who receive public subsidy and who are enrolled in the PA's PreK Counts program. There is a significant gap between the true cost of care for a child at PIC and the reimbursement rate provided by these public programs. We depend on contributions and our fundraising events to help sustain our diverse enrollment by reducing this funding gap and to support an in-house tuition assistance program for families who earn too much to qualify for government programs. Fundraising campaigns help support capital improvements and 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. *ArtStart* is our fall silent auction and dinner event, and *Day of Play* is our spring event that includes a community gathering of activities and play on our nature playground, and a children's concert. Parent committees provide critical support in planning these events and volunteers lend hands-on help at each fundraiser. Being part of a planning committee or volunteering on the day of our events is a wonderful opportunity to meet other parents and receive PPP. **Our fundraising events have been reenvisioned during the pandemic. Please read our regular communications for up-to-date information about what is happening at PIC.**

## **Grants**

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

## Donations and Contributions

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

**PIC is eligible to receive funds through the United Way Donor Choice plan and the Penn's Way Campaign.** Our number is 02671. We hope that you will consider designating PIC in your employer's next workplace giving campaign.

**Each year, PIC conducts an annual campaign** to friends and alumni of the center to raise funds for operations, special projects and tuition assistance.

**PIC participates in Pennsylvania's Pre-K Tax Credit Program.** Instead of paying taxes directly to the Commonwealth, a business may instead support PIC through this program.

When children graduate from the Center, some families choose to **donate a portion of their tuition deposits** as a contribution to our tuition assistance program – 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, there is a file box with folders that serve as our “mailbox” system, and in other classrooms mail is distributed in child cubbies. Please regularly check for hard copies of information that are sent home. ***Family communications are primarily handled via email at this time.***

### Newsletters

A weekly electronic newsletter, *PIC Weekly News* includes news of classroom activities, announcements of upcoming events, public policy updates, and other information. We publish a semi-annual mailed newsletter for the broader community to current and alumni families, PIC friends and supporters, business and professional contacts, legislators and policy makers. The spring newsletter includes our annual report.

### Website

PIC's website, [parentinfantcenter.org](http://parentinfantcenter.org), contains a copy of this handbook, information about the Center and its programs, events, staff and Board member profiles, and phone and e-mail contacts. There is a “PIC Families” section of our website where families can report PPP hours, find PPP opportunities, read the Family News Feed, and access forms and resources.

***With limited ability to gather families together for Saturday work days, special event support, and family activities in the classroom, we have suspended the tracking of parent participation volunteer hours.***

### Facebook

We invite you to visit PIC's facebook page ([facebook.com/parentinfantcenter.org](https://facebook.com/parentinfantcenter.org)) and “like” us for center

updates, interesting articles, and general happenings around the Center and community!

## E-mail

In addition to weekly e-newsletters, PIC maintains an e-mail list for general announcements and queries to parents. Every classroom has an email listserv used by teachers for classroom e-newsletters, important information, and reminders, by Room Parents for new family welcomes and special announcements, and by families for questions or to set up playdates. All PIC teachers and staff have PIC email addresses.

**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.**

## The Tadpoles Application

All of our classrooms use the Tadpoles app for daily communication. All infant and toddler families will receive a daily report by email. You can also choose to download the Tadpoles Family app to your mobile device to get the daily updates.

## 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. **We are not using the Small Gym space during this time.**

## Hours and Closings

Our regular program hours are from 8 am until 6 pm, Monday through Friday. For a small additional fee, families can arrange to drop off their children between 7:30 and 8 am. **Early Care is not available at this time due to our strict adherence to classroom cohorts as a means to mitigate the spread of COVID.**

We are closed on the following days:

- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Presidents Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- July Fourth
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day through New Year's Day
- New Year's Day

*We also closed for three In-service Days around Labor Day and one In-service day in the spring.*

## Drop-off Time

Children should arrive before 10 am. This 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 10 am, 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. *All new drop-off protocols are outlined in our COVID Handbook.***

## Pick-up Time

The Center closes promptly at 6 pm. This means that you should arrive by 5:45 pm to allow adequate time to hear about your child's day, see his or her latest accomplishment, collect belongings, and chat with staff and other parents. Please plan to leave the building by 6 pm 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 6 pm, 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 6 pm will be taken by a staff member to the Small Gym of the Spruce Building. ***All new pick-up protocols are outlined in our COVID Handbook.***

The part-day program ends at 2 pm. Please understand that teachers have a scheduled break or other commitments after that time, so we ask that you respect the closing time.

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 valid identification.

### ***A Useful Tip:***

*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.*

Parents must sign their children out at the end of the day. When you arrive for pick-up, please sign your child out of the classroom. 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 in your care. Remember that you are responsible for your child, even though staff members are present. ***All new pick-up protocols are outlined in the COVID Handbook.***

### ***A Useful Tip:***

*For some families, permitting the child to "sign out" with your assistance becomes a helpful leaving ritual.*



## Late Fee Policy

Any child who has not been signed out by 6 pm (2 pm in the part-day program) will automatically be charged \$15 for any part of the first 15 minutes and \$5 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.

## Snow Closings or Emergency

PIC works 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 do 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. There will be no early care on late opening days.

PIC uses an automated communication system for snow closings and delays. This system will send text and e-mail messages to all PIC families for whom we have updated contact information.

In addition, we post information about closings or delays on the homepage of our website, PIC's Facebook page, and leave a message on the Center's voicemail. *PLEASE NOTE: We no longer use the TV announcements for channels CBS3, 6ABC, NBC10 and Fox29, KYW News Radio 1060 AM.*

PIC may also close due to other emergencies such as loss of power or water or other weather-related events. We will send text and e-mail messages to all PIC families for whom we have updated contact information.

## 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: Intruders, 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 our website (parentinfantcenter.org), via e-mail and text 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. 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 due on the first business day of the month and is payable in advance. A late fee of \$10 per week may be assessed on all payments not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 (on the second floor or by the ground floor reception desk) or the Sweet Building (near the Family Meeting Room, first floor). ***There is now an outside locked mailbox for checks that is installed outside of the Sweet Building.***

If there is something unusual about the amount of your payment, it's helpful if you write a memo so we know what is different from your invoice.

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. We also have a "click to pay" feature which shows on your emailed tuition bill.

### ***A Useful Tip:***

*There is no surcharge for automatic withdrawals from checking or debit accounts. 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. **Families must give a 60-day written notice of withdrawal from PIC in order to**

**have their deposit returned.** Your deposit may be forfeited without this 60-day written notice.

You will get a letter about your escrow deposit towards the end of your enrollment. You are required to return the signed letter within 90 days in order for your deposit to be returned. The deposit is \$750 per child for children in the full-day program; \$350 per child in the part-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. The PIC Finance Committee works in conjunction with the Executive Director to determine which projects take precedent each year.

### ***A Useful Tip:***

**Child Care Expenses and the IRS.** *Many employers have 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 childcare 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-week care**

Though PIC primarily provides full-time care for working parents, we recognize that many families need only part-week 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-week enrollments so that all our classes can be filled.

### **Several rules apply to part-week enrollment:**

There is a 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.

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 8:00 am to 2 pm. The same policies regarding part-time enrollment outlined above apply for part-day children.

## Leaves from PIC

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.

### Extended Leaves

Extended leaves-of-absence may be taken under the following circumstances:

- Four- to ten- week leave of absences require a 30-day written request and prior consent from the Enrollment Coordinator.
- During the leave of absence, families are responsible for payment of one-half of their current monthly tuition for each month of the leave.
- 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.

## Visiting before Start Day

The Lead Teacher in your child's designated classroom will reach out to you before your official start date to arrange a Visit Day to the classroom with your child. This Visit Day allows 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. ***During the pandemic, we are not able to schedule in-classroom visits prior to a child's first day. Your child's teacher will reach out to you to discuss other ways to ease into the child's first day experience.***

**The Enrollment Coordinator needs to receive all enrollment forms before your Visit Day.**

### *A Useful Tip:*

*Families will also be welcomed by the Room Parents from the child's classroom. Your Room Parents are another resource for new families.*

## Your First Day at PIC

On your first day, go straight to your child's classroom unless other arrangements have been made. You will already have been in touch with the classroom teachers and visited in the classroom ahead of the official start day. The teachers will have a cubby set aside for your child's clothing and extra supplies and 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 have 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. **As family members may not come into the classrooms during the pandemic, your child's teacher will discuss other ways to make your child's beginning experience a successful one.**

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. Remember that when you leave, you are welcome to call the Center to inquire about your child's adjustment. **We encourage only very short conversations at the classroom door with your child's teacher. Email communication is best during this time.**

### ***A Useful Tip:***

*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. **During this time, family members may not come into the classrooms. Remember to explain to your child in advance that you will be saying goodbye at the classroom door, and then remember to say a big goodbye at the door.***

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

## New Family Orientation

PIC can be a big and often confusing place when a family first starts. Each September we welcome new (and even not-so-new) families at an orientation where they have a chance to hear from the Executive Director about PIC's history, new initiatives, events for families, parent participation opportunities, and more.

## Every Day at PIC

### Food and Nutrition Program

Good food habits are learned at an early age! PIC provides healthy meals for all children. All meals are served family-style with milk and water offered, and children are encouraged to be independent in serving themselves.

***During the pandemic, children do not serve themselves and all food at lunch and snack time is plated for them.***

We follow the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that children under the age of four should NOT be served popcorn, grapes (unless cut in half), nuts, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, hot dogs or baby carrots.

Our lunch program is offered to all age-groups and is included in the cost of tuition. All lunches are prepared and delivered daily by Smart Lunches and follow USDA guidelines. You can find information about food and nutrition guidelines on the USDA website: <http://www.nal.usda.gov>.

For families who choose to send their child with his or her own lunch from home, we encourage healthy food choices 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 infants/young toddlers sometimes bring food for a week at a time.

### Food Allergies

**PIC is entirely peanut and tree nut free, so please do NOT send any peanut or tree nut products in your child's lunch.**

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.

**Please label everything** - lunch boxes, bottles, cups, thermoses, plastic containers, etc.

### Every Friday is Pizza Day

On Fridays, pizza is served with a fruit or vegetable option and water and/or milk and is a part of the lunch program.

### Nursing

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. ***During this time, parents***

**may not come into the classroom to breastfeed. We greatly look forward to welcoming breastfeeding parents back into the classroom.**

***A Useful Tip:***

*Our Family Resource Room on the second floor of the Spruce Building is available for nursing when not in use.*

***The Family resource Room may not be used for breastfeeding at this time. It is currently our designated Sick Room during the pandemic.***

## **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 Older Toddler 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.**

***A Useful Tip:***

*Use first name and initials as 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!) for outdoor puddle jumping or mud play.

Parents of walkers or crawlers should send children in sneakers or other soft-soled shoes. Closed-toed shoes are

best as sandals are not good for climbing. Waterproof beach shoes should be provided for summer, when children are playing in the sprinkler.

*A*

*Useful*

*Tip:*

*The Center welcomes donations of gently-used 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 or may get broken or lost. 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 water fountain on the ground floor of the Spruce Building and near the stroller corral on the first floor of the Sweet Building. ***At this time we have moved lost and found items to an area under the outdoor covered porch of the Spruce Building.***

#### ***A Useful Tip:***

*You will be more likely to find lost items if they are labeled with your child's name. When classes are closing outdoors, children's belongings are often placed along the fence. Check those locations before you leave to be sure you have everything.*

## **Moving to New Classrooms ("Move-ups" at PIC)**

At the beginning of each summer, many of the children begin to be on the older end of the classrooms that they are in and families begin to have questions about children moving to the next age group.

#### ***What are "Move-ups?"***

"Move-ups" is the term we use at PIC to refer to the process of moving children to the next age group.

#### ***What is the age range in each of the classrooms?***

See page 6, Our Classrooms section.

#### ***When do children move-up to the next age group?***

Occasionally spaces will become available during the school year, if a family moves away or leaves PIC for another reason.

However, most often children start to move-up at the end of June, when spaces become available as the oldest children move onto summer camp. The next "wave" of move-ups usually happens in early September, again as our oldest children move on to kindergarten. We begin to move the oldest children in the infant/young toddler rooms to the older toddler rooms, the oldest toddlers to the preschool rooms, and so on, as spaces open up.



This means that there will be children over 2 years in the infant and young toddler rooms, over 3 years in the older toddler rooms, and over 4 years in the 3's rooms over the course of the school year. The children move in "rough" chronological order as space becomes available in the next age groups.

### ***What does "rough" chronological order mean?***

Our Enrollment Coordinator and Program Coordinators consult with the classroom teachers about each child's individual needs, temperament and other factors that may influence when a child moves up. For example, some children will do better when moving with a specific peer or will do better when being separated from a specific social group. Some children may have developmental or home needs that make it best to wait a little longer or move a little sooner (this might include the birth of a new baby or a move to a new home). Any of these decisions may affect the order when a child moves.

Other factors also need to be taken into consideration in planning for move-ups. In each classroom, we need to balance gender and child schedules. And we need to consider the ages of the children in all the classrooms that are the same age range, not just one at a time. **This means that often it is not the oldest child in the classroom that moves before the others.** To balance all of the factors we need to take into account, it is very possible that children will move somewhat out of chronological order. Be assured that once the summer move-ups begin, all of the children age-eligible for moving up to the next age group will do so in a relatively short period of time.

### ***When will we know when our child will be moving and how can we prepare our child for the move?***

You will receive an email from our Enrollment Coordinator about 2-3 weeks before a child's scheduled move-up date. Teachers also receive notification that a new child is coming into their rooms and will reach out to you to offer any information needed.

### ***A Useful Tip:***

*Talk about the move to the new classroom at home and use the teacher's names as well as the names of any of the children in the room that your child may already know.*

### ***What is the move-up transition like at PIC?***

Children moving into our preschool classrooms generally move in groups to their new room. The children seem happiest and most comfortable when they know they are moving with at least one friend.

With our younger children, the teachers will discuss a "transition plan" for each child's move-up to the new classroom. This usually involves each child spending some time visiting the new classroom, often for incremental periods of time. Each child is very different in how they experience the move-up process and the teachers are very sensitive to knowing that some children need more time than others.

We ask parents to participate in the transition plan by taking their child to visit the new classroom as many times as helpful.

***During this time, parents may not take children to visit the new classroom. Teachers continue to be very creative in helping the children learn about their new classrooms.***

### ***How are decisions made as to what classroom children are placed in?***

There are many, many factors that go into classroom placement decisions when children move up and this process is probably one of the most complicated things that we do. As much as possible, we want each child to move into a new classroom where there are other children whom s/he knows. We want there to be a balance of gender, and of part-week and full-week children. Again, teachers know which children will do better if moving with a peer group or being split from a specific peer group. We also take into account which classroom culture may best fit each child's individual personality and temperament. Teachers know the children in their class very, very well and we ask parents to trust us in this process.

### ***Can parents request specific classrooms?***

Many of the children moving up are siblings of children who were in classrooms before them. Often these parents have an established relationship with a teaching team and would like their younger child placed in the same room. We do our very best to honor these requests. However, other than the sibling example, *we ask that families not request specific teachers* as usually the only information that they have about a teacher or a classroom is hear-say, and every child and family's situation is different.

## **What to Do If You Have a Concern**

There may be times when you have a specific concern regarding something happening with your child, with the classroom, or with the program. Open communication usually solves most problems. If you are comfortable talking with the Lead Teacher, that is the place to start. In general, it is best not to address such issues in front of children, or at a time when the teacher is in-ratio and responsible for the children. It is helpful to give details of a situation of specific examples of the issue you wish to discuss. Hopefully, a plan will be reached to address the issue.

If you would prefer to speak with someone outside the classroom, or if the issue remains unresolved after speaking with the classroom teacher, it is best to schedule an appointment to talk with the Program Coordinator who is responsible for supervision of your child's teachers. They can help you think about how best to address the issue or speak directly with relevant staff members. They know the children in the classrooms, and they provide oversight, mentoring and coaching to the classroom teams.

If after speaking with the Program Coordinator, you still believe the issue or concern has not been resolved, please schedule a time to speak with Assistant Director Jessica Carter or Executive Director Deb Green. Your Room Parent(s) may also help you locate the appropriate person to address your concern.

Please note that while these conversations often happen when there is a concern, all the administrators listed above love to speak with families about positive things too!

## **PIC Traditions**

### **Special Events**

**Among our other PIC traditions are:**

*Parent Infant Center Early Learning Family Handbook - Rev. September 2021*

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

***While most of our beloved Special Events are on hold during the pandemic, we continue to think of creative ways for families to continue connections with our program.***

## The PIC “Push”

Some children have trouble saying goodbye in the morning. It is a longtime PIC tradition for children to “push” their parent or caregiver from the classroom 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! We appreciate the celebration of birthdays as landmark events. We ask that you discuss your child’s birthday observance with the classroom staff, respect classroom routines, and keep things simple.

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

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.

We also know that some families do not celebrate birthdays for religious, cultural, or personal reasons. Speak with the classroom teacher so that plans can be made to best accommodate this.

### ***A Useful Tip:***

*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. 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 celebration can then focus on sharing and reading the birthday book. Teachers can make suggestions about appropriate books for the classroom.* ***Many birthday traditions are on hold during***

***the pandemic. Families may bring a classroom treat to the classroom. At this time, the treat needs to be store bought (i.e. small cupcakes or popsicles from the grocery store.)***

***A Useful Tip:***

*PIC's Small Gym may be used on weekends for a donation. Contact the Facilities Manager to schedule a party.*

***Our facilities are not being rented during this time.***

## **Holidays**

At PIC, we recognize that not all families 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.

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 and authentic 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 of 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., families may choose to share their traditions or 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. ***Family members may not come into the classroom during the time. We continue to look forward to learning about holidays and traditions specific to your family. You might send in a book or a home artifact that tells a bit more about the celebration or tradition. Consider recording yourself reading a book and sending it to the teacher.***

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 the commercialized aspects of the holidays, we prefer to foster the children's engagement in our classroom studies.

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.

## Withdrawing from 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. Tuition deposits are held in escrow and returned by the Center upon withdrawal, less any outstanding tuition payment or PPP obligation. **Families must give a 60-day written notice of withdrawal from PIC in order to have their deposit returned.** Your deposit may be forfeited without this 60-day written notice.

Upon notification of withdrawal, you will receive a letter about the return of your deposit, which you are required to sign and return. Your deposit, minus any fees and a charge for uncompleted PPP obligations or unreturned key fobs, will be returned about a month after receipt of this signed letter. When children leave the Center, some families choose to designate their tuition deposits as a contribution to our fund for tuition assistance—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 to share their wisdom, or a visit to the kindergarten classrooms at a nearby elementary school 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 schools 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 the**

classroom sink when you arrive for the day. ***Handwashing is being strictly followed during this time and be assured that teachers will assist children with handwashing when they enter the classroom.***

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 him/her to be sent home. 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:

- Your child will not get well as quickly as she or he will in a more isolated, quiet, home environment.
- There is an increased chance of other children and the staff getting sick.
- Staff giving extra attention to sick children cannot give adequate attention to other 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 having a plan in place 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. Temporary exclusion is recommended when the child has any of the following:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities;
- The illness results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children;
- A severely ill appearance - this could include lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash;
- Fever (temperature above 101°F [38.3°C] by any method) *with* a behavior change in infants older than 2 months of age. For infants younger than 2 months of age, a fever (above 100.4°F [38°C] by any method) with or without a behavior change or other signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea) requires exclusion and immediate medical attention;
- Diarrhea is defined by stools that are more frequent or less formed than usual for that child and not associated with changes in diet. Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet-trained children if the diarrhea is causing "accidents". In addition, diapered children with diarrhea should be excluded if the stool frequency exceeds two stools above normal for that child during the time in the program day, because this may cause too much work for the caregivers/teachers, or those whose stool contains blood or mucus. Readmission after diarrhea can occur when diapered children have their stool contained by the diaper (even if the stools remain loose) and when toilet-trained children are not having "accidents" and when stool frequency is no more than 2 stools above normal for that child during the time in the program day;
- 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.

- **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 alert other parents to be alert to similar symptoms and take appropriate preventive measures. It is important that you also let us know if your child ever needs hospitalization.

## **Returning After an Illness**

Your child may return to the Center once his or her condition has improved and he or she is able to participate in normal activities. Please note, 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.

## **Conditions/symptoms that do not require exclusion**

Many common childhood illnesses do not require exclusion from daycare settings. Research has shown that the most effective means of preventing the spread of illness is *not* exclusion, but rather good hygiene. These conditions include:

- Common colds, runny noses (regardless of color or consistency of nasal discharge)
- A cough not associated with fever, rapid or difficult breathing, wheezing or cyanosis (blueness of skin or mucous membranes)
- Pinkeye (bacterial conjunctivitis) indicated by pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye mucous drainage and matted eyelids after sleep. This may be thought of as a cold in the eye. Exclusion is no longer required for this condition. Health professionals may vary on whether or not to treat pinkeye with antibiotic drops. The role of antibiotics in treatment and preventing spread of conjunctivitis is unclear. Most children with pinkeye get better after 5 or 6 days without antibiotics. Parents/guardians should discuss care of this condition with their child's primary care provider, and follow the primary care provider's advice. Some primary care providers do not think it is necessary to examine the child if the discussion with the parents/guardians suggests that the condition is likely to be self-limited. If no treatment is provided, the child should be allowed to remain in care. If the child's eye is painful, a health care provider should examine the child.
- Watery, yellow or white discharge or crusting eye discharge without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness
- Yellow or white eye drainage that is not associated with pink or red conjunctiva (i.e., the whites of the eyes)
- Fever without any signs or symptoms of illness in children who are older than four months regardless of whether acetaminophen or ibuprofen was given. For this purpose, fever is defined as temperature above 101 degrees F (38.3 degrees C) by any method. These temperature readings do not require adjustment for the location where they are made. They are simply reported with the temperature and the location, as in "101 degrees in the armpit/axilla". Fever is an indication of the body's response to something, but is neither a disease nor a serious problem by itself. Body temperature can be elevated by overheating caused by overdressing or a hot environment, reactions to medications, and response to infection. If the child is

behaving normally but has a fever, the child should be monitored, but does not need to be excluded for fever alone. For example, an infant with a fever after an immunization who is behaving normally does not require exclusion.

- Rash without fever and behavioral changes. Exception: call EMS (911) for rapidly spreading bruising or small blood spots under the skin.
- Lice or nits treatment may be delayed until the end of the day. As long as treatment is started before returning the next day, no exclusion is needed;
- Ringworm treatment may be delayed until the end of the day. As long as treatment is started before returning the next day, no exclusion is needed;
- Thrush (i.e., white spots or patches in the mouth or on the cheeks or gums);
- Fifth disease (slapped cheek disease, parvovirus B19) once the rash has appeared;
- Children with chronic infectious conditions that can be accommodated in the program according to the legal requirement of federal law in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The act requires that child care programs make reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, considering each child individually.

***Policies and procedures around illness have been significantly altered during the pandemic and have also been altered several times as more information has become available during the pandemic. Please refer to the COVID Handbook for all updated information regarding our COVID health and safety policies.***

## **Medication at PIC**

All medication (prescription and over-the-counter) administered at PIC follow these guidelines:

- “Permission to Administer Medication and Medication Log” form is completed by 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.
- All medication must have child’s full name, name of medication, prescription date/date of expiration and name of prescriber.
- If the medication is being used to treat an ongoing special health need (like asthma or allergies), please complete a Care Plan for Children with Special Health Needs

“Permission to Administer Medication and Medication Logs” 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 form.

Diaper cream/ointment and/or bug spray must be provided by the family and will be applied as needed, with prior consent. We ask that sunscreen be applied before school. PIC does supply sunscreen that the teachers will reapply as needed.

Upon enrollment and when entering a new classroom, families are asked to complete a “Special Permission: Administration of Tylenol, Motrin or Generic Substitute.” This Special Permission applies ONLY to instances where the parent or guardian has been called to pick up a sick child. In this case, with your permission, the staff will give a dose of Tylenol, Motrin or GS to bring down fever while awaiting your arrival. 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.



## 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 Care Plan for Children with Special Health Needs needs to be completed and signed by a parent and health care provider(s). In the case of asthma or allergies, you should complete an additional Action Plan detailing how and when additional interventions will take place. 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.

## 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.

In the event that a child is underimmunized (has not received the recommended number or types of vaccine for his or her age according to the national and local immunization schedules,) and a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the program, the family of the underimmunized child will be asked to promptly pick the child and not return until the vaccine preventable disease has run its course.

### Mandated Reporting

All individuals working with young children 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.**

## Safety and Security

At PIC, active supervision of all children at all times is taken very seriously. All classrooms follow the principles of active supervision at all times:

- **Set up the Environment**
  - Teachers set up the classroom environments so they can supervise children and be accessible at all times.
  - Small spaces are kept clutter-free and big spaces are set up so that children have clear play spaces that teachers can observe.
- **Positioning**

- Teachers carefully plan where they will position themselves in the environment to prevent children from harm. They make sure there are always clear paths to where children are playing, sleeping,, and eating so they can react quickly when necessary.
- **Scan and Count**
  - Teachers are always able to account for the children in their care. They continually scan the entire environment to know where every child is and what they are doing.
- **Listen**
  - Specific sounds or the absence of them may signify reason for concern. Teachers listen closely to children to immediately identify signs of potential danger.
- **Anticipate Children's Behavior**
  - Teachers use what they know about each child's individual interests and skills to predict what s/he will do. They recognize when children might wander, get upset, or take a dangerous risk.
- **Engage and Reflect**
  - Teachers use what they know about each child's individual needs and development to offer support. They wait until children are unable to problem solve on their own to get involved. They may offer different levels of assistance or redirection depending on each individual child's needs.

### How parents and caregivers can help with supervision:

- Siblings may never be left unattended while another child is being dropped -off or picked-up. This includes leaving siblings unaccompanied in a hallway (even directly outside of the other child's classroom,) or on the blacktop or playground. Once a parent arrives to drop-off or pick-up a child, the other child(ren) accompanying the parent or caregiver must be with both children at all times.
- When siblings come into a classroom, we ask parents and caregivers to closely monitor the behavior of the child coming into the room that they are not enrolled in. Furniture and equipment in the younger rooms is not made to withstand the play of older children. Likewise, the equipment and supplies in the classrooms with older children is not always suitable or safe for younger children. **Siblings may not enter the classrooms during this time.**

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. **Families may not enter the classroom during the time. Please be sure that your child is greeted and seen at the classroom door before departing.**
- 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. **A teacher will sign out your child during this time. Be sure that a teacher sees you arrive and that you are departing with your child. This is true both at**

***the classroom door and when picking up outside.***

- 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, email, 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**

Parking a car at PIC is challenging! There is no parking allowed on PIC property. Between the hours of 8 and 10 am, and then again from 4 to 6 pm, the parking spaces halfway down the blocks on both 42<sup>nd</sup> 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 7:30 am and 4:30 pm on school days.

**Please do not park in the "driveway" at the corner of 42<sup>nd</sup> and Locust – this is a No Stopping Zone. Emergency vehicles need to have access to the driveway in the event of an emergency, and thus it is illegal to park there.**

## **Transportation**

PIC has four vans to transport children on trips. All of our drivers are over 25, insured and have a safe driving record. All occupants 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 provides. If a trip requires renting another vehicle, our policy is 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.

***No transportation is being used at PIC with children in the Early Learning Division at this time.***

### **Strollers, Scooters, Bikes**

Some children come to PIC by stroller or scooter. Please park strollers/scooters on the ground floor of the Spruce Building or the Sweet Building, or in the "corral" in the Small Gym. Please 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.

***Strollers may be parked in the stroller corral that is located on the ground floor in the Spruce Building. Use the entrance located directly across from Penn Alexander School. We are not able to hold strollers in any other space at this time. All bikes and scooters must be parked and locked at the bike rack outside of the blacktop area.***

## Facility Rentals

PIC offers rooms to PIC families, staff, alumni or community organizations for a fee of \$75 for 4 hours. Rental time includes setup time, event and 1 hour event clean up time. Payment is due two weeks prior to the event. All events require a scheduled PIC staff person paid \$15 per hour in cash on-site from arrival to staff departure time. PIC will schedule event staff person. Deposit is required to reserve your date. More information and Room Request form available from PIC's Facilities Manager.

***There are no facility rentals during this time.***

## 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 ventilation. 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

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 to 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. *While we have always valued our outdoor spaces, we recognize that our campus has been a tremendous asset during the pandemic. Please dress your child accordingly as we want children outside every day and in all kinds of weather.*

## Family Handbook Addendum for Families of Children Enrolled in our PreK Counts Program

### Attendance

**Regular attendance is important for your child to maintain steady progress and to enjoy the benefits of a high quality early education experience. If your child is ill or unable to attend school, please call PIC at 215-22-5480 so that an administrator can let the teacher's know that your child will be not be at PIC.**

Enrollment in the Pre-K Counts Program will be jeopardized with 10 or more consecutive absences or more than 18 days absent per school year. When a child has consecutive and unexplained absences, we need to document that we have taken all of the following accountability actions:

- After **3 absences**: Teacher will verbally remind parents about the importance of daily attendance.
- After **5 absences**: Teacher will meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the reason for absences and strategies to be utilized to avoid absences in the future.
- After **10 absences**: Educational Coordinator will confer with the parent regarding excessive absences and develop a plan of action to ensure daily school attendance.
- After **15 absences**: Parent receives written notification that continued absences will result in child's removal from the class list.
- At **18 absences**: In consultation with the program director, the child is placed back on the waiting list, and the slot will be filled by the next child on the waitlist.

The only exception is an extended recurring medical situation. Extended vacations/holidays from school count as absences.

If the child is a Pre-K Counts student, we do not accept **regularly scheduled** early dismissals during instructional time. The entire amount of time allocated for the slot is supposed to be fully utilized by the recipient.

### Snacks and Lunch

Healthy snacks and lunch are provided daily, with milk and water offered at each meal. Children enrolled in the Pre-K Counts Program automatically are enrolled in the PIC lunch program free of charge. For more information on PIC's food policy, see that section of the Family Handbook.