



# Parent Handbook

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## **1. Welcome**

Welcome to Carpe Diem Private Preschool. We sincerely hope this will be the beginning of a rewarding and trusting relationship between your family and us. This handbook is meant to serve as a guide to what you should expect from us. It also details what your responsibilities are. Of course, always feel free to contact the Director, or any other staff member, in person, by telephone, or by e-mail, if you have any questions or concerns about these policies and procedures.

From all of us at Carpe Diem, please accept our thanks for placing your trust and your child with us. Welcome to our family!

## **2. Our Philosophy**

At Carpe Diem Private Preschool, we're dedicated to one thing—giving your child the best start in life by laying the foundation for a lifetime of learning. From our dedicated staff and inspired array of programs, to our secure, state-of-the-art facilities, every element of Carpe Diem is designed to enrich your child's mind, body, and spirit. So much so that we've met or exceeded the stringent requirements set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The fundamental reason and long-term goal for the kind of developmentally appropriate, child-centered, experiential learning we advocate is not only to help children to develop personal integrity and fulfillment, but also to enable them to think critically, work cooperatively, solve problems creatively, and make the life-long decisions necessary to participate fully in society. Our meaningful curriculum for all age levels provides experiences which enable children to make sense of what they are learning and to connect or integrate their knowledge in ways that lead to rich conceptual development.

## **3. Our Faculty**

We believe that a school's excellence is ultimately measured by the quality of its staff, which is why we're extremely selective when it comes to our faculty. Our classes are led by degreed teachers who are supported by well-educated, experienced assistant and specialty teachers. All our teachers and administrators are required to participate in diverse workshops, seminars, and continuing education courses annually.

Every employee at Carpe Diem, from Director to Housekeeper, is held to the highest standards and must complete a rigorous pre-employment screening process. This includes a thorough background check, education and experience verification, and drug testing.

All staff members are required to have emergency response training and current first aid and CPR certification. Our staff members are trained in preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Shaken Baby

Syndrome on an annual basis. Immunizations are not required by staff.

#### **4. Disaster Preparedness**

In the event of a disaster, (i.e. hurricane, tornado, flooding, etc.) Carpe Diem has a Disaster Preparedness plan to ensure the safety and well-being of all our students. We will communicate necessary updates via email. Please understand that parents will still be responsible for tuition in the case of unexpected closures or class delays. No refunds will be given. To see a copy of our Disaster Preparedness Plan, please see the Director.

Fire, severe weather and lock-down drills are practiced regularly. You can be sure your child is always in the best hands while he/she is at Carpe Diem. We have our evacuation routes for fire escape and tornado evacuation posted and available for viewing in each child's classroom. Administrators have copies of each emergency location for each classroom.

In the event Carpe Diem Students and Staff members need to evacuate the premises, the older children will be transported on the Carpe Diem Buses. Children 24 months and younger will be seated on a caregiver's lap with a seatbelt fastened in the staff members vehicles. We will relocate to Walmart 2801 E Whitestone Blvd, Cedar Park, TX 78613 (512) 690-9340.

#### **5. Peace of Mind—Our Security Procedures**

We kept two things in mind when designing Carpe Diem facilities—safety and atmosphere, which is why every part of all our campuses has been designed to make you and your child feel secure and comfortable. Our buildings are equipped with sprinkler systems and fire alarms, which are directly connected to the City of Allen, Frisco, Richardson, Cedar Park and Southlake Fire Departments.

You'll notice our commitment to your child's safety begins the moment you step inside our lobbies. To access the schools' interior classroom area, every visitor will participate in a "background check" using our Raptor system.

Only after someone's background check has been correctly identified will that person be allowed to enter the interior hallways. Once inside, you'll find only students, staff, parents, and other authorized adults are permitted to enter our classrooms during regular school hours.

Our "age appropriate" outdoor playgrounds at each campus have also been designed with concern for safety as well as imaginative, physical play. In fact, each play system, including all fall zone materials, complies with the demanding guidelines of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Plus, we've installed six-foot fences around the perimeter of all our playground areas.

If a medical or any other type of emergency occurs, including the need to evacuate the building, we will take whatever steps are required. We will call 911 and/or the local city's office of emergency preparedness if necessary to obtain an appropriate and expeditious response to the situation. Parents are welcome to view our Emergency Preparedness & Safety Plans at any time, see an admin to do so. In the event of an emergency, parents will always be contacted as quickly as possible. **Please make sure your child's registration information is consistently up to date.** It is extremely important we have your and all your emergency contacts' current home, work, and cell phone numbers. It's important to us to take proactive steps to protect your child's wellbeing at all times, but from time to time, accidents do occur. Carpe Diem Private Preschool is not responsible for any medical costs of a child becoming ill or injured while at our facility. All injuries will be documented carefully, and you will be fully and immediately informed.

## 6. Open Door Policy

We welcome you to visit your child throughout the day if you choose to do so. You may observe or participate in classroom activities, but we do ask you not to disturb the class during naptime. If it is necessary for you to pick up or drop off your child during naptime, please let us know in advance, so we can help you minimize interruptions to the daily routine. If you would like to have lunch at Carpe Diem with your child, we ask you to arrange it with his/her teacher or an admin beforehand. Parents who are interested in enrolling their child or children are encouraged to make an appointment to take a tour. We happily welcome visitors at any time. However, visitors on a tour are not allowed to enter classrooms when children are present. We also encourage you to participate in our school's operations and activities (i.e. birthday parties, school parties, carnivals, etc.). Parents are allowed in-person meetings both scheduled and unscheduled with the Director Monday – Friday during regular business hours.

## 7. Our Goals for Children

Carpe Diem's goals for children address all the domains of child development—emotional, social, cognitive, creative, and physical.

Children enrolled in Carpe Diem Private Preschool will:

- develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward learning, self-control, and a sense of belonging.
- develop curiosity about the world, confidence as a learner, creativity and imagination, and personal initiative.
- develop relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults and peers, understand perspectives of other people, and negotiate and apply rules of group living.
- understand and respect social and cultural diversity.
- know about the community and social roles.
- use language to communicate effectively and facilitate thinking and learning.
- become literate individuals who gain satisfaction, as well as information, from

- reading and writing.
- represent ideas and feelings through pretend play, drama, movement, music, art, and construction.
  - think critically, reason, and solve problems.
  - construct understanding of relationships among objects, people, and events, such as classifying, ordering, number, space, and time.
  - construct knowledge of the physical world, manipulate objects for desired effects, and understand cause and effect relationships.
  - acquire knowledge of and appreciation for the fine arts, humanities, and sciences.
  - become competent in the management of their bodies and acquire basic physical skills, both gross motor and fine motor.
  - gain knowledge about the care of their bodies and maintain a desirable level of health and fitness.

#### Child-to-Teacher Ratios:

To ensure individualized instruction and essential nurturing attention, our child-to-teacher ratios and group sizes are significantly lower than the standards required for state licensing by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Instead, we follow the highly regarded NAEYC guidelines. All our child-to-teacher ratios and classroom group sizes that vary according to children's ages or birth dates, are published on our Tuition Rate Sheet, which is available by contacting our schools by phone or by e-mail. This information is also included in the folder you receive when you take a tour.

#### Curriculum and Assessment:

Any preschool can help a child learn basic skills like letters, numbers, or shapes. But at Carpe Diem, we help children learn **how** to learn. We encourage children to question why and discover the answer for themselves. This approach inspires our students to think more creatively, thus strengthening their problem-solving abilities. What's more, our programs include character-building activities that teach children the importance of fairness, integrity, and honesty.

We believe highly appropriate curriculum and assessment should be planned based on the best knowledge of theory and research about how children develop and learn, with attention given to individual children's needs and interests.

Our curriculum is an organized framework that represents a broad range of relevant content and skills that children need to learn, the processes through which children achieve these identified goals, what teachers do to help children achieve them, and the context in which teaching, and learning occur.

The most effective curriculum develops knowledge and skills in a meaningful context, not in isolation. For example, children learn numerals and number concepts best by

counting and manipulating real objects, not by filling in workbook pages. Children learn letters and their sounds by using them in their names, signs, or stories that are engaging to them rather than by tracing them on a page or reciting the alphabet repeatedly.

We use assessment, the process of regularly and systematically observing and documenting what children do and how they do it considering realistic and attainable content goals, as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child from infancy on, including curriculum planning for groups and individual children and communicating with parents.

The following are our basic assumptions about the interactive process of teaching and learning:

- Children learn best when their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically safe and secure.
- Children construct their own knowledge through repeated social interaction with adults and other children or through physical experiences with objects.
- Children’s learning reflects a recurring cycle that begins in awareness and moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally, to utilization.
- Children learn through play.
- Children’s interests and “need to know” motivate learning.
- Human development and learning are characterized by individual variation.

## **8. Daily Procedures**

Hours of operation:

Carpe Diem Private Preschool is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday year-round. Each class’s daily schedule is posted outside the class room and on our website. The school year holiday calendar is also posted on our website.

Drop-off/check-in procedure:

When you drop off your child, please park your car and come into the lobby. You enter the main school area using your key fob scan and proceed to your child’s classroom. All children must be signed in at drop off in the classroom.

Pick-up/check-out procedure:

When you pick up your child, please park your car and come into the lobby. You enter the main school area using your key fob and proceed to your child’s classroom. You do not need to notify us if you are picking your child up early, unless it will be during naptime.

Please note we will only release your child to individuals you have designated as an “Authorized Person” on your child’s enrollment form or by using our “Authorization for Release of a Child” form. Giving a note or verbal permission to your child’s teacher is unacceptable. In an emergency, if you need to make arrangements to give permission for someone who has not been authorized to pick up your child, please ask to speak to an administrator.

In all cases in which you authorize the release of your child to a person who has not picked up your child before or who is unknown to the administrator on duty, we require that person to provide picture identification.

**All children must be signed out in the classroom by the person who is picking up the child or by his/her teacher.**

## **9. Your Child’s First Day**

You have probably visited us on one or more occasions and our intent is for you to have a smooth and informative enrollment and orientation process. In addition, we want you and your child to feel as comfortable and welcomed on your first day at Carpe Diem as possible. We understand no matter how well prepared and excited a family may be, the newness can also be a little scary for everybody. We don’t consider any questions or concerns you may have unimportant or silly.

Please come to our lobby where our administrators will greet you warmly, escort you to your child’s classroom, and help you get your child settled. Sometimes saying goodbye isn’t easy. We recommend you keep it reassuring, short, and sweet. Prolonging the inevitable often does not help the situation—ten minutes or so should do it; however, we won’t rush you and respect your right to decide how to best handle this situation with your child.

We suggest that if you have any business or final paperwork to attend to, you should do it after you return to the lobby, as we don’t want to keep your child waiting beforehand. We will be glad to take your phone call later in the day if you need reassurance about how your child is doing. Please know if we ever think you need to be told about anything concerning your child, we are going to call you, if necessary, or speak with you at drop-off or pick-up times, so that you can help us decide a course of action.

## **10. Meals/ Snacks, Breastfeeding and Allergic Reactions**

At Carpe Diem we serve healthy, nutritious meals and snacks. Our weekly menus, both regular and vegetarian, are posted in the classrooms as well as on our website. Breakfast is available from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m., mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks are provided, and

lunch is served family-style between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. **To prevent the possibility of allergic reactions, our menus do not include tree nuts or peanuts.**

Children are encouraged to try new foods, but may refuse what they do not want to eat. Withholding food is never used as a form of discipline. We reserve the right to substitute any menu item if the listed item is unavailable. You will be informed of substitutions on your child's Daily Report Form.

Parents may provide meals and/or snacks at any time for their child if there is a food he/she does not prefer or to substitute for food he/she is allergic to. Except in infant classrooms, we cannot refrigerate or heat children's food. In all other classrooms, food should be sent in insulated containers to maintain its appropriate temperature. **Parents may not bring any food items that are cooked in or/and contain tree nuts or peanuts.** All food items must be labeled with the child's name and the menu item it's substituting for. All food items must be either consumed or returned to parents every day. Food items sent by parents will be stored in the classroom, refrigerated, or left in the cubbies or backpacks. The only exception to this rule is milk.

Parents who supply substitutions for their child are required to sign an agreement stating they are choosing to provide their child's meals and/or snacks from home and the parent understands the child-care center is not responsible for its nutritional value or for meeting the child's daily food needs.

If you are breastfeeding your baby, you may provide breast milk, which will be stored in the infant room refrigerator or freezer. Mothers are most welcome to breastfeed in the infant room or in the cozy surroundings of our library.

**If your child is allergic to any foods etc., you must let us know.** If your child has an allergy that can cause a life-threatening reaction such as anaphylactic shock, **we require you to provide a copy of an Emergency Plan of Action from your child's doctor.** We strongly urge you to monitor our menus for possible reactive foods. We are happy to work with our parents to identify any ingredients in our menu items which may cause a reaction.

## **11. Outdoor Play**

This is a special time of the day to release energy and simply enjoy the physical rewards of active play. Carpe Diem is equipped with commercial state-of-the-art outdoor play systems, with more-than-required cushioning material in the fall zone areas of the systems.

We actively monitor the air quality and temperatures for the day, and keep children indoors when the air quality is hazardous or when it's too hot (over 95 degrees F. including the heat index) or too cold (below 45 degrees F. including the wind chill factor). In the hot summer months, we schedule our outdoor playtimes early in the day to take advantage of the cooler morning temperatures. Please make sure your child brings a coat, jacket, or sweater to wear when he/she will use the playground on breezy and chilly days.

#### Sunscreen and Bug Spray

We encourage families to apply sunscreen and bug spray prior to arriving at school. However, if sunscreen or bug spray need to be applied directions must be provided in writing with the specific name of the product and times of application. Products must not be in an aerosol can and siblings must bring their own products. We are not able to share products among children. Faculty will assist in application of the products and will keep the product in a safe and secure location, out of the reach of children. Please see administrators should you have more questions regarding this.

### **12. Naptime**

Every day, after enjoying our lunchtime meal, the children have a 1½ to 2-hour naptime. While all children are encouraged to take a nap, they are never forced to sleep and may have a quiet, peaceful rest time instead. Your child may bring a blanket, pillow, and/or stuffed animal for naptime except for children under 12 months old, but they must be small enough to be stored in his/her backpack when not in use. Carpe Diem provides crib and mat sheets. Crib sheets are changed daily, and mat sheets are changed weekly, at which time mattresses and mats are sanitized. Soiled sheets are always changed immediately, and the mattress or mat is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before the sheet is replaced.

### **13. How We Communicate With Parents**

We understand that an important part of your life is finding out about your child's day and progress at Carpe Diem. In our infant classes through pre-kindergarten, our daily Parent Report form, in addition to the on-going, informal conversations you will have with your child's teacher(s), is one way of sharing with you what, why, and how we do things. We encourage you to read these report forms and, when he/she becomes verbal, talk with your child about his or her accomplishments, further reinforcing the pride and competency your child will surely have.

Our administrators and teachers are very special people who spend a great deal of time with your child and they want to build mutually trusting relationships with you. We know you will use good judgment and not monopolize the teachers' time while they are supervising children. If you ever have any concerns, call us or stop in the lobby and we'll address them immediately. We will respond as quickly as possible. We usually do not put parent calls directly through to the classrooms because that would distract the teachers'

attention from the children. If you want to arrange a meeting or conference with a teacher or an administrator or both, please ask and a mutually agreeable time will be arranged during regular business hours.

We also have a Parent Resource Center page on our website, a Facebook page, and informative parent information bulletin boards in our hallways and classrooms where we post monthly newsletters and calendars, daily schedules, menus, reminders, weekly curriculum highlights, and monthly teacher newsletters. In addition, we have parent/teacher conferences scheduled three times throughout the school year, special programs and family events, holiday celebrations, parent education workshops, and ways for parents to volunteer their special interests and talents.

From time to time usually before parent/teacher conferences, so you can let us know how we're doing, you'll be asked to take a few moments to complete a short questionnaire. We always welcome and encourage your involvement, comments, and suggestions.

#### **14. Our Discipline and Guidance Philosophy**

We believe the best way to prepare children to live successfully and productively is to help them develop self-control, resolve conflicts, and become increasingly responsible for their actions and behaviors. Adults must model desirable behavior for children to learn to understand, acknowledge, and cope with their feelings. We accomplish this using positive guidance techniques that offer developmentally appropriate choices and set clear and consistent rules and consequences. We know children must be involved with each other, with teachers, and with materials and equipment to learn how to work and play harmoniously.

Sometimes children may be separated from the group for short periods when they need a quiet place away from the overwhelming emotions of peers and play. At Carpe Diem, this cooling-off period, often called "Time Out," is only used judiciously and as a last resort for serious behavior problems. We firmly believe children should never be made to feel humiliated or rejected. Physical, verbal, or emotional punishment or abuse is never allowed. If we have concerns about a child's behavior, we will inform his/her parents as soon as possible and collaborate on a plan of action for positive change. If the parent cannot agree to a plan of action and other children/teachers are at risk of serious injury, Carpe Diem has the right to terminate the enrollment at any time.

##### **Suspension Policy**

If all fails and the disruption continues, the teacher will call the Director to speak with the child. The Director will inform the parents and a parent conference will be scheduled to review the situation and discuss any changes that may need to be implemented.

If at any time a child creates an unsafe environment to themselves, other children, and/or faculty the child may be suspended or expelled from the program. Our goal is to

provide a safe and nurturing environment for all students.

## 15. Uniforms and Backpacks

Carpe Diem requires children in our preschool B, and pre-kindergarten classes to wear Carpe Diem uniforms on Monday through Thursday, with Friday being an opportunity to dress in some other favorite outfit. The uniform requirement does not extend to children in our infant, toddler, and Preschool A classes or children in our after-school program.

Our uniform consists of a blue Carpe Diem polo shirt for both girls and boys. The shirt is to be worn with your choice of khaki or navy pants, shorts, capris or skirts. A khaki jumper embroidered with the Carpe Diem logo is also available for girls and is to be worn with either a short or longer sleeved blouse or shirt of any color. Every summer we offer a t-shirt with a different eye-catching design for sale. Pre-Kindergartners and Summer Day Campers must wear this t-shirt on field trips.

For the sake of safety and comfort, keeping in mind that part of your child's day at Carpe Diem will be spent in very active play, such as running and climbing, the only allowed shoes are closed toed athletic footwear with non-skid, non-marking rubber soles to be worn with socks.

From time to time, toileting accidents or spills will occur at school, which require your child, regardless of age, to have a change of clothes. Therefore, **please make sure you always have a complete change of clothes, including underwear and socks, in your child's backpack.** If your child does not have extra clothes, we will call you to bring some. We do not have any clothes available for your child to borrow.

Except for children in after school care, you are required to purchase our standard Carpe Diem backpack for your child's use. Please make sure the backpack tag is clearly labeled with your child's name. Embroidered monograms or designs are allowed. For safety reasons, please do not have your child's full name embroidered on their backpack. No other backpacks or bags are acceptable. You will be given a price list and order form regarding the purchase of your child's uniforms and backpack. The form is also available on our website.

## 16. Diapering

Children who wear diapers are checked at regular intervals throughout the day. Every effort is made to change each child's diaper at the first sign of wetness or soiling. All

diapers and supplies are provided by Carpe Diem. If your child needs a special type or brand of diapers or supplies, you may provide them, and they will be utilized. Parents are asked to provide diapering cream labeled with your child's first and last name.

## **17. Toilet Training**

We recognize that toilet training is an important step in the early development of all children. At some point during the older toddler or 2/3's school year, when you believe your child is ready to begin the process, discuss what you plan to do with his/her teachers. The teachers will have suggestions to assist you. Your child will have the greatest success when parents and teachers work together in a consistent team effort. If the timing's right, it should be a natural progression, not an ordeal to worry about.

Children who are in the toilet training process must have several changes of clothing on hand every day. We recommend your child wear underwear at this time. Switching between underwear and diapers, except at naptime and bedtime confuses children.

We believe pull-ups often hinder successful toilet training, so we do not use them. We also do not allow potty-training chairs for sanitation reasons.

## **18. Personal Belongings**

**It is your responsibility to make sure everything your child brings or wears to school has his/her name clearly written on it in permanent marker.**

All children love to bring personal items to school with them, but please understand we have plenty of toys and materials at our schools already. If your child brings an item to school, it may be lost or damaged. The risk is yours and Carpe Diem is not responsible for personal belongings. We do our best to keep track of such items; but if it's precious, it's best left safe and sound at home. We will store unclaimed, unlabeled items in our "Lost and Found" basket. If they are not claimed after a month, they will be donated to charity.

Your child must not bring to school any weapon or replica of a weapon or any other item that may encourage overly aggressive play. Small or delicate items, such as jewelry, coins and ceramics, which could be easily swallowed or broken, are not to be brought to school either. All items brought to school should fit in your child's Carpe Diem backpack. Please do not bring larger items unless they are something needed for a special "show and tell" assignment/project that has been previously arranged with your child's teachers.

## **19. Pets and Other Animals**

According to state licensing standards, all Carpe Diem parents must be notified 48 hours in

advance if animals, whether family pets or those part of a special program such as a visiting petting zoo, are present on Carpe Diem premises. Therefore, please do not bring any animal to school without prior approval from the Director.

## 20. Health and Immunization Records

State licensing standards require specific medical and immunization information, including documentation of current negative TB test results (not required in all counties), to be on file for each child upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year thereafter, except for children enrolled in our after-school programs. The Texas Department of Health audits our records regularly. **Your child will be excluded from attendance at Carpe Diem if this information has not been submitted, is not current, or is incomplete.**

### Hearing and Vision Screening Requirements

The vision and hearing screening program requires that all children enrolled for the first time in any public or private school must be screened or have a professional examination for possible visual and hearing problems.

#### Who Must Be Screened

- 4-year-old group by September 1<sup>st</sup>
- Kindergarteners
- (4-years\* through 12<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders

This vision and hearing can be done by your child's physician and then a copy given to us.

## 21. When Your Child Is Ill or Injured

At Carpe Diem, we are not a sick care facility. Staff, like students, with signs or symptoms of communicable diseases or contagious illnesses will not be permitted on campus. Temperatures of 100.4 and higher will be cause to exclude from school, as will uncontrolled vomiting and/or diarrhea. Evidence of a communicable disease like chicken pox will also be reason for exclusion. If prescribed an antibiotic for illnesses like ear infections or sinus infections that are not contagious, the teacher may be present.

Injuries will be handled case by case taking into consideration one's ability to care for children and their doctor's recommendations. **While we encourage our staff members to get annual flu shots, it is not mandatory for them to do so. The same is true of Whooping Cough/Pertussis and HepA vaccines.**

Hand washing and glove wearing procedures are posted in all rooms. Staff members are expected to follow them, as well as the diaper changing procedures, to protect

themselves and the children from any cross contamination.

If your child becomes ill or injured while at school, we will notify you immediately for you to make arrangements for pick up; we will do our best to comfort him/her until you arrive. To avoid the spread of disease, state licensing standards require ill children to be isolated from their group and picked up from school as soon as possible, but **no later than one hour after notification**. If emergency medical care is required, we will call 911 for immediate assistance.

**To attend school, your child needs to be well enough to function in group care, which means he/she must be able to follow his/her class's daily schedule and activities without the need for one-on-one attention from the teachers.**

If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, he/she must be excluded from attendance:

- Has or has had a fever at or above 100.4° F. within the past 24 hours, regardless of its cause. This includes fever that you and/or your pediatrician believe is caused when infants or toddlers are teething.
- Is vomiting or has an upset stomach accompanied by diarrhea.
- Has diarrhea that is not able to be contained within a diaper.
- Shows evidence of a communicable disease, such as chicken pox or pink eye.
- Has an undiagnosed rash.
- Has discharge from the eyes, ears, and/or profuse, colored nasal discharge.
- Has difficulty breathing.
- Has unusual lethargy, irritability, or persistent crying.

As a courtesy to all Carpe Diem children, families, and staff, please help us minimize the transmission of illnesses. **In order to return to school, your child needs to be free of all symptoms for 24 hours without the use of medication, except for an antibiotic prescribed for an ear or sinus infection, for example.**

To reduce the spread of infections, children and staff wash their hands, using anti-bacterial soap, many times during the day, but especially after toileting and before eating, and we do not allow children to share cups, utensils, etc. In addition, toys, doorknobs, and all other items that are handled or contacted on a regular basis by children are disinfected regularly with an anti-bacterial solution.

## **22. Medication Policies**

We recognize the administration of medications is an important part of helping to maintain your child's overall state of welfare and health. We will administer all prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications according to the following requirements:

- All medications must be in their original containers. For prescription medications, the pharmacy label with the child’s and physician’s names, the prescription number, date prescribed, dosage, and frequency must be current and legible. For non-prescription medications, the child’s name and the date supplied needs to be clearly written on the container with permanent marker. **Non-prescription medications will only be administered with a note or fax from your child’s pediatrician stating the specific name of the medication, the dosage, and its frequency.**
- With the exception of prescription allergy and asthma medications, medicine will not be administered on an as-needed basis. A specific time must be indicated on the authorization form.
- An “Authorization to Administer Medication” form must be completed in full by the parent and given, along with the medication, to an administrator. Forms are available in the lobby or on our website. Do not give medication or forms to your child’s teachers. For on-going medication, a new form must be submitted every week.
- Clearly indicate it if the medication needs to be refrigerated.
- We recommend you have your pharmacist prepare your child’s prescription in two containers, one for home and one for school, in case you forget to take the prescription medication home at the end of the day.
- Medication can be very dangerous in the hands of children and must never be left in a child’s backpack where it might be accidentally available to any child.

### **23. When Your Child Is Absent**

If your child will be absent due to vacation or illness, please notify the school as soon as possible. **If your child is enrolled in our after-school program, you must notify us by 1:30 p.m., so we can properly inform our bus driver that your child will not need to be picked up.** A \$5.00 charge will be assessed if you forget to cancel after-school pick-up. After three failures to notify us, the charge will double to \$10.00 per incident.

### **24. Solicitation of Carpe Diem Employees**

Solicitation of Carpe Diem teachers for work such as private tutoring or baby-sitting on an evening or weekend basis is allowed but not encouraged. Any/all arrangements must be made away from the school facilities during non-school hours. This work must not conflict or interfere with an employee’s regularly-scheduled Carpe Diem work hours. Carpe Diem employees are not permitted to discuss other students or employees of Carpe Diem with a parent whether on site or otherwise.

### **25. Severe Weather Days**

If either the Richardson and/or Plano Independent School Districts are closed due to unsafe

weather conditions, Carpe Diem Cedar Park will be closed if the Leander ISD and/or Georgetown ISD close. Public school closings are announced on local TV and radio channels. If delayed openings are announced, we will make every effort to open Carpe Diem following the ISD's designated time, but since our staff commutes from different locations, we may not be able to do so. We will post closings and delayed opening times on [www.cancellations.com](http://www.cancellations.com) and each schools Facebook Page. In the case of a severe mid-day storm, we will notify you by phone and/or e-mail if your child needs to be picked up early.

## 26. Children's Birthdays

We enjoy celebrating your child's birthday at Carpe Diem. If you would like to bring a simple, yet special treat for the class, please limit it to small cupcakes, muffins, or cookies.

**The birthday treats you choose must be store bought and include the nutrition/ingredient label.** For safety reasons, we do not allow candles, and/or balloons to be brought to school. We ask you to make arrangements in advance directly with your child's teachers as to how much to bring and when. **Special birthday treats will be served at our afternoon snack time.**

Parents are welcomed to pass out birthday invitations to every child enrolled in the class. Parents will be encouraged to place the invitation into each child's cubby at drop off or pickup time.

## 27. Field Trips & Transportation

Field trips are not only fun but are also educational for your child. In our Pre-K and school-age programs, field trips are a planned, regular occurrence. Please be assured that safety while on a field trip is our paramount concern. We only take groups of manageable size at one time to maintain a high level of supervision during the trip and while at the destination. The ratio for Pre-K classes (ages 4-5 years) on non-water related field trips is 1:8 but may not exceed 1:10. The ratio for summer campers (ages 6 and up) on non-water related field trips is 1:10 but may not exceed 1:12.

Summer field trips in June, July, and August include water activities at public pools, which have certified lifeguards on duty at all times. Our teachers participate in the water with the children and must be able to swim. Our teacher to child ratio for off-site water activities for four-to six-year-olds is 1:3 and for seven-to eleven-year-olds, it's 1:5. If you do not want your child to go on pool field trips, he/she may stay at Carpe Diem with another group.

Parents are always welcome to participate on field trips and may drive their own vehicle or ride on one of our buses if space permits. For safety reasons, parents are not permitted to drop off and leave their child at a field trip venue. If a child misses the bus departure time, parents are allowed to bring their child to the venue, but a parent must stay with their child and transport them back to Carpe Diem in their own vehicle.

Field trip information will be given to you at least two days in advance via a notice posted in the classroom. There may be additional fees for field trips, depending upon the destination, which will be charged to your account.

Children must be at school and be ready to leave at the designated time. Uniform shirts or the Summer Camp t-shirts, as designated, must be worn on field trips, depending on the time of year.

All staff drivers have a list of all Pre-K and school aged children and their emergency contact information with them on every trip. Each bus is equipped with adjustable shoulder harnesses and lap belts in every seat as well as a warning notification system that requires drivers to “walk the bus” to ensure that no child is left on the bus after disembarking. Drivers are also required to take annual Transportation training to review safety practices such as but not limited to:

- Curbside loading and unloading
- Proper seatbelt/restraint methods
- Constant headcount/verification of children present during field trips
- Emergency procedures and notification

## **28. On-Site Water Activities**

During the summer months, toddlers through school-age children participate in water play i.e., splashing, wading, and sprinkler activities on our playgrounds, which are designated for different and specific age groups.

The children’s safety is our highest priority. Our teacher to child ratio for on-site water play for toddlers and two-year-olds is 1:2; for three-to five-year-olds, it’s 1:6, and for six-to eleven-year-olds, is 1:8.

## **29. School Holidays/Closings**

Carpe Diem Private Preschool will close on the following days:

- New Year’s Eve
- New Year’s Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Staff In-Service Days (Thursday & Friday before the first day of the school year)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday)
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

Closings will be adjusted when any of the holidays listed above fall on Saturday or Sunday. There may be other infrequent occasions when we close to allow our entire staff to attend early childhood education conferences. Please check the current school year holiday calendar for specific closure times and dates.

### **30. After-School Care and Holiday Care for Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Carpe Diem provides after-school care for children enrolled in selected public elementary schools. We have an exceptionally low child to teacher ratio of 15:1 that allows us to guide children in a caring atmosphere and prevents most discipline issues. We also offer full-day care on public school holidays (except for the days we are closed—see above) with field trips and special programs and an exciting Summer Day Camp packed with fun and adventure. We distribute our Summer Day Camp registration information every February for the coming summer.

After-schoolers will be transported to Carpe Diem at the end of their school day in one of our buses. They will follow a regular, well-supervised schedule using a classroom for art, crafts, and special projects; our spacious, indoor activity room; the computer lab with its large software selection; the library for reading and homework; and the challenging outdoor play area specially designed for older children. There will be plenty of time for a nutritious afternoon snack, socializing, playing games and sports, doing art and craft projects, dramatic play, cooking, and playing with puzzles and other age-appropriate toys.

Our after-schoolers are signed-in daily by our staff. They must be picked-up by a parent or other authorized adult (who must be at least 16-years-old with picture ID) using our standard procedures described in section 7. Parents must call us by 1:30 p.m. if we are not going to pick-up their child at his/her elementary school, so we can notify our bus driver appropriately. A \$5 fee (\$10 after the third time per school year) is charged when a parent fails to cancel pick-up.

### **31. Fees, Security Deposit, and Tuition**

**Wait List and/or Registration Fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.**

*Registration Fee:* \$150.00 per child/\$200 per family due upon initial enrollment and annually thereafter to re-enroll for the upcoming school year. The initial and annual registration fees are a non-refundable. For wait list purposes when a class is full, we charge a \$50.00 Wait List Fee with the remaining balance of the Registration Fee due upon enrollment when a space for your child becomes available.

*Security Deposit:* \$100.00 per child due upon initial enrollment. This deposit will be credited to your account when you withdraw your child, provided thirty (30) days advance written notice of withdrawal is given.

*Tuition:* Tuition is due monthly on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month falls on a weekend, Carpe Diem or bank holiday, tuition will be due on the business day prior. All checks should be made payable to Carpe Diem Private School. For your convenience, ACH Debits are available. Please see an administrator for an authorization form to sign up. Payments made via ACH will transact on the first business day after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month should the 1<sup>st</sup> fall on a weekend, Carpe Diem or bank holiday.

Carpe Diem reserves the right to increase tuition and other charges upon one month's prior written notice. Tuition information is available on a separate rate sheet. There will be no reduction of tuition charges if webcam access is unavailable due to technical difficulties beyond Carpe Diem's control. Tuition is based on a yearly amount divided into 12 equal monthly rates. There will be no tuition reduction or refunds for posted closings for holidays, teacher in-service day(s) or any unexpected inclement weather closings or delays.

*Late Payment Fee:* A 10% late payment fee may be assessed to your account on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month for unpaid balances due.

- *Late Pick-Up Fee:* All children must be picked up by 3:00 p.m. for part-time children and 6:30 p.m. for full time children. A late pick-up fee of \$15 per every 15 minutes will be charged directly to your account. Please let us know if you will be late, so we can reassure your child. The fee will double if you are late more than five times per school year.

*Returned Check Fee:* A \$25.00 fee will be charged for any returned check. This fee must be paid along with the replacement payment for the returned check in cash or with a cashier's check or money order. The total amount must be paid in full in order for your child to attend Carpe Diem. After two checks have been returned due to insufficient funds, cash, a cashier's check, or a money order are the only acceptable forms of payment from then on.

*Absences:* Tuition must be paid in full, without deduction for absences of any duration or for any cause, and without substitution of other days of attendance as "make-up" days. This is necessary due to staffing and operational costs that are incurred on the basis of fixed levels of enrollment. If your child is absent from Carpe Diem for two consecutive weeks without notification to the Director, your child will be considered withdrawn from our school. If you choose to re-enroll your child, depending on space availability, you will be charged another registration fee.

*Withdrawal:* The obligation for full payment of tuition continues until the date indicated by the parent or guardian as the date of withdrawal. The parent or guardian agrees to furnish Carpe Diem with at least **thirty (30) days written notice** of such date of withdrawal, and failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the security deposit.

## **32. Confidentiality Policy**

All personal records of children and families are kept in the strictest confidence.

Information pertaining to admission, progress, health, or discharge of a child shall be confidential, unless we have written permission for disclosure from the parent or guardian.

### **33. Licensing Information and Liability Insurance**

Carpe Diem is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). The Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers, our most recent licensing inspection report, and Carpe Diem's Certificate of Liability Insurance are available for review in the lobby. You may contact the local Licensing office, child abuse hotline, and HHSC website at:

1-800-252-5400 abuse hotline or [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

#### Local Child Care Licensing Offices:

Carpe Diem—Cedar Park  
14000 Summit Drive, Suite 100  
Austin, TX 78728  
512.834.3426

### **34. Gang-Free Zones and Reporting Suspected Abuse and Neglect**

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized gang-related criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Texas law requires parents, teachers, and administrators to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the TDFPS or to law enforcement. Call the Child Abuse Hotline number at 1-800-252-5400 to make confidential reports. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a crime.

All members of Carpe Diem are committed to the safety, welfare and protection of all children participating in our program. All teachers are required to have Child Abuse and Neglect training annually and are updated as new/updated information is provided to us. This commitment includes protecting children from abuse, neglect or harassment of any form, whether physical, mental or sexual and from any individual (i.e., parent, peer, or staff member).

Any suspicion of child abuse by a parent, staff or otherwise is to be reported immediately to the Director. Documentation will be made, and a phone call will be made to our licensing representative. Confidentiality is the highest priority. There will be no discussions with fellow staff members or other families at or outside the school by a staff member. All communication is directed between the Director and employee only.

Any staff member who is accused of committing a prohibited act may be suspended temporarily while an investigation is underway. The involved individual will have the opportunity to give a deposition/statement and meet with the Response Team (individuals

who are involved in the process of reviewing the allegation).

The following acts directed toward a child are considered abuse/neglect and are prohibited. **Such behaviors will not be tolerated in any way from a Carpe Diem staff member.**

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity or abusive conduct toward a child.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and child.
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child. This behavior could include but not limited to slapping, hitting, pushing, pulling a limb or hair, shoving hard to sit down, jerking motion, or similar behaviors.
- Physical neglect of a child including failure to supervise properly or leaving children unattended.
- Causing mental or emotional injury to a child (humiliating, excessive embarrassing, spiteful teasing, name-calling, purposeful excluding from activities, using “mean” language, saying “shut-up”, using “put-down” language or similar behaviors).
- Possessing, consuming, or being under the influence of illegal drugs of any kind, alcohol, or over medicating oneself where judgment and ability to perform one’s job is impaired in any way.

Each Carpe Diem staff member has the responsibility to report any questionable circumstances to the Director. In the event anyone personally witnesses an occurrence, that person will be asked to complete an Incident Report Form. When the Director receives a report of alleged violation, she/he will have the discretion to consult with others (as needed) and to take such steps deemed appropriate to address the issue.

Any person, who fails to report an observed incident or suspected situation, will be in violation of this policy. Carpe Diem may treat this violation as grounds for suspension or termination.

Staff that reports suspicion of child abuse or neglect at the school in good faith are immune from discharge, retaliation or any other disciplinary action for that reason unless it is proven the report is malicious or intentionally defaming.

Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse can be very difficult to detect. Symptoms, warning signs or factors indicating abuse *may* include one or more of the following:

- unusual or recurring bruises, welts or burns
- unexplained injuries
- unusual clothing for time of year
- unusual shyness, avoidance, anxiousness to please
- very knowledgeable (beyond age level) with facts/information
- frequent urination, itching or discomfort
- very poor relationships with peers

- unusually “adult” in actions, language, or behavior
- regression in behavior when redirected

These are just a few external behaviors typically observable. Parents and staff may always discuss any concerns with an Administrator.

The Director has the responsibility to assess the situation and decide what action, if any, needs to be taken. The Director will evaluate all the evidence and make the decisions for reporting. However, all employees and/or parents may make reports separate and independent of the Director. If desired, reports can be made anonymously by contacting Family and Protective Services either by telephone or online.

Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline & Website  
Call: 1-800-252-5400 or visit: <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

Community resources are available to families. Safe Environment Trainings for parents and the general community are held regularly through various organizations (typically at no charge) to offer help in recognizing abuse/neglect, offer knowledge on prevention methods and reporting, as well as online training opportunities. Please see an administrator for more info or visit [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us), click on the Child Care Licensing page or contact the local licensing office for assistance. Any parent of a child who is a victim of abuse and neglect may also obtain assistance and intervention through the services mentioned above.

### **35. Supplemental Information**

Carpe Diem Private Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or national/ ethnic origin in the admission of children to our programs or in the administration of our policies and procedures.

Carpe Diem reserves the right to exclude the new enrollment of or terminate the existing enrollment of a child at any time, including, but not limited to, children whose behavioral and educational needs cannot be met at Carpe Diem without fundamental alterations of or undue burden to our existing programs, procedures, or practices, as deemed by Carpe Diem, and/or children whose fees and/or tuition payments are in arrears.

Parents must never leave a child unattended in a vehicle in the Carpe Diem parking lot. Please lock your vehicle when you enter the building to drop-off and pick-up your child. Never leave anything of value visible in your vehicle. Carpe Diem Private Preschool is not liable for the theft of or damage to any property.

Children may be photographed for classroom display, curriculum, social media, and/or publicity purposes. Any parent that does not wish for their child to be photographed must notify an administrator in writing. To ensure a safe environment for children, Carpe Diem screens visitors via the RAPTOR data base as well as parents who want to volunteer in

classrooms or as field trip chaperones at the United States Department of Justice Sex Offender Public Website ([www.nsopw.gov/core/offendersearchcriteria.aspx](http://www.nsopw.gov/core/offendersearchcriteria.aspx)).

Carpe Diem reserves the right to change, revise, supplement, or delete any of our policies and procedures, including all those covered herein, at any time. Changes will be effective on the dates determined by Carpe Diem and will be communicated to parents by e-mail within five business days.

This Parent Handbook contains general information concerning the policies and procedures of Carpe Diem Private Preschool. The policies and procedures described herein are not intended to be and should not be interpreted as a contract between Carpe Diem Private Preschool and any other person. This information does not constitute a legal document, nor does it constitute a contract. It does not confer any legal rights, nor does it create any contractual obligations, expressed or implied.