



Appletree Childcare & Learning Center

Parent Handbook Calendar Year 2023

Revised: January 2023

The Parent Handbook has been written to provide you with information about programs, policies, and procedures at Appletree Childcare & Learning Center. Please keep this handbook in a convenient location so that you can refer to it as needed. Please note that the Handbook is continually updated with information; check with us for the latest version.

We want to hear from the parents. Please contact our staff with any questions or concerns. Appletree is licensed by the Department of Human Services, Philadelphia PA. MPI # 101042590-0001

**Amy McShane
Josh Borenstein
Alyssa Gibson, MS**

Appletree Childcare & Learning Center
Operated by Appletree Developmental Center LLC
3665 East Crown Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19114

School Office: 215 281-9223
Fax: 215 281-9224

e-Mail: childcarepa@comcast.net

Website: www.appletreechildcare.net



*Appletree Childcare & Learning Center is a certified Keystone STAR-4 preschool
Reaching Higher for Quality Early Learning*

Philosophy and Goals

Appletree Childcare & Learning Center offers safe, clean, exciting, and creative high-quality classrooms with loving, engaged staff that encourage learning through play and discovery in a nurturing environment. We use The Creative Curriculum®, the #1 preschool curriculum that provides instruction, promotes language and literacy, nurtures math skills and more in all classrooms.

Appletree is a high-quality, Keystone STAR-4 certified, early childhood preschool that strives for continuous improvement with a commitment to enhancing the social, emotional, cognitive, creative, and gross motor skills that help children achieve developmental success.

Keystone Stars initiatives have been a defining moment in our evolution as a high-quality educational center, and in helping us create exciting learning environments and staff engagement in the achievement of care.

Appletree has an open admissions policy. Admissions, the provisions of services, and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most reasonable, practical, and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aides, and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Appletree meets and exceeds the regulations and guidance set by the Philadelphia Department of Human Services and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health for the safe operation of a childcare center.

Teachers provide children with a safe, friendly, and secure classroom environment. Our rooms are busy, interesting, activity-centered places where children enjoy learning through play and exploration.

We at Appletree believe that children learn best when they are given opportunities to participate in activities and play that involve physical and social experiences. We carefully balance activities that develop cognitive skills with painting, block play and dramatic play to enhance social and emotional development. The staff of caregivers and facilitators carefully structures the classrooms and plans learning experiences to guide children in their development.

Visiting Appletree: All families that have children enrolled in our care are free to schedule a visit to our center by calling the office.

Enrollment

Children are assigned to specific areas of the center based on their age and development. Appletree provides programs and separate classrooms for Infants, Young Toddlers, Older Toddlers, Preschool, Pre-K, PHLpreK, and Before & After School.

Information that we maintain on individual children under our care and their families is treated in strict confidence. Our policy regarding Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is designed to ensure that the staff makes every effort to promote communication and understanding for those children and their immediate families who are identified as having (LEP). Once enrolled our staff will make every effort to integrate that child into the classroom. Once a child or family has been identified as needing translation or interpretive services, Appletree will assign a staff person who may speak their language to assist, and/or reach out to other members of the family or a community representative to assist with translation services.

Any parents or guardians, who believe that they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint of discrimination with:

Amy McShane and/or Alyssa Gibson, MS
Appletree Childcare & Learning Center
3675 East Crown Avenue
Philadelphia PA 19114
Ph: 215 281-9223 📞
e-Mail: childcarepa@comcast.net

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Dept. of Human Services
Bureau of Equal Opportunity
Room 225, Health & Welfare Bldg.
P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg PA 17105

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Dept. of Human Services
Bureau of Equal Opportunity
Southeast Regional Office
801 Market St, Ste. 5034
Philadelphia PA 19107

PA Human Relations Commission
Philadelphia Regional Office
110 N 8th Street, Ste 501
Philadelphia PA 19107

U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services
Office for Civil Rights
Suite 372, Public Ledger Bldg.
150 South Independence Mall West
Philadelphia PA 19106-9111

Full-Time & Part-Time Programs

Children who are enrolled *full-time* attend five days per week, Monday through Friday. *Part-time* is fewer than 5- days per week. Infant room children must be a minimum of 6-weeks of age. Tuition rates are structured for all programs.

The days that the child attends may be either on a fixed or flexible weekly schedule (availability permitting). On a fixed schedule, the child attends the same days each week while a flexible schedule has varying days based upon the schedule needed for the child and the availability in the classroom.

Families who require a flexible schedule will be asked to provide a weekly schedule each Monday of the days that they will need care for.

Whether the child is on a fixed or flexible schedule, families are not permitted to alternate, or make-up days missed due to illness, vacation, or closures due to inclement weather. The only days that are allowed to be made up are days missed due to school closure for holidays that land on your child's scheduled day, and only if our classroom ratio permits.

At times, families may want to add an additional day to their child's schedule. These requests should be made to the school director or administrative staff. A request for an additional day must be made at least 24 hours in advance and acceptance will be pending based upon availability and is not guaranteed. If accepted, the family will be charged the daily tuition rate for the additional day.

Arrival and Departure

When you arrive with your child, please store personal items, such as coats, sweaters, or extra clothes in your child's school bag. Escort your child to the designated drop off area and feel free to give any messages to the front door staff to pass along to the child's teacher.

Your child's name must be placed onto **all items** that you bring to Appletree for your child. We encourage children **not** to bring their own personal toys to Appletree. If your child does bring a preferred toy, or an item for Show & Tell, please leave the toy in their school bag and inform the front door staff of the item.

After dropping off your child and departing Appletree, should you have any questions or wish to discuss a concern, please call us. Sometimes we are so very busy with the children that we do not get to every incoming phone call; so if your call goes to voice-mail, please leave a message or try us back a short time later. You can also email us at childcarepa@comcast.net or connect directly with your child's teacher on the **Remind App**. The Remind App is a messaging communication platform specifically used in education between parents and teachers, and our staff can help you set it up on your phone.

Drop offs must happen by or before 9:30am (except for the PHLpreK program). All classes (aside from PHLpreK) start promptly at 9:30am. Our front door staff are no longer assigned to answering the door after that time. Late drop offs then become disruptive and even unsafe. Please call before 9:00 AM if you know your child is going to be late to school so that we may effectively accommodate them.

PHLpreK students must be dropped off between 8:00am and 8:30am. Pick up is between 2:30pm and 3:00pm (or earlier). Appletree offers a Before School (drop-off: 6:30am-8:00am) and Aftercare (pickup: 3:00pm-6:00pm) program at additional cost, and schedules are on a fixed basis. Please ask about this option and rates should you need additional care for your child and speak to the director of the PHLpreK program Alyssa Gibson. Space is limited and not guaranteed.

If your child is absent from school due to illness, appointments, vacation, or any other reason, please inform your teacher. They may ask why the child was, is, or will be absent, this is to help us track contagious illness and respond accordingly.

When picking up your child at the end of the day, you will be greeted by our front door staff. The staff member will retrieve your child for you from their class while you wait at the designated drop off area (either the top floor front door or the bottom floor front door depending upon your child's classroom). Please remember to check the child's daily sheet to gain a sense of their day. Also, check any bedding or clothing being sent home as they may be soiled thus needing to be replaced for the next school day. If you have any further questions or concerns about your child's day, please feel free to call or email the center or contact your child's teachers directly on the Remind App.

The center maintains an **Emergency Contact / Parental Consent** form. Persons (in addition to the parents) that you authorize to pick up your child must be listed on this form. At the end of the day, a child will not be permitted to leave the center with anyone who has not been previously given authorization by the parent.

If it becomes necessary for someone else to pick up your child and they are not on the Emergency Contact / Parental Consent Form, then written advance authorization must be provided by the parent. If you are unable to provide written notification, the parent must call the center and speak directly with the child's teacher or director to advise us of your authorized pick-up plans.

A child will not be released to a parent/guardian or other authorized person if the staff suspects that this person may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. An authorized pickup person must provide the child with a proper seat restraint appropriate for his/her age and weight. If a parent is restricted from picking up their child due to a court order, then a copy of the court order must be provided to Appletree, which will be placed into the child's confidential file.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Appletree closes at 6:00 PM. Our staff appreciates that the children are picked-up prior to closing. For each late pickup, a fee of **\$1.00** is charged to the parent for every **1-minute** interval or time therein after 6 PM. The late fee is paid directly to the staff members.

If you pick up your child late, please call the center to inform the staff of your anticipated arrival time. If we do not hear from you by 6:00 PM, we will contact a person on your child's Emergency Contact list and ask them to pick up the child and the late fee will be added to your account. Late pickup charges may then apply.

Parking Policy

Appletree has a large parking lot available to families for drop-off, pick-up, and special events at the school. We ask that vehicles **slowly** enter and leave the parking lot to ensure the safety of all children. No cars are allowed to park in the lot overnight.

Meals and Snacks

Appletree offers a **free**, high-nutrition meal program for all enrolled children through a state CACFP sponsor. Included is breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack, and meets standards established by the U.S. Dept of Agriculture. Children with food allergies, religious dietary restrictions or special needs will be accommodated with meal substitutions. Infants are provided with Iron-Fortified formula, cereals, and other foods. The director will provide each family with an application, which is submitted to a program administrator. Families that do *not* wish to participate in the meal program, can pack meals for their children. Appletree provides bowls, plates, napkins, and utensils.

Breakfast is served 8:00-8:30 AM, lunch is 11:30 AM - 12:00 Noon, and afternoon snack at 3:00 PM (2:00 PM for PHLpreK class). This meal schedule does **not** apply to children in the Infant Room. Infants are on their own individual schedules and are fed when hungry.

If families provide lunch, it should be sent to school in the child's lunchbox. Lunchboxes then get stored in our refrigerators. Put the child's name on everything.

School Schedule

Appletree is open Monday through Friday, 6:30 AM until 6:00 PM, 12 months per year. The center is closed on the days listed in the Enrollment Agreement.

Holiday Closures

Appletree is closed on certain federal holidays. Families will be notified in advance of any changes in the closure schedule. You can also review these dates by a) the Enrollment Agreement, b) asking the front door staff, or b) contacting teachers via Remind App or calling the office staff.

Supervision of Children

Children at Appletree are always supervised. Within the center, staff members are assigned to the supervision of specific children based on age group. Staff members are physically and mentally present with the children in their area. It is our policy that gentle and encouraging language is to be used with all children in our care.

At the time that families arrive at Appletree, to either drop off or pick up a child, that child is under the family member's care at that moment, and therefore not under the supervision of Appletree staff.

Appletree meets and exceeds the standards set by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the hiring of staff. All our teachers must be at the minimum of 18 years of age. They must also have at least 2 years prior experience working with children and references, pass security clearances (including child abuse clearances, Pennsylvania State and FBI clearances), complete a physical health assessment (including the Mantoux screen) from a qualified health care provider, submit their high school and college diplomas, submit transcripts, provide 2 references, undergo trainings for Fire Safety, Mandated Reporting, and CPR/First Aid, and take additional trainings and coursework in early childhood education on an ongoing basis.

In addition, all staff must be passionate and engaging when working with children. We hire persons able and willing to work cohesively with the team, children, and families while creating an age and developmentally appropriate environment. Teachers must meet the standards of conduct as described in their employee handbook.

Inclement Weather

We understand that childcare is a necessity, and our families depend on this care. Thus, every effort will be made to keep the center open. However, there will be times when the weather is severe enough to make getting to Appletree difficult and even unsafe for families and staff. Under such adverse conditions it may be necessary to open the center later than 6:30 AM or close the center for the day.

If Philadelphia Public Schools close due to adverse or the anticipation of adverse weather, then Appletree will be closed.

To keep families informed on the status of the center's closures please feel free to check in with your child's teacher on the Remind App, email the center, call, and leave a message, or check our Facebook page for updates.

Tuition Policy

Appletree accepts state tuition subsidies through Child Care Works and the PHLpreK program. Families are responsible for

any co-pays identified by the state subsidy provider in your subsidy agreement. Private-pay fees at Appletree are very competitive with other childcare programs in the area. Families are also responsible for paying tuition regardless of absences due to illness, vacation, holidays, staff in-service days or weather.

Weekly payments are due every Monday or on the first day of the week that your child is scheduled to attend. Families are also given options to choose to pay tuition biweekly or monthly, but the payments must be in advance and not at the end of the payment period. Late tuition payments will result in a penalty fee of \$5.00 per day.

Appletree accepts cash, personal check, Visa, and MasterCard debit/credit cards, and/or money orders. Payments can be made in the school office or through the MyProcure online portal.

A returned check from the bank is assessed with a \$35.00 processing fee billed to the family. If two or more checks are returned from the bank uncollected, then Appletree may require a future or early tuition payment schedule payable by cash, personal check, Visa, or MasterCard debit/credit cards, and/or money orders.

No refunds are made for days missed due to illness, vacation, snow closures, staff in-service days or holidays.

There is a non-refundable registration fee of \$85.00 for the general daycare programs.

Scholarships and discounts are not currently available.

Withdraw of a Child

a) A two-week advance and written notice to the director of Appletree is required when a child is voluntarily removed from the center. A minimum of two weeks tuition will be charged from the day that the written notice is given.

b) A child may be dismissed from the center if the director determines that the child cannot adjust to the center's program, and after a discussion with the family regarding the goodness of fit or lack of.

c) A child may also be dismissed if the family's language or actions are abusive to a child and/or staff member. Once dismissed the family will no longer be charged tuition from the date of the discharge.

Occasionally a family will express desire to remove their child from Appletree during the summer months. The only way to guarantee a spot for your child in September is to keep them enrolled and continue to pay tuition through the summer (this includes PHL PreK). Should you find it necessary to withdraw a child and then re-enroll at a later date, you must do so for a minimum of 8 weeks, and you must provide a written 2 week notice to the director. Furthermore, you will need to reapply to the center for September (or the desired start day) and will be added to the waitlist.

Transitioning to Another Educational Center

Appletree will assist you and your child in transitioning to kindergarten or another educational setting by providing a packet of useful information on transitions, and copies of appropriate child records. Our Pre-K class visits John Hancock Elementary each spring to help familiarize and prepare the children for their future setting.

Health Assessments

Pennsylvania law requires each child to be examined by a licensed physician, and that a completed child Health Assessment, signed and dated by the pediatrician, must be provided to the center no later than 30 days following the child's enrollment date. Each child must have a physical examination and a health appraisal updated annually, or more frequently as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics or The Center for Disease Control. (See the immunization chart on the last page of this handbook.) The health appraisal from the pediatrician must include:

- A review of the previous health history
- A physical examination
- Growth assessments
- Review and update of the child's immunization status
- Any recommendations pertaining to the physician's assessments of a disability or health problem and any recommendations for treatment

If a child does not receive an immunization due to a medical reason, a parent's strong personal objection or due to a religious belief, then a statement to that effect must be provided to Appletree in writing by the physician or by the parent. A child that is not immunized can be excluded from enrollment into our program.

Illness

Children need not be excluded from Appletree for a minor illness, such as a cold, as long as they can participate comfortably in program activities and do not require greater care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.

At the discretion of the director, families may be asked to pick up their child, who develops vomiting, diarrhea, and/or an auxiliary fever of 100 degrees either alone or in combination with other symptoms including sore throat, while at Appletree. Should the child continue to manifest these symptoms at home, the child cannot be brought to Appletree, unless the director provides specific authorization.

If a child shows symptoms of a potentially communicable disease, such as, a suspicious rash, sores, or purulent eye discharge, then a physician must verify the child's diagnosis and begin an appropriate treatment. Written documentation must be provided to Appletree from the child's physician concerning the condition of the child prior to returning to the center.

A sick child may not return to the center until at least 24 hours after the signs and symptoms have subsided, the fever is gone, and treatment has begun. However, the length of time a child is asked to stay home, to recover and/or prevent the further spread of contagious illnesses, can change depending upon the illness or symptoms. DO NOT send sick children to school on fever suppressant medications. These only temporarily relieve the child of their symptoms and don't offer them the necessary rest and recovery that they deserve. Fever reducing medication also does not suppress the contagiousness of the child's illness. As always, our priority is safety.

Whatever the nature of your child's illness, please call the center to advise the staff that your child will not be coming, what the symptoms are, and when your child may be well enough to return.

Medications

The staff will not administer over-the-counter and prescription medications. The director may review this policy for a child when the parent provides written consent. An authorization form will be provided to you, and it must be completed and signed. All medications must be in the original container, and it is the responsibility of the parent to label the container with the child's name and provide dosage and frequency of administration. Please give any medication to a staff member so it can be safely stored until it is to be administered. Please do not put any medication in your child's lunch box or in your child's cubby.

Lice (Pediculosis)

Children with active lice or nits may not enter the Center. Parents must monitor their children for a minimum of 10 consecutive days following any infestation of lice in their child's head and advise Appletree staff if any nits or crawlers have been found. Additionally, Appletree staff reserve the right to check children's heads periodically and at random. If lice are found, Appletree follows the procedures recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for a daycare center, which includes:

- a. Cleaning: Carpets are thoroughly and repeatedly vacuumed. The vacuum cleaner is removed to the outside of the building and the waste emptied. Hard surfaces, including counter tops, tables, floors and toys, are wiped down with a diluted bleach solution.
- b. Inspection: Teachers put-on gloves and check the back hairlines of the children, working up towards the sides and top of the head.
- c. Isolation: If activity on the scalp is found, the child is separated from the group, the clothes and bedding placed into a plastic bag, and the parent called. The daycare center is re-cleaned using the steps above.

IFSP & IEP

For children that have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) assessment or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) assessment, we request a copy of the report, which will be kept in the child's confidential file in the office.

Children's Rest Time

Shortly after lunch the children have a rest period. Each child has his/her own rest mat that is labeled with the child's name. Each infant has his/her own crib. Parents are asked to provide a crib sheet and a child-sized blanket or quilt. The sheet and the blanket should be labeled with the child's name. Sheets and blankets are sent home on Friday to be laundered and are to be returned on Monday. It is also acceptable for your child to bring in one small stuffed animal to snuggle with at rest time.

Clothing

There must always be a complete change of clothing, including socks, in the extra clothes box in your child's cubby. These articles should be labeled with your child's name and should be checked periodically to make sure that the clothes still fit and that they are appropriate for the season. If it is necessary for staff to use the extra clothes that were in the box, please make sure to replace the items the following day.

Children should come to school wearing comfortable, practical clothing that is appropriate for the season and free of complicated fastening. Belts, suspenders, one-piece rompers are difficult for staff when changing diapers and difficult for children when going to the bathroom. Since the children are often involved in creative activities that include the use of paints and glue, their clothing should be sturdy and washable so that the child does not have to worry about getting dirty.

The children go outside to play every day unless the weather is rainy or extremely cold. Please make sure your child wears shoes that are suitable for running and climbing - no clogs, sandals, or flip-flops please. Also, please be sure that he/she wears a heavy jacket, hat, and mittens once the weather turns cold.

Toys & Other Personal Items

Our policy at Appletree is to strongly discourage children from bringing toys or small objects from home unless a special "Show & Tell" day has been announced. For Show and Tell, the toy should be left in the cubby at arrival and until needed by the teacher. Small objects can be put into the mouth and present a choking hazard, especially to the infants and toddlers who find tiny items fascinating.

Appletree is not responsible for personal items, including school district laptops, that are brought from home, should they be broken or lost.

When a child brings a toy from home, other children in the group want to play with that toy too. Quite often sharing becomes a problem when this situation occurs. It is very upsetting for the owner if the toy should get lost or broken. Therefore, except for a stuffed animal at rest time, please keep your child's toys, money, action figures, small plastic figurines, and jewelry at home.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Maintaining good communication between the parent and teacher is very important. When a parent is actively involved in their child's progress, there is greater success.

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled so that the development of your child can be discussed. Parents are encouraged to contact our staff with any questions regarding their children and activities.

Communications

It is the desire of the staff at Appletree to remain in close contact with the parents of each child. The most effective forms of communication include the Remind App, talking to the front door staff, or emailing and calling the center directly.

The teachers maintain age-appropriate learning records for each child in their group. You will be offered the opportunity to discuss your child's progress with his/her teacher a few times during the year. Additionally, staff members are always available for more informal discussions concerning happenings at school.

We want our parents to feel involved in the program; therefore, we hold special events and activities throughout the year which we encourage parents to attend.

Other sources of information for our parents include daily reports, letters and announcements placed in cubbies or posted in classrooms. Parents also receive monthly calendars indicating the themes children will be working on at school.

Disciplinary Procedures

Proper boundaries and appropriate structure enable children to function happily, safely and successfully in a group situation. In all events, teachers are encouraged to use calm, empathetic, and compassionate interventions when working with the children. This process is also used with escalated behaviors.

At Appletree "time-outs" are not used as a disciplinary measure but as a "cool down" to prevent escalation and to ensure safety.

Teachers implement Social Emotional Learning consistently to promote prosocial behaviors and to minimize behavioral challenges.

Fire Drills

To ensure the safety of our children and in keeping with the state regulations, Appletree schedules fires drills regularly.

Safety, First Aid

The safety of our children is our absolute priority. Every precaution will be taken to insure their well-being. Children will always be within line of sight and sound of their teachers. All teachers are required to receive training and pass certifications in first aid. Staff persons are also encouraged to become certified in infant/child CPR.

PHL PreK

PHL PreK is a free, Philadelphia Government funded Pre-Kindergarten program offered to over 180 centers in Philly. Appletree worked hard to get the PHL program approved for our center and as of now we have one 20 child classroom, accredited in 2022 with the hope of a second 20 child classroom getting approved in 2023). For specific information about this program visit <https://www.phlprek.org/> or contact our director.

Additional Services

The staff is continuously assessing programs to offer, and we will appraise you as these activities become available.

Please let us know whenever we can answer any questions or otherwise be of help!

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Parent Handbook Revision: 01.18.2023

Caregiver Signature Page:

Parent/Caregiver/Legal Guardian Signature:

Parent/Caregiver/Legal Guardian Printed Name:

Date: _____

