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Section 1. Overview

WELCOME TO ALTOGETHER FRIENDS CHILD CARE

Dear Families,

Altogether Friends Staff wishes to extend a warm welcome to you and your child. Our center provides the community with several early childhood programs for children and families which include Infant Care, Pre-Toddler and Toddler Classes, Preschool and Pre-K as well as working together with several early intervention programs. Our program is designed so that all children can enjoy playing, growing, and learning together.

This handbook was created so that we can communicate our policies and procedures to families. It is especially important our families have a shared understanding of how our program operates. If you have any questions or concerns not covered in this handbook, please let me know.

We are committed to continuous quality improvement and welcome your comments and concerns as we strive to create a learning environment that is healthy, safe, and caring for children, families, and employees.

We look forward to partnering with you to provide the best quality care for your child and family.

Thank you for choosing Altogether Friends!

Sincerely,

Linda Killion
Corporate Officer and Co-Owner
215-722-3320

We hope this booklet will answer many of your questions about the day-to-day workings of Altogether Friends. Please keep it accessible. We think you will find it useful throughout the year.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

In a caring and positive atmosphere, we create a warm and happy place for children to learn. As we bridge the gap from home to school, we guide children to a continued good self-image while building social skills in a school setting.

Sensory, motor, perceptual and language skills are introduced through materials and activities which are both child-centered and teacher-directed. Work is planned which emphasizes the process rather than the product, fostering a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Based on the theory that children learn through play, classroom routines encourage active involvement, meaningful experimentation, and reinforcement through repetition. Schedules are designed which balance structure and free choice, as well as active and quiet times.

Recognizing that children grow in predictable stages, we treat each child as an individual, working from the level each child has attained and moving forward a step at a time. We teach a love of learning by allowing children to experience their own stage of development and helping them to feel success without pressure.

Parents may gain valuable insights and techniques from the expertise of staff, and, at the same time, share their talents and interests to maintain the excellent quality here at Altogether Friends. School then becomes a shared experience which hopefully will continue throughout each child's educational process.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We promote and support the growth and development of children and their families by providing developmentally appropriate early care and education in inclusive environments leading to the achievement of outcomes established through partnerships with families and guided by the Early Learning Standards in the State of Pennsylvania.

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

Altogether Friends understands the responsibility we have to routinely assess the safety and quality of our program. Our center is licensed yearly by the state meeting all the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Altogether Friends participates in Keystone STARS. Keystone STARS is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's system for Quality improvement in all early childhood programs across the state.

PROGRAM FEES

Our weekly rates are as follows and are based on a full day schedule beginning at 6:30 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday of each week for a 12-month period.

Tuition is paid weekly, or bi-weekly, whichever has been agreed upon and is stated in your child's packet of signed documents. All tuition Payments should be placed in the tuition mailbox located at the front desk. Payment is due at the time of registration, thereafter payable by the beginning of each week. If payment is received after the Tuesday of each week, the family will be charged a \$10.00 late fee. An additional \$10.00 fee will be added for each week the fee is late. Payment may be made by check, cash, or money order. The school's budget and teacher's salaries are based upon full enrollment; therefore, compensation cannot be given for absences. Returned checks will be surcharged a \$35.00 bank processing fee. We reserve the right to enforce a tardiness fee \$1.00 for each minute after 6 p.m. for families who are late at closing. If your child's tuition becomes past due by two weeks, you will be notified not to return until all payments are made and up to date including late fees. Failure to make payments will result in dismissal from the program.

ACTIVITY FEE

A one-time toddler fee of \$135.00 and preschool fee of \$150.00 is charged to cover all extracurricular activities and events that will take place throughout the school year. This will also cover a subscription for your preschool child to the Weekly Readers/ Scholastic magazine which we use as a workbook in our readiness lessons. This fee is due on or before the beginning of the school year. This payment may be made in 4 installments throughout the year; however, your child may not participate in these extra activities if regular payments are not made. This payment needs to be made separate from your tuition and given directly to your child's teacher.

Section II. Program Policies

STANDARD OF CONDUCT

Children's Families' and Employees' Rights and Expectations

Children, Families and Employees have the right to:

- Feel safe
- Be informed of program rules and policies
- Be treated with respect at all times
- Treat others with respect
- Use appropriate language that is polite, courteous, and free of all profanity.
- Communicate any concern respectfully and in accordance with our grievance policy
- Be dependable, and cooperative
- Supervise children at all times

Respectful behavior is expected at all times. Disrespectful behavior of any adult member or our community may have the following consequences:

- Family members, volunteers, parents, guardians, and escorts may not be allowed on site.
- Family members will have the responsibility of finding an alternative, acceptable escort so that the child's participation in programming is not compromised.
- All violations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with the support of our legal counsel to determine the length and duration of any restrictions placed upon violators in response to the severity of the violation.

If any adult member of our community engages in threatening or intimidating behaviors, physical confrontations, or assaults, and /or use of profanity and offensive language, the police may be called.

If a challenging situation arises, families are asked to handle it in accordance with our grievance procedure. If the policy is not followed, the family will be required to meet with the director to discuss the incident and determine what next steps are for the family or Altogether Friends. Altogether Friends will work with all parties involved to resolve the concern, but everyone must understand that the health and safety of the children must be our top priority.

Employees at Altogether Friends have signed a Code of Conduct and consequences for not following are explained in our Employee Policies.

Each child and family's personal information is kept confidential. If any other child is involved in the incident we reported to you, another report is given to that parent as well. Altogether Friends staff use these reports to assess the health and safety of each individual child as well as the entire program. Appropriate steps are taken to address any concerns related to these reports.

Our school has an open-door policy. It is your right as a parent to visit with or pick up your child at any time during the day without prior notice. Feel free to call the center should an emergency arise, or you should have any questions regarding your child. Our director or assistant will be glad to speak with you. It is difficult for your child's teacher to conference with you by telephone during school hours, however, should you wish to speak with your child's teacher, you may leave a message and he or she will return your call when convenient. A note on their desk will always be given a response.

Altogether Friends encourages a close link with parents and community. We believe that children benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. Most parents, caregivers and others visiting our center have been willing to work together and are incredibly supportive. However, on rare occasions when a negative attitude toward the school is expressed, it can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse toward members of our staff, fellow parents, or the neighboring community. We expect and require our staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other staff members. However, all staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defense. We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable and respectful way toward members of our staff. Should any unacceptable behavior occur on the premises, we may feel it necessary to contact the appropriate authorities.

Types of behavior that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated are:

- Threatening to do actual harm to a child, staff member, fellow parent, therapist, or visitor regardless of whether the behavior constitutes a criminal offense.
- Disruptive behavior that interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, main reception, or any other area of the center's grounds.

- The use of physical aggression toward another adult or child. This includes punishment against your own child on school premises.
- Physically intimidating a staff member e.g., standing remarkably close to him/her, the use of aggressive hand gestures, threatening behavior, pushing, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, or spitting.
- Swearing or using loud offensive language or displaying temper. Speaking in an aggressive tone.
- Racist or sexist comments.
- Shouting at staff members, either in person or on the telephone.
- Approaching someone else's child to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this child toward their own child.
- Damaging or destroying property.
- Abusive or threatening emails or text/ voicemail/ phone messages or other written communication.
- Defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments regarding the center or any pupils/ parents/ staff at the school on Facebook or other media sites.
- Breaching the school's security procedures.

This is not an exhausted list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behavior.

Altogether Friends will try to deal with each problem or concern fairly, appropriately, and effectively for all concerned. However, all incidents will be logged in your child's file.

Children learn best when there is a positive partnership between home and school. While every effort will be made to work with parents, this will only be possible when parents behave in an acceptable way. We believe that staff, parents, and children are entitled to a safe and protective environment. Behavior that will cause harassment, alarm or distress will allow us to reserve the right to dismiss your child/children from our program.

RESPONSIBILITY

From the moment a parent/guardian drops off a child until he/she returns, the child becomes the center's responsibility. When a child's parent is present, the responsibility becomes that of the parent and no longer the centers. All children must be accompanied into the building by a parent or guardian always. The reasons for this are:

1. The teachers have no way of knowing that the child has entered the building.
2. A "Sign In & Out" sheet must be signed by a parent or guardian at the beginning and end of every day.

This is our "Transfer of Responsibility".

3. It gives the parents a chance to share the center with their children. They spend many hours here every day. It is important for them to have time to show you their

friends, the materials and equipment they work with, and to see you contacting their teachers.

4. To put your child's belongings in their proper places and to check cubbies for artwork, seatwork, homework and any messages or notices we may have for you.

PARENT / TEACHER COMMUNICATION

There are several ways Altogether Friends communicates with the families we serve.

They include:

- Health and safety form
- Behavioral Incident Reports
- Accident Reports
- Communication Logs: We send home communication logs on a daily basis for all toddlers and a weekly basis for Preschool. This form is meant to serve as documentation of activities that took place throughout the day/week along with observations about your child's individual progress and participation.
- Monthly Newsletters
- Daily Schedules
- Classroom and Hallway Boards
- One on one in person communication
- Bi- annual Service Reports

PRIVACY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

All Altogether Friends Employees are trained on the policies and procedures in place to maintain confidentiality and maintain HIPPA Compliance. We are all required to:

- Keep child and family information confidential.
- Protect child and family information.
- Let families know that if they need their information shared with outside agencies that they will need to sign a release of information.
- Assure families that no information will be released without their written authorization.
- Allow families access to their child's file.

MEDIA RELEASE FORM

The Altogether Friends staff take photographs and videos of both special activities and daily classroom experiences as a source of pride and recognition of accomplishment for both children and employees. These photographs and/or videos may be used in hallway or classroom displays and/or publications regarding our program. Each Family will be asked at enrollment and at the beginning of each program year to sign a media release form. If you do not wish your child's image to be used, please indicate this on the media release form. At any point in time, you would like to change your child's status, please let your child's teacher or any teacher on site that you need to update your form.

Please remember when you are participating in our special days to take pictures of your child only unless you check with the other child's family and/or the teachers.

HEALTH AND WELFARE POLICY

Children who attend a center-based program are required to have a current health appraisal on file at all times. In addition to health appraisals, you may also be required to submit documentation that your child has had their vision checked and has been to the dentist. Each family will be notified when these documents are due.

We work closely with families to keep our records up to date and in compliance. If you are struggling to get these documents submitted, please see the director to determine what support we can provide to you and your child. Regulations require that we have them on file and children may be placed on a waiting list if families are not able to supply the necessary paperwork.

ILLNESS POLICY

It is a fact of life that children have colds. When a child has a fever or is too under the weather to participate in normal school activities, we recommend that you keep him/her at home. There are times when you might not be sure if you should send your child to school. If in doubt, use the following list of symptoms as a guide as to when to keep your child home.

- Fever of 102 degrees or higher
- Vomiting (2 or more times in a 24-hour period)
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Severe sore throat
- Red and/or runny eyes
- Undiagnosed rash
- Severe headache

- Abdominal pain
- Unusual sleepiness
- Know communicable disease

Health Concern when at School

There are times when a child comes to school and they are perfectly fine but during the day caregivers can tell that the child is getting sick. If your child exhibits any of the symptoms listed above, we will contact you and ask that you take your child home for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the other children in the classroom. We understand that families are not available 100% of the time so please make sure that your emergency pick up list is up to date with current names and phone numbers.

Returning after Illness

In order to maintain a healthy environment for all children we follow the recommendation of the PA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Caring for Our Children 3rd Edition. If your child has been diagnosed with any of the following, please use the information to determine when you should send your child back to school. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by all the children and families that participate in our program.

<u>Illness/Disease</u>	<u>Re-Admittance</u>
<u>Conjunctivitis (CFOC3 7.5.1)</u>	<u>24 hours after treatment starts</u>
<u>Diarrhea (CFOC3 3.6.1.1e)</u>	<u>24 hours after last episode</u>
<u>Fever (101 or higher (CFOC3 3.6.1.1d)</u>	<u>24 hours after fever breaks – w/o medication</u>
<u>Head Lice/Nits (CFOC3 7.5.8)</u>	<u>Not until after first treatment and nit free</u>
<u>Impetigo (CFOC3 7.5.4)</u>	<u>After treatment has been started</u>
<u>Mouth Sores w/ Drooling (Herpes Simplex CFOC3 7.7.2)</u>	<u>Not until the child’s primary care provider or local health department authority states child is noninfectious</u>
<u>Ringworm (CFOC3 7.5.9)</u>	<u>24 hours after treatment starts</u>
<u>Scabies (CFOC3 7.5.11.1)</u>	<u>Not until treatment has been given</u>
<u>Streptococcal pharyngitis (strep throat or other Streptococcal infection) (CFOC3 7.3.1)</u>	<u>24 hours after treatment starts</u>
<u>Vomiting (CFOC3 3.6.1.1g)</u>	<u>24 hours after last episode</u>

Any child who has been determined to be sick or contagious will be isolated from classmates and parents or emergency contacts will be notified ASAP. It is expected that parents or contacts will pick up their children as soon as possible after being contacted. Your child must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to the center. No

credits or refunds will be given for days missed due to illness. In case of an extended illness (5 consecutive school days or more), credit may be given with proper verification in writing by the child's physician and will be determined by the severity of the illness.

Administration of Medication

Families are encouraged to have their physician arrange a dose schedule so that their child does not need to receive medicine during program hours. If this is not possible, medication will only be given by an employee if the following steps are taken:

- Families must document any medication to be administered each day in the Medication Log located at the front desk. Parent signature is required for any medication to be administered.
- Liquid medicine requires an accurate measuring spoon or cup provided by the family.
- A prescription or non-prescription medication may be accepted only in the original labeled Container.
- An employee shall administer a prescription medication only if written instructions are provided from the individual who prescribed the medicine.
- All non-prescription medicines must have a doctor's note verifying that the child is able to take the medicine which will be kept in the child's file.
- Instructions for administration contained on a prescription label are acceptable.
- The label of a medication container shall identify the name of the medication and the name of the child for whom the medication is intended, and which shall be administered only to the child whose name appears on the container.
- Medication will be stored in a locked area of the facility and in an area that is out of the reach of children.
- If the label says "consult your doctor" for age, a doctor's note must be submitted with specific dose to be given based on your child's age and weight.

Food Allergies

If your child has allergies, please discuss them in detail with the teacher and director. For food allergies, please complete an allergy action plan signed by the parent and doctor. This form must be updated each program year. All employees know how to take appropriate precautions. If at any time your child develops an allergy, please let us know immediately.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Day Care schedules will depend on the parent's individual needs. Our center opens promptly at 6:30 a.m. and closes at 6:00 p.m. Each child needs to be signed in and out each day on the daily log sheet located next to the front door.

* Special Note: If someone other than the parent is to pick up a child, the staff must be notified prior to the pick-up, they must be on current release forms with all their information included, and they must arrive with proper identification which matches the information on their child's forms. Any person other than a parent must be 18 years or older to pick up a child. This is for your child's protection. If you need to pick your child up early, please let us know ahead of time.

Appropriateness of Pickup Person

Keeping your child safe getting to and from school is a responsibility we share. Therefore, if at any time we feel that the person who comes to pick up a child is unable to take the child home safely, we will request and assist the adult to call another person on the pickup list for assistance. If they refuse to contact another person, we are required to call 911 and Childline. Parents are responsible for making sure that the individuals they authorize to transport their child understand this requirement.

Cell Phone Usage

We ask the families to refrain from using their cell phones at arrival and dismissal times. This is an important time to share information for both teacher and families and cell phone usage limits the amount of time information can be shared.

PEDESTRIAN AND PARKING SAFETY

Limited parking is available directly in front of our center. Families should follow all the parking regulations in place for the city of Philadelphia or take the risk of getting a ticket. When walking to and from school, please pay close attention to your child in the street and entrance.

Speed limits are posted, and families are asked to use extreme caution when driving. We also ask that parents hold their child's hand while outside our center. Keeping the children safe in our parking lots is a responsibility that is shared by all.

Seat Belts

When you are transporting your child in an automobile, your child must be in a car seat or booster seat if they are under the age of 8 and lighter than 80 pounds. By state law, no child can sit in the front seat of a car until they have reached 12 years of age.

SAFE ROUTES TO & FROM OUR CENTER

Here are some helpful and suggested ways to travel to and from our center every day.

By Car or Bicycle:

-From Cottman Ave. – Travel south on Rising Sun Ave. and make a right (west) on Unruh Ave. and follow to the dead end which is Hasbrook Ave.

-From Roosevelt Blvd. – Travel west on Tyson Ave. to Oakley. Make a left (south) to Unruh Ave., then make a right (west) and follow to the end (Hasbrook Ave.)

By Bus:

The 18 bus will bring you up or down Rising Sun Ave. Take it to Magee Ave. and travel west on Magee Ave. by foot to Hasbrook Ave. and make a right. Travel 2 short blocks until you reach our center at Unruh Ave.

Safe Pedestrian Crossways: Rising Sun and Martins Mill Rds.

Oakley and Longshore Aves.

Oakley and Magee Aves.

Oakley and Hellerman Sts.

Oakley and Levick Sts.

These intersections all have 4 way stop signs or traffic lights.

Remember, children may only be dropped off and picked up inside our facility at all times unless other arrangements have been made.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Your child's emergency contact list will need to include at least two updated addresses and telephone numbers of escorts who are available during school hours.

Emergency contacts will only be used after attempting to contact the parents/guardians first in case of illness, injury, or late pick-ups. Any life-threatening emergencies will follow the procedures of calling 911 for assistance first and then contacting the family immediately.

Keep your contact form up to date! Twice a year families/guardian are asked to provide the most current contact information for the child along with a list of adults authorized to pick up their child from school. Each adult identified on your emergency contact list must present valid identification when they come to pick up your child. Family members must inform us of any change in contact information for the family or emergency contact and phone numbers immediately.

Parents have equal rights to have access to their child unless there is a court order specifying custody. Please understand that parents will be called before any emergency contact unless a court order is in place that documents who has custody of the child. We ask that parents determine what procedure they want us to follow in the event that there is an emergency if the parents do not live together with the child and there is no court order in place. Our primary goal is to support the health and safety of the child and we ask parents to support this goal.

In event of an emergency, the parent will be contacted immediately. If immediate medical assistance is required, the child will be taken to the hospital by an ambulance or by a staff member. The hospital will determine whether to wait for a parent before treating the child. If the parent cannot be contacted the emergency contact person will be notified. A staff member will stay with your child until you or your emergency contact person arrives.

CUBBIES

Each child will have his or her own cubby in which to keep a change of clothes and any other personal items he/ she may bring to school. All belongings should be clearly marked with your child's name to avoid loss and/or confusion. We ask that children do not bring in any toys from home except on designated days. Most toys are not made to be handled by many children at once and may break. This can make for a very unhappy child.

REGISTRATION AND FORMS

As a state licensed facility, we are required to maintain specific forms that need to be filled out and returned to us before the first day of school. A registration agreement must also be filled out and signed along with one non-refundable week of tuition to be held as security upon registration. Your child's spot will not be reserved without this. A re-enrollment agreement will be given out each school year to register your child along with a \$25.00 non-refundable fee. These forms must be completed, signed, and dated for your child to be officially registered in our program and be updated every six months.

HEALTH POLICIES

Every child enrolled in the day care program must have a current physical examination (well check) and be up to date with all immunizations. It is a state requirement that the child have a well check and form filled out each year and that our center be informed of all updated (booster) immunizations as they occur. If your child misses a scheduled immunization due to illness, please have your doctor send a note to that effect. When your child is scheduled for shots please ask for a copy of their medical form to have updated at the time of the appointment and then return promptly thereafter.

WITHDRAWS

Any parent who intends to withdraw their child from the program for any reason should notify the teacher in writing stating the exact date of the child's departure. This is necessary to ensure that prior payment can be arranged for the days that the child attends school. A two-week written notice is required for withdraws. If a 2-week notice is not given you will forfeit your last week deposit as a payment toward your tuition. You also lose the right to re-enroll your child in our program.

LEAVE OF ABSENCES

Due to our limited space and the number of children we are restricted to serve at any given time, we will not be able to hold any spot due to a Leave of Absence for any reason without weekly tuition payments.

VACATION

Your child will be eligible for one-week vacation after one full year of attendance. This means that you will not need to pay tuition this week. This does not apply to subsidized families. We do require a 2-week notice in writing prior to the vacation time. Example:

- if your child attends 5 days per week you are entitled to 5 days of vacation.
- if your child attends 3 days per week you are entitled to 3 days of vacation
- if your child attends 2 days per week you are entitled to 2 days of vacation.

NEWSLETTER

A newsletter is sent home with your child at the beginning of each month during the scheduled school year. It contains schedules of holidays and special events, and any information we need to pass on to you. Important information is sent home in these newsletters. Please keep this newsletter handy and review it daily to keep yourself and your child informed of our current events.

INFANTS, PRE-TODDLERS, & TODDLERS

Parents of infants need to supply their children's bottles, formula, food, diapers, pack and play, crib sheets, blankets, and change of clothing. We also ask that each infant has a written schedule to follow until we are familiar with his/her routine.

Parents of Pre-Toddlers need to supply their child's diapers, change of clothing, blanket, sleeping bag, no spill cup, and a full lunch in a labeled lunch box or bag.

Parents of Toddlers need to supply their child's diapers, several changes of clothing, blanket and or sleeping bag, a labeled no spill cup and a full lunch in a labeled lunch box or bag.

PRESCHOOL HOMEWORK

The preschool children will be given homework sheets relating to our readiness skills, letters, numbers, shapes, and colors, etc. It is especially important for your child to complete this work with a parent. As much as we would like to, it is impossible for us to give each child the one-on-one attention needed for these essential readiness skills. A few minutes each evening reinforcing what was taught during the day will help facilitate your child's learning. Please help your child remember to return his/her homework to school at the end of the week.

DRESS CODES

This dress code has been developed in order to keep children safe and healthy while allowing them to fully participate in all aspects of the program. Many activities in school involve rigorous exercise and hands on experience. Children should wear clothing that is comfortable enough for gross motor activities and weather appropriate for outdoor play. Teachers will assist children in learning self-help skills. However, children should wear clothes they can play in without worry of getting dirty or torn. Children should wear shoes that protect the entire foot, such as sneakers or other shoes that cover the whole foot to prevent injuries. Sandals, flip-flops, clogs, etc. are not permitted. Children should not wear items such as small hair beads or small beaded bracelets. These can fall out of the children's hair and/or the bracelet can break from being pulled on. Young children are naturally curious and loose beads may result in nose, ear, or mouth injuries. In case of an accident or a spill of some sort, please send in a change of clothing that can be left in school. Mark all children's clothing clearly with your child's name. This is especially important! Please change extra clothing periodically for size differences and seasonal changes.

MEALS AND FOODS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Lunch

Lunch is to be supplied by the parents and should be brought to school daily. Please talk to your child about his/her lunch menu. It is better to pack a lunch that your child will eat. It saves you from wasting money on uneaten food and avoids much stress at lunch time. Items that need to be kept cold may be placed in each classroom designated

refrigerator. Just make sure to label your child's name on each item. Foods that need to be heated may also be brought to school if they can be heated in a microwave.

Snack

We ask that each parent contribute to our snack supply once a month. This may consist of cookies, crackers, pretzels, water, or any other treat your child and you would like to bring in to share.

Drinking Water

Drinking water is available to all children during the classroom day. Water will also be available during gross motor play.

Birthdays, Holidays, and Special Events

We will celebrate many holidays throughout the year. Your child's birthday is a very special holiday. If you would like to bring in a special treat for this day, please notify your child's teacher in advance.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

Toddlers – At least 30 minutes of accumulated daily Structured (intentional caregiver/adult lead movement/activities) physical activity is provided daily. Toddlers are provided ample opportunities to develop movement skills that are the basis for future motor skillfulness and physical activity.

Preschoolers – At least 60 minutes of accumulated daily structured (intentional caregiver/adult lead movement/activities) physical activity is provided daily. Preschoolers are encouraged to develop competence in fundamental motor skills that are the basis for future motor skills and physical activity.

SCREEN TIME POLICY

The children will have no more than 20 minutes of screen time once a week while in the facility during regular school hours and only for educational purposes or to support physical activities such as exercising and or music movement activities.

SUBSIDY

Any parent who has qualified for subsidy must follow strict procedures put in place by the Early Learning Resource Center. Please make yourself familiar with your

caseworker and all the correspondence that is sent to you. Please be aware of many dates that are given and deadlines when turning in paperwork, updating information, payroll etc. ELRC is really cracking down on participants who are not following proper procedures. A participant is not only you, but the center as well.

Much of our income relies on ELRC, so we cannot jeopardize losing our place in this program. Every family participating in this program must pay their weekly copay each week or we must report a delinquent payment the following Monday morning. When a nonpayment is called in an adverse action is placed on your account which jeopardizes your place in the program. Please understand that this is not personal, it is procedure to continue in the program for you as well as this center.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN/ MANDATED REPORTERS

The health and safety of the children who attend our center is our top priority. One of the responsibilities we have is to make sure children are protected from abuse. Our role in keeping children safe is clearly defined when we are trained as Mandated Reporters. Mandated Reporters do not determine child abuse, but they are responsible for looking for the signs of abuse. Below you will see the definitions for Mandated Reporters and the other is the criteria used to evaluate possible signs of abuse.

Altogether Friends employees are all mandated reporters and as reporters, we are required to follow up on things we see and hear. We value the relationships that we have with families and will support the family to the best of our ability. However, the law is clear. We must report. Definition of Child abuse from Pennsylvania Code:

- (I) The term child abuse means of the following:
 - (A) Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes nonaccidental serious physical injury to a child.
 - (B) An act or failure to act by a perpetrator which cause nonaccidental serious injury to or sexual abuse or exploitation of a child.
 - (C) A recent act, failure to act or series of the acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or exploitation of a child.
 - (D) Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide the essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.
- (II) A child will not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of

- the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care.
- (III) If, upon investigation, the county agency determines that a child has not been provided needed medical or surgical care because of seriously held religious beliefs of the child's parents, guardian or person responsible for the child's welfare, which beliefs are consistent with those of a bona fide religion, the child will not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused. The county agency shall closely monitor the child and shall seek court-ordered medical intervention when the lack of medical or surgical care threatens the child's life or long-term health. In cases involving religious circumstances, all correspondence with a subject of the report and the records of the Department and the county agency may not reference "child abuse" and shall acknowledge the religious basis for the child's condition, and the family shall be referred for general protective services, under Subchapter C of the CPSL (related to general protective services), if appropriate.

Who is a Mandated Reporter?

Individuals who, in the practice of their employment, occupation or practice of a profession, come into contact with children and have reasonable cause to suspect that a child under the care, supervision, guidance, or training of that person or of an agency, institution, organization or other entity with which that person is affiliated is a victim of child abuse.

Child Left Unattended in Vehicles

Children should never be left unattended in vehicles. If at any time any Altogether Friends employee observes a child left unattended in a vehicle, they are required to alert management. Management will be our best to locate the parent/caregiver immediately but if we are not able to do this, 911 will be called.

Section III. A. For Families

FAMILY SATISFACTION AND HOW TO HANDLE CONCERNS

Although we strive to meet all your expectations throughout the year, we understand that there may be a time when you have a concern regarding your child's program or classroom placement, or you may feel that your needs are not being met. We want to know if this happens so that any problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. Our goal is to treat any concern with respect, fairness, and acceptance. We have developed the following procedures that you can use to help resolve any concerns that you might have:

1. Families are encouraged to bring any issues or concerns they might have directly to the person with whom they have the concern.
2. If the issue is not resolved immediately to your satisfaction, or you prefer to skip step #1, you are encouraged to go to the appropriate Program Manager or Director.

Families of children in our childcare program can contact the PA Department of Human Services if they have a complaint that does not follow the Day Care Regulations of Pennsylvania or there is a concern about the health, safety, or well being of a child at 215-560-2807.

It is our hope that through direct conversation with families and their input, that all families feel that they are an integral part, not only of their child's individual program, but of the program at large.

CALENDAR

Our school year session begins in September and ends in August. We are open all year with the exception of holidays. Altogether Friends observes the following holidays in which are center will be closed:

Teacher Development Day (October 11th), Thanksgiving Day, Black Friday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Spring break (April 7th & 10th), Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day. If your child is scheduled to attend school on these days, then you are responsible for paying for them.

SNOW DAYS

Altogether Friends will be closed due to inclement weather when it is recommended that it is severe enough to close. We will take a recommendation from the Philadelphia public and parochial schools in our decision making but will not necessarily close when they do. Please check www.altogetherfriends.com , The message will state whether we will be closed, open or opening late. All messages will also be posted on our Facebook page and texted to you if you leave permission for us to do so. If the weather becomes inclement while classes are in session, we will contact you directly as to what the situation will be. If your child is scheduled to attend school on these days, then you are responsible for paying for them.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR TRANSITIONS

Children and families experience many different types of transitions during their early years. Transition planning is one of the best ways to support the child, the family, and the program. There are multiple types of transitions that happen.

- Starting a new school or program
- Changing classrooms
- Changing schools
- Daily transitions
- Each type of transition has very specific actions that can support smooth transitions.

Coming from home to school

- When parents come to Altogether Friends, they are provided with program information and an application for our Program.
- Paperwork is completed by family and reviewed by the director.
- Families are invited to an open house to meet the teachers.
- Teachers meet with each family to share information more specific to the needs of the child, family, and to explain classroom routines, expectations, and methods of communication used to share updates.

Supporting Daily Transitions

- Children arrive on time so they can participate in breakfast and the morning routine.
- Families stay a few minutes and are sure to say goodbye to their child. When a family sneaks away, it makes leaving separation easier for the family but can create mistrust and damage a child's sense of security if they do not know when to expect their family to be with or without them. Goodbyes are an opportunity for families and children to create a loving ritual such as two big hugs and a kiss

on the forehead, or a special phrase like “see you later alligator, in a while crocodile.”

- Families return to the program at pick-up time and take the opportunity for the child to share thoughts from the day as they prepare to leave.
- Teachers greet children in the morning and create their special goodbye rituals with the children for the end of the day.

Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten or Another School

Families are informed that all children who will turn five years old by September 1st will have support and information provided that will assist them in completing the steps necessary to transition their child to Kindergarten.

Information related to transition is shared in a variety of formats:

- Bulletin Boards
- Written correspondence with timely information on how to enroll your child in kindergarten.
- Flyers from the School Districts offering specific times and events for families and children who will be transitioning to kindergarten.
- Meetings to share information and discuss service reports.
- Teachers track transition information on the children in their classroom and monitor the progress of each family to determine/ suggest the need for more individualized support testing.

In the classroom, teachers support the children by planning activities and reading books that focus on transitioning to kindergarten. Circle time is a wonderful opportunity to assess the child’s comfort level with moving to a new school and can inform teachers on what activities can be planned to meet the individual transition needs of each child in their group.

Philadelphia currently has a selection of private, charter and public schools in all neighborhoods for families to choose from. Families are encouraged to research different school data from their websites that can help plan for their child’s next educational step.

Teachers and families work together with neighboring kindergartens to provide for smooth transitions such as having the children visit or arranging for kindergarten teachers to meet with families to answer questions. Early Intervention Employees work with families, Service Coordinators and the School District of Philadelphia or Montgomery County to support families that need to transition from Early Intervention to the School District’s Special Education programs.

Transition from one Classroom to Another

When children are ready to transition from one classroom to another, the existing teacher and the family discuss the plan to have the child move to their new classroom. The new teacher is given the information on the child that will be entering their classroom. The new teacher arranges to meet with the family so they can share information that will support the needs of the transitioning child. The existing classroom team shares information about the transitioning child with the new teacher. Arrangements are made for the child to have multiple visits to the new classroom with existing staff. This gives the child the opportunity to become familiar with the new teachers and children in the new classroom.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Every family is welcome to participate in as many activities as they choose. Family involvement is a key component of a quality program. All support is appreciated. There are a number of ways for you to participate such as field trips, Special visitor days, special events, parties, picnics, and fundraisers.

FIELD TRIPS (3 to 5 years)

Throughout the year we will be taking curriculum related field trips. Specific information regarding each trip will be sent home with your monthly newsletter. A few parent volunteers will be needed for supervision however, all parent volunteers will have to apply and have on file at our center proper clearances related to volunteering. The children's fees for these trips will be covered by the activity fee. (On hold for 2022-2023 school year)

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

The Federal Government offers an Earned Income Tax Credit for families who work but do not earn high wages. This benefit is not fully taken advantage of by many qualifying families because they believe they earn too much to qualify. In an effort to support your rights as a family to access this tax credit; we have included the following information. Call 1-800-TAX-1040 for more information regarding the EITC and/or to request a volunteer to help you prepare your taxes. To view information, download forms and to find out if you qualify, access www.irs.gov/eitc.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES IN THE PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY

Today's families experience multiple demands that may lead to a need for additional supports. It is our belief that in order for the children we serve to be successful, their families must be successful. Families are encouraged to communicate any management

they are comfortable with to ask for referrals to community supports for their family's success. We have included a list of family resources for your reference.

Section III. B. Curriculum and Program Practices

CURRICULUM INFORMATION

The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, & Twos forms the basis of our fully integrated program for this age group. It helps you to build relationships with children by showing you how to create meaningful daily routines and experiences that respond to individual children's strengths and interests.

The Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers (agers 3-5) is primarily based on using the environment as the textbook. The emphasis is on the teacher and family roles as facilitators of the children's learning by maintaining and continuously developing learning centers in the classroom. The learning centers we have set up at Altogether friends include blocks, table toys and manipulatives, house corner, art, library, music movement, science and math, computers, writing, and the outdoors.

Our teachers are trained in the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. These standards have been developed by experts across the state and outline what each child should be able to do by the time they enter Kindergarten. The Creative Curriculum has been cross walked with the Early Learning Standards. If you want to view the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards, please visit [www. Pakeys.org](http://www.Pakeys.org).

If parents want to learn more about child development, information can be accessed by contacting nationally recognized organizations such as Zero to Three, www.zerotothree.org, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, www.naeyc.org, and/or First Signs, Act Early, www.cdc.gov.

If families want to learn more about Pennsylvania's initiatives for early childhood education, information can be retrieved through the Pennsylvania Office of Early Childhood Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) through www.dpw.state.pa.us.

You can also visit www.papromiseforchildren.com resource for more information to prepare your child for school success.

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENTS/FAMILY CONFERENCES

All children are screened with the ages and stages Screening Tool. A report sharing the results of this screening is sent home to the family as early as possible after it is

completed. If concerns regarding your child's development are identified as a result of this screening, the program will work cooperatively with you to make referrals to early intervention.

The ongoing assessment throughout the year is the Teaching Strategies Goal which looks at the overall development of the child through teacher records of children's participation in the program. This assessment is conducted on an ongoing basis and is reported on at least 2 times per year. The results are discussed during at least two conferences offered to families throughout the year and are provided in a summary. If families have any questions about assessment procedures, please feel free to talk with your child's teacher.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the early childhood years, children are developing their skills in many different areas. As they are learning how to share, take turns and participate as a part of a group, children communicate in different ways. Children may yell, say "NO", bite, and/or hit to express their feelings. While these behaviors are concerning, they are also typical to certain stages of development. With the proper support and guidance, children will learn more appropriate methods of getting their needs met as they grow.

Our employees are trained in positive approaches with young children so that they may provide guidance to children who are working on developing appropriate educational and social emotional skills. The training includes a self-examination of employees' actions and responses. Background knowledge on why children and people behave the way that they do, and positive approaches with children, we are able to teach appropriate behavior rather than focus on behavior that are less desirable. We utilize approaches such as distraction, redirection, role modeling, natural consequences and "taking time" to stay calm. We recognize that all areas of development need caring positive approaches.

While we have discussed that many behaviors are typical as a result of a child's development, we also recognize that some children experience a higher than typical level of intensity and/or frequency of particular behaviors. Altogether Friends has a support system for staff, children and families in place. We support staff through training, use data to analyze children's behaviors while look for trends and patterns. It is important for families to know that our mission supports the inclusion of all children regardless of their needs. Our services must be delivered in a manner that protects the safety of all children. This occurs when children have the appropriate amount of support in place to be successful.

Department of Human services regulations support our positive approaches and ask us to inform you that we will never utilize humiliation or psychological and/or corporal punishment as a means of guiding a child's behavior.

If you are looking for more guidance, please visit the website of the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at www.csefel.vanderbilt.edu.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

The health and safety of all children is the primary responsibility of Altogether Friends. In our efforts to maintain a healthy and safe environment there are times when it is necessary to meet with families to discuss the individual needs of their child that cannot be supported with the typical staffing patterns in place for Childcare and Preschool programs. Altogether Friends recognizes the need to sometime add additional services that make it possible for a child to be included in a typical preschool program. Without these supports in place, it is challenging to provide the healthy and safe environment that all families expect us to provide and it may be necessary to suspend/expel a child from our program until the appropriate supports are in place. Families must work cooperatively with the Altogether Friends Staff. If they fail to do so your child may be suspended and/or expelled.

Other Causes for Suspension/Expulsion

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payment.
- Failure to complete required forms including child's immunization records and health assessment.
- A child can not be suspended/expelled because a child's family made a complaint to the office of licensing regarding a school's alleged violation of the licensing requirements, reported abuse or neglect occurring at the school, or questioning the school regarding policies and procedures.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Admissions, the provisions of services, and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, English Limited Proficiency (LEP), age or sex.

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

Our center has sought to ensure that its programs are accessible to all persons who wish to benefit from them. As an extension of this effort, we will provide reasonable efforts to

make its program and activities accessible to individuals who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as appropriate.

Any individual who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination. Please check your package of forms to find the list of organizations and contacts.

CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY

Our Center serves all eligible children without discrimination as stated above. We recognize that we serve children from a variety of cultural background throughout our programs. Teachers and families can work together to plan meaningful developmentally appropriate activities to share different family traditions in the classroom. It is our belief that acceptance begins with knowledge. What better place to start sharing that the world is made up of many kinds of families with many different celebrations and customs than our classrooms?

Teachers will share planned activities throughout the year. If at any time you do not wish your child to participate in a certain activity, please contact your child's teacher and discuss how your wishes can be honored.

By filling out the Getting to Know You Form, Families will provide the teacher with the information needed to plan classroom activities.

Thank you to all families who have provided us with the opportunity to care for and educate your children! We understand what an honor it is for you to have placed their care in our hands. We would also like to thank you for taking time to read through our handbook. If you have any questions regarding our program and policies, please do not hesitate to ask.

Please return the attached signature page together with all the other required forms. Thank you!

Help Us Get to Know Your Child (6 weeks to 18 months)

Child's Name _____

Daytime phone number _____ Evening Phone Number _____

The best way to contact you is by _____

What was your child's birth weight? _____

Was your child premature or full term? _____

Who does your child live with? _____

What is your child's general mood? _____

Is your child bottle fed or breast fed? _____

If both, when do you use bottle vs breast? _____

Do you use formula or milk? _____ If formula, which brand? _____

Does your child eat solid food? _____ If yes, which types/brands? _____

What foods does your child like? _____

What foods does your child dislike? _____

What are your child's eating habits? (amounts and times) _____

What are your child's sleeping habits? _____

Does your child generally sleep through the night? _____

Does your child use a pacifier? _____ If yes, when? _____

Please list any goals you have for your child this year. _____

Please list any food/product allergies your child has _____

Please list any common holidays your child does not celebrate _____

Are there any other languages besides English spoken at home? _____

Have there been any recent changes at home? _____ If so what? _____

Do you have any special concerns for your child? _____

Any other important information you would like to share? _____

Help Us Get to Know Your Child (18 months & up)

Child's Name _____

Daytime phone number _____

Evening Phone Number _____

The best way to contact you is by _____

What are your child's strengths? _____

What are your child's weaknesses? (Things to work on) _____

What makes your child happy? _____

What upsets/frustrates your child? _____

Name 3 words to describe your child. _____

What things does your child like? _____

What thing does your child dislike? _____

What does your child fear? _____

What does your child need extra help with? _____

What special interests does your child have? _____

Please list any goals you have for your child this year. _____

Please list any food/product allergies your child has _____

Please list any common holidays your child does not celebrate _____

Are there any other languages besides English spoken at home? _____

Is your child potty trained? _____ If yes, at what age? _____

Please list any personal habits your child has _____

Does your child generally sleep through the night? _____

Have there been any recent changes at home? _____ If so, what?

Do you have any special concerns for your child? _____

Any other comments or concerns you would like to make? _____

FAMILY HANDBOOK SIGNATURE PAGE

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

By signing below, the family acknowledges that they received the handbook. The family will abide by the policies of Altogether Friends program in the best interest of the children. If at any time, the family has questions about program policies, they can contact the teacher and/or any member of the Altogether Friends staff with questions or the need for additional information.

Family /Caregiver Signature:

Date: _____

In our efforts to support Family Engagement, we are asking you to provide your contact information below:

Email address _____

Phone number for texts _____

Other family members can also receive this information. Please list the phone number or email address for other family members you want to receive this information.

Please return this form with your package of forms. Thank You!