

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Children’s Center

Parent Manual

Policy and Guideline Review

Revised June 2016



University of Nebraska–Lincoln Children’s Center

This manual is intended to be a guide for parents about the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Children’s Center (UNL Children’s Center) policies. Many of the policies and guidelines described are requirements of the University of Nebraska and/or Health and Human Services–State of Nebraska Department of Education. A copy of licensing requirements is available for review in the Director’s office.

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Notes:



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Welcome!

Greetings and welcome to the UNL Children’s Center! We are pleased that you have chosen our program to provide care for your child. Choosing the “right” child care environment for your child is often a frustrating, even frightening, experience. There are so many things to consider—location, cost, number of children attending the center, and most importantly, the quality of the program.

As a parent, you can play an extremely important role in making the UNL Children’s Center a quality program that is responsive to the needs of your child and yourself.

We encourage you to:

- Maintain open, direct communication with UNL Children’s Center staff. We can always make time to answer questions or listen to concerns.
- Actively participate on the UNL Children’s Center Parent Circle, as well as in fundraising projects and social gatherings.
- Carefully read the guidelines and policies in this manual, and fulfill the expectations and responsibilities of the parents as they are outlined.

We must work together to achieve our mutual goal of providing the highest quality of care possible for your child!



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Mission of the Center

The mission of the Children’s Center is to provide high quality early childhood education for children 6 weeks to Kindergarten.

To meet our mission...

- ❖ We seek to employ highly qualified, educated teaching staff. Two full-time teachers are scheduled in each classroom M-F during operating hours. Ideally, one full-time teacher opens the classroom and works an 8 hour day, overlapping with the second full-time teacher who will also work 8 hours and then close the room. This allows teachers the opportunity to provide proper communication for all staff and families during the day.
- ❖ We utilize Teaching Strategies – Gold, a highly recognized, developmentally appropriate curriculum; which supports all children regardless of their developmental abilities. Our teachers individualize children’s learning to meet their needs.
- ❖ We provide a safe, nurturing environment for children and their families.
- ❖ We embrace diversity and uniqueness within each family. We welcome all families into the Center to share a favorite tradition as well as their family values.
- ❖ We create a partnership with families. Teachers meet with families prior to the child’s first day in a new classroom. We welcome collaboration between parents and teachers as desired. We encourage families and teachers to meet twice a year to discuss and assess the child’s learning together.

Philosophy Statement

“Play needs to be cherished and encouraged, for in their play children reveal their future minds”.

–Friedrich Froebel (1887)

Program Funding

Financial support for this organization comes from the parent’s tuition paid directly to the center. The UNL Children’s Center falls under the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, as part of the Nebraska Unions. The UNL Children’s Center Director is a member of the Unions Executive Staff.



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Tuition

Tuition is based upon enrollment. Since the space is reserved for the child, tuition is set whether or not he/she attends. Tuition is also assessed to your account even though the UNL Children’s Center may be closed for official holidays. Tuition will not be assessed during the last week of the year when the University is closed for Holiday Break.

Parents that are currently employed with the University may choose one of two options; employees have the option to deduct payments from their paycheck, or make payments via an automatic withdraw from their bank account each week. When a family is not employed through the University, tuition will be paid through an automatic payment from a checking account each week.

UNL Children’s Center requires a two week notice to be given in writing if and when you decide to remove your child from the Center. You will not be able to use your week of vacation as part of the two week notice unless it had been scheduled prior to the written notification of termination of care.

Staff-to-Child Ratios

State Licensing Regulations require that childcare centers be staffed at the following staff-to-child ratios:

Birth to 18 months	1 teacher: 4 children
18 months to 3 years	1 teacher: 6 children
3 to 4 years old	1 teacher: 10 children
4 to 5 years old	1 teacher: 12 children

We strive to staff the UNL Children’s Center at ratios lower than those listed above, to ensure children receive individual attention during the day. We maintain ratios within each classroom. We also have volunteers and practicum students periodically at our center. They are not included in the staff-to-child ratios, but rather as extra staff.



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Parking

The UNL Children’s Center has a specific area for dropping off and picking up. Please try to use this space for 20 minutes or less. If you plan to stay longer in the lot, please notify the front desk and you will be given a windshield permit. This will let UNL Parking Department know that you are eligible to be there and prevents you from being towed at your expense. This area is not to be used for a full day of parking.

Operating Schedule

The UNL Children’s Center is open 51 weeks out of the year. Since UNL Children’s Center staffs are University employees, we are required to observe official University holidays. Closings include:

- National Holidays
 - New Year’s Day
 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 - Memorial Day
 - Fourth of July
 - Labor Day
 - Thanksgiving (Thursday & Friday)
 - Christmas Day
- Additional Closings
 - Holiday Break (time period between Christmas and New Year)
 - 2 Training Days per year (these are days that full-time staff are present for training while children are not present)
 - Official closings declared by the Chancellor during inclement weather

An annual calendar noting the UNL Children’s Center closing dates is available at the front desk.

The UNL Children’s Center is licensed by the State of Nebraska to operate 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

It is best for a parent or guardian to call the UNL Children’s Center to let the staff know of a later than normal pick up time. If the staff at the UNL Children’s Center has not heard from the parent or guardian, they will call the parent or guardian to check on their whereabouts. If UNL Children’s Center staff is unable to reach the parents, guardians, or their written emergency contacts by 6:30 p.m., the UNL police will be notified.



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Vacation Scheduling

Each child has 2 weeks of vacation per year during which no childcare fee is charged. One of these weeks **MUST** be taken during UNL’s year-end shutdown period (Holiday Shut Down). The other vacation week is at the discretion of the family. The UNL Children’s Center requests that at least 2 week notice is given before you plan to take your vacation week. There are vacation notices located at the sign in/out computer. Please return the form to center administration upon completion.

NOTE: Vacation time cannot be split into daily units. It must be taken in a single week unit.

For the purpose of vacation scheduling, the UNL Children’s Center considers each year to run from January 1st to December 31st. If a family does not want to use the week of vacation, full fees are still due. Vacation weeks do not carry over from year to year. Your child must be absent from the center on the week you request vacation.

Authorized Pick Up

The UNL Children’s Center considers child pickup an important process. Upon enrolling at the UNL Children’s Center, you are required to submit 2 emergency contacts who are authorized to pick up your child. If someone other than yourself will pick up your child, please inform your child’s teacher and the front desk. This can be done via email or by writing a note at our front desk. It is also our policy to obtain a picture ID verifying identity before releasing your child to anyone. To protect your child, UNL Children’s Center staff will not release your child to anyone without proper authorization.

The UNL Children’s Center also requires that parents sign their child in and out daily:

- At the reception desk, you are asked to sign your child in upon arrival and out upon departure.
- On the room attendance sheets within your child’s classroom.

This process is important as this information is used for various reasons:

- To keep track of the number of children present
- As a quick reference to assess which children are/are not present on a particular day
- During fire and tornado drills and/or other emergency procedures, to be sure all children are accounted for.
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) paperwork

Any parent/guardian who smells of alcohol, controlled substance or acts unusual will be asked to notify an authorized contact to pick up their child. If the child is taken out of the center against the better judgment of the staff, the center will notify the police of the situation.

In the event that a child is not picked up and out of the building by 6 p.m., a late fee of \$1 per minute per child will be assessed to the parent or guardian of the child/children. The fee should be paid by cash or check at the time you pick up or before the child is dropped off the following day.

*The clock on the sign in/out computer at the reception desk will be used for calculating the late fee.



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Parent Visitation

The UNL Children’s Center has an “open door” policy and encourages parents to visit their child/children during the day. The Children’s Center does ask that parents consider the child’s routine and be mindful of the time of day they come. If you have any questions about convenient times to visit, please ask your child’s teachers.

Illness

It is the policy of the UNL Children’s Center to keep contagious diseases and illness to a minimum. We require children to wash their hands upon entry of their classroom to decrease the spread of germs. Children will not be allowed to attend the UNL Children’s Center if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Pink Eye
- Fever
- Diarrhea (repeated)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Significant skin eruptions (i.e., chicken pox, etc.)
- Head Lice or nits

If any of the above symptoms appear during the day, UNL Children’s Center staff will isolate the child from other children and staff as much as possible. The Teachers or Directors will make the final determination whether or not the parent needs to be called—keeping in mind the well-being of the sick child as well as the other children and staff at the UNL Children’s Center. If called, a parent must pick up the child within 1 hour.

It is a subjective decision about whether or not a low-grade temperature is due only to teething. For that reason, the UNL Children’s Center policy is that if the child’s axillary (by the armpit) temperature is 101 degrees, the parent will be called to pick up the child.

We realize that it is difficult for a parent to take time off from school or work to stay with a sick child, but this policy is for the protection of everyone at the Children’s Center and must be strictly enforced.

We also recognize that the UNL Children’s Center has a responsibility to keep the spread of illness to a minimum. We take the following steps to ensure this:

- Disinfect toys & equipment
- Require documentation of immunizations prior to a child’s enrollment, with annual updates
- Post notices for parents if any communicable disease occurs at the UNL Children’s Center

We feel that these precautions will assist in safe-guarding your child from illness. We ask that you cooperate with us by keeping ill children at home and by immediately picking up children who exhibit symptoms of illness at the UNL Children’s Center. Here is a sample copy of our Illness Exclusion form:



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Illness Exclusion Form

_____ is being sent home from care because they have exhibited the following symptoms. They may return to care after being symptom free for a period of 24 hours (without the use of a fever reducer) or when a doctor’s note stating the symptoms are not contagious is received by the center.

_____ **Vomiting**

- 2 or more times in the past 24 hours
- 1 time with an accompanying symptom **and** behavior change or other illness symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea)

_____ **Rash**

- With fever or behavior change, until a physician has determined the illness is not contagious.
- Chickenpox (varicella), until all lesions have dried or crusted.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been started.
- Mouth sores with drooling.
- Head lice or ringworm, until after the first treatment.

_____ **Conjunctivitis**

_____ **Diarrhea**

- 2 or more times in the past 24 hours.
- Diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet-trained children with diarrhea causing “accidents”.

_____ **Fever:** Temperature above 100 degrees taken axillary (under the arm) **and** behavior change or other illness symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea)

Temperature _____ Taken By _____ Time _____

Temperature _____ Taken By _____ Time _____

Temperature _____ Taken By _____ Time _____

_____ **Not feeling well:** Any child who requires more care than can be provided by staff in a group setting or a child who is unable to participate in regular daily activities.

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

*Policy written in conjunction with Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department guidelines.



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Medication

Prescription medicine must be in the original container with the child’s name and dosage clearly stated. Over-the-counter medicine must also be in the original container, labeled with the child’s name, and the dosage for the child’s age listed on the bottle. A note from your doctor stating an appropriate dosage must accompany any over-the-counter medicine that does not have a dosage listed for the child’s age. Medicine forms need to be filled out in each child’s room. Please make sure to give the medicine to a full time Teacher so they can store it in the appropriate lock box. We will administer only those doses of medicine that cannot be given at home. For example, if your child was prescribed three doses per day, we will administer one of the doses during the day. Also, in the case of medicine needing to be given every 4-6 hours, we will not administer until the child has been in our care for 3.5 hours to ensure the correct amount of time has passed

Accidents

The UNL Children’s Center strives to maintain a safe and healthy environment for the children, but accidents do happen. They may arise from children arguing over a toy, or from a child trying to do something that his/her motor skills are not quite ready to do. Also, particularly in the younger groups, biting may occur.

When an accident or injury does occur, the staff immediately assesses the first aid that is needed and responds appropriately. If it is a minor bump or scrape, soap and water, a cold compress, Band-Aid, and gentle care will usually take care of the problem. If your child has such an accident during the day, an accident report form is filled out by the staff and is given to you when you come to pick him/her up. The form summarizes the events leading up to the accident and describes what care was given.

Each Teacher is trained in giving first aid. Any injury requiring more treatment than that described above will be reported immediately to the child’s parent or emergency contact. It is important to keep your emergency contact list up-to-date.

If emergency medical personnel are needed, support staff will call 911 and immediate first aid measures, such as CPR, will be administered. Examples of such situations include severe bleeding, unconsciousness, compound fractures, head trauma, or spinal injuries. After calling 911, the parents will be contacted. The emergency contact person will be called if the parents are unavailable.



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Cultural Awareness

An important element in the development of a child’s self-esteem is an awareness and sense of pride in her/his cultural or ethnic heritage. As educators and caregivers of young children, we encourage a pluralistic outlook—an appreciation for one another and the differences that make each of us unique.

Of course, children need to know how people are alike. We share the commonality of basic needs for food, love, and sleep. However, our celebrations, the kinds of food we eat, our beliefs, and the way we do things may differ at the UNL Children’s Center. We try to help children value this diversity and take pride in the unique characteristics that make each of us special. One way we show our diversity is with what we call a “This Is Our World” map; which shows where families in our center are from around the world.

Just as we try to avoid ethnic or cultural stereotypes, we also want to avoid fixed gender role images. At the UNL Children’s Center, we:

- Encourage children to explore creative play in all areas.
- Use role concepts presented in books, finger plays, songs, etc. for discussion.
- Try to be sensitive to subtle yet influential gender role stereotyping in all experiences the children have.

UNL Children’s Center staff actively works to avoid gender role stereotypes. We try to introduce the children to the freedom of enjoying a wide range of roles from which they are able to choose.

Toilet Training

The UNL Children’s Center works with parents in assisting their children to learn the procedures of toilet training. It is first introduced in the Pre-Toddler room (1 year to 2 years) by having children go to the restroom with their diapers. They are taught to take off their own diaper, sit on a toilet (though they may not go), put their diapers back on, and wash their hands. Hopefully they will start to go and the process will go smoothly. We strive to make this a very positive time for the children.

Discipline Policy

The goal of the UNL Children’s Center discipline policy is to help children develop self-control and a sense of responsibility for their own actions. Children are respected as individuals and need the opportunity to make decisions concerning their behavior. We strive to turn inappropriate behaviors into teachable moments.

The first part of the discipline policy focuses on preventative discipline. This means avoiding potential problems before they materialize. Some methods we use include:

- Cueing appropriate behavior—We discuss rules and expectations with the children.
- Positive reinforcement—This includes giving praise for appropriate behavior “we catch them being good”.
- Positive redirection—We divert the child’s attention and offer positive alternatives.
- Modeling—This includes showing appropriate behavior by our own actions.



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- Positive verbal interaction—Examples include using “do” instead of “don’t” when giving directions, and giving children choices, but only those we are willing to accept.

The second part of the discipline policy is after-the-fact-discipline. We recognize that not all unacceptable behavior can be prevented. When a child has acted inappropriately, we intervene and focus on the behavior. No matter what a child has done, that child is never told that he/she is bad or naughty, but that his/her actions are not allowed. Some examples of this type of discipline are:

- Logical Consequences—For example, the consequences for throwing a toy would be losing the chance to play with that toy. We always let the child know what the consequences are for a particular action, and then follow through.
- Remove the Child—This is not a “punishment” but a quiet time in another part of the room or away from the group to allow the child to regain his/her composure.

Nutrition Program

We are very proud of the nutrition program that the UNL Children’s Center has to offer. Meals, which meet or exceed USDA nutritional guidelines, are provided. Menus are planned on a five-week cycle. All food is provided by the Children’s Center. Vegetarian meals are available upon request. Please visit our website at www.childcare.unl.edu for a current five week menu.

Parent(s) of infants may provide formula, breast milk or any foods they would like us to serve. Mothers wishing to nurse their infants at the Children’s Center are welcome to do so, either in the nursery or our lactation room. The center will provide one type of iron fortified formula.

Menus are posted daily and substitutions are made for the children with food restrictions. Each classroom serves breakfast, lunch, and snacks at regular times. You are welcome to eat lunch with your child/children, in this case, please let the cook or office by 9 a.m. to ensure a correct lunch count.

Please let the teachers know about any food allergies that your child might have. In accordance with USDA, we must have a written note from a doctor when a child cannot have a food item offered by the program.

Parent Teacher Conferences

The Teachers in each room will provide times for conferences with parents at least twice a year. You will be given the opportunity to meet personally or by telephone, whichever is more convenient. Also, you are encouraged to schedule additional conferences whenever you have questions or concerns; you do not have to wait for the bi-annual conference.

Field Trips

From time to time, rooms will go on field trips to local sites such as museums, parks, businesses, etc. These trips are used to provide additional educational experiences for the children. Field trips are chosen with the developmental age group in mind. Occasionally, a nominal fee is



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needed to defray the costs of the trips. If this is the case, parents will be notified well in advance of the scheduled trip so they can plan accordingly.

The Infant and Toddler rooms take walks which are considered “field trips”. These are usually within close proximity of the Children’s Center.

Summer field trips are typically taken by preschoolers. Parents are welcome to accompany their children on field trips. If you wish to do so, please contact your child’s Teachers.

Photography

Upon enrollment, parents will be given a release to give permission for photos of their child to be taken. Only those children whose parents have signed a release may be photographed. The UNL Children’s Center can only regulate the taking of photos within the Children’s Center building and by UNL Children’s Center staff. The UNL Children’s Center attempts to prevent all taking of photos by third parties while in the playground or on field trips. If parents wish to take pictures of their child’s classmates, they must first talk to the Directors and the Teachers of the room. The parent wanting to take the pictures must also obtain permission from each child’s parents.

Birthdays & Holidays

The UNL Children’s Center makes children feel special on their birthdays and you are encouraged to join us. The Children’s Center requests that you do not bring homemade, edible treats for the children. We will instead, provide a birthday snack for every child’s birthday. The classroom often allows the child to choose the special snack and they may make it in their classroom as a cooking/baking experience.

Instead of treats, you could bring small, inexpensive gifts for your child’s classmates (such as stickers or crayons), or a gift that can be shared by all the children in your child’s room (such as a book or tape).

The UNL Children’s Center does not “celebrate” holidays due to the diverse population of families we serve. We recognize that not all families may celebrate the same holiday nor celebrate in the same manner. Our teachers help the children understand the reason some people may celebrate holidays. This helps children/families grow to respect the rights and customs of other cultures.

Also, we often invite families to come and share a tradition or family time with the children. All families are welcome to do this. If you are interested in sharing about your family’s cultural beliefs please talk with your child’s teacher.



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Room Transition

The Teachers in your child’s room will advise you as your child approaches the time for advancement to the next room. This will usually occur 2-3 weeks prior to the actual move-up or transition date. During this time, your child will spend time in the new room a few hours each day to become familiar with the atmosphere, environment, staff, procedures, and routines. An attempt will be made by the Teachers of your child’s new room to schedule a conference and provide you with information about the routine in the next room so you know what to expect. You will also read and sign a family transition form which is a plan for your child to get to know the classroom they are moving into.

Research Projects

From time to time, University faculty or students ask to conduct research projects involving the children at the UNL Children’s Center. It is our policy to notify parents in advance of any such studies, including a description of the research. We will not allow a child to be included in a research project without prior parental permission.

Parent Circle

Parent Circle is a group of parents, teachers and administrators who meet monthly to discuss and plan staff appreciation and upcoming activities and events. This group also provides the Center with feedback regarding current and potential Center wide matters.

Suggestions & Concerns

If you have any suggestions or concerns about any aspect of the operation of the UNL Children’s Center, there are several places you can go. The staff at the UNL Children’s Center is always eager to visit with you about your child’s care. If you do not feel the response is satisfactory, you may visit with the Directors

