



The Acorn School

for early childhood development

Child Care at its Best through Primary Caregiving

**2008/2009
PARENT
HANDBOOK**

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Our Philosophy

Mission Statement

The mission of The Acorn School for Early Childhood Development is to provide high quality, accessible, early care and education programs, and to advocate for higher standards in the field of early childhood.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Acorn School does not discriminate against personnel, clients, potential clients, volunteers, or any person or group on any basis, including race, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, gender, gender variance, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability.

Children with Special Needs

The Acorn School is inclusive and makes every attempt to reasonably accommodate any child based on whatever their special need may be. The Acorn School teachers will help create and implement an individual education plan for any child who needs extra support and attention for developmental growth. Teachers will work closely with parents, and, at the parent's request, with any other professionals who may be involved with the child to recognize and address any special needs that exist or may become evident. Our goal is to work together to create thoughtful approaches that are in the best interest of the child.

Teacher to Child Ratios

Our ratios of teachers to children are lower than the requirements for licensing by the State of Colorado. They are as follows:

<u>Child's Age</u>	<u>Acorn's Max Teacher to Child Ratio</u>	<u>State Max Legal Ratio</u>	<u>Acorn's Max Group Size</u>	<u>State Max Group Size</u>
3 – 12 mo.	1 to 4	1 to 5	8	10
12 – 24 mo.	1 to 4.5	1 to 5	9	10
2 – 3 yrs.	1 to 5	1 to 8	10	16
2.5 – 3.5 yrs.	1 to 5	1 to 8	12	16
3.5 – 5 yrs.	1 to 8	1 to 12	16	24

Primary Caregiving

Our goal is to foster and continue our philosophy of *primary caregiving*, which is the essence of The Acorn School, and childcare at its best. Primary caregiving matches children with teachers who remain with them from toddlerhood through pre-kindergarten. Children enter the program as infants, toddlers, or preschoolers, and are placed in small clusters of eight to ten children. The children shift classes together with their teachers each year, while the oldest cluster graduates to kindergarten. This system emulates a family environment within the context of a childcare center, and allows teachers to fully comprehend the needs and learning patterns of their children.

Scholarships

The goals of The Acorn School Scholarship Program are to provide equal access to high quality child care and early education regardless of a family's ability to pay, and to educate parents seeking information for evaluating and choosing high quality child care.

Eligibility for the Scholarship Program is based on family size, annual income, and need, and is reassessed three times a year. If you would like to apply for the Scholarship Program, please contact the Executive Director. All applications are confidential. (Please be aware that financial assistance is not guaranteed or automatic for those who qualify, as there is often a wait list for available funds.)

Classroom Information

Guiding Behavior

We believe that children act “badly” when they are *feeling* badly. We view acting-out as a call for assistance. When children act out, assistance is given immediately in the form of loving redirection. Messages given are positive. Our staff is trained to handle acting out firmly but with compassion. Setting limits is an essential part of showing children that the world is a safe place. Physical discipline is never used at The Acorn School.

Occasionally, we have a child who experiments with aggressive behavior (such as scratching, hair pulling, etc.) that we take very seriously. The ways in which we handle aggressive behavior vary, as each child’s reason for aggression may be very different. To help solve aggression issues, we work closely with the child at school and ask parents to work with the child at home. If, however, the behavior gets out of control and other children are at risk of being hurt, the child will be sent home immediately after the second incident and remain at home for at least one full day after the incident. Luckily, we rarely have to take such drastic measures and usually aggressive behavior situations are resolved quickly through strong teacher/parent teamwork.

Infant Nap Time

We follow the guidelines for helping infants go to sleep that are set forth by the National Back to Sleep Campaign. These steps include the following:

- 1.) The diaper is checked to make sure that the baby is dry.
- 2.) The baby is swaddled in his/her blanket with just enough left at the top to loosely drape over the baby’s eyes to keep the light out.
- 3.) The teacher sits in a rocker and offers the baby his/her bottle, being sure that the baby’s head is slightly elevated.
- 4.) The baby is burped as needed.
- 5.) When the baby is asleep, he/she is placed in the crib *on his/her back*. Until a child is one year old they are always placed on their back to nap, however, an older infant will occasionally roll onto his/her stomach during his/her nap.
- 6.) The baby monitor is turned on.
- 7.) Babies are checked regularly even when the monitor is on.

Toys from Home/ Food in the Classroom

Please do not allow your child to bring toys (other than transitional and nap toys), candy, or food of any kind into the classroom. It is crucial to check with teachers and/or administrators before bringing any special treats into the classroom since allergies need to be considered before any food is served.

Birthdays

We enjoy celebrating the children’s birthdays and welcome you to come join the party! Please talk to your child’s teachers at least a week in advance if you would like to provide favors or treats for the children. **We frequently have children enrolled who have serious food allergies and it is important to consider this when making food choices.**

Toilet Training

To avoid the trauma of having multiple “accidents” at school, we ask parents to begin potty training at home when their children begin to show readiness. Once success is experienced at home, we will begin working with the children at school. Please let us know if you are trying at home so that we can get ready here. We will, of course, encourage children who are showing interest to try using the potty at school. Our goal is to meet the specific needs of each child, helping create a non-pressured transition into potty training.

Outdoor Play

Please remember that the children usually play outside each day. We ask that you always equip your child with the necessary boots, mittens, coats, hats, rain gear, etc. **every day** (depending on the time of year and the weather.)

Field Trips

Parents are always notified in advance of field trips (except for short, spontaneous excursions by foot, such as a walk to the park or the grocery store, etc.), and a permission slip for parents to sign will be posted in the classroom. When a field trip is scheduled, a Field Trip Form will be completed by the classroom teacher and posted on the office door. This form will indicate the destination, children and teachers in attendance, departure time, and anticipated return time. If a parent arrives with a child after a class has already left for a field trip, please check in with the office. If a parent arrives to pick up a child while a class is on a field trip, the office can help them locate the class to arrange a pick up.

Teachers, classroom assistants, and parent volunteers will accompany and supervise children on field trips. Children will be transported in teacher and/or parent volunteer vehicles. Seat belts and/or car seats will be used at all times. The teachers will check to see that all cars used for transportation have necessary liability/collision insurance. A signed Parent Agreement Form authorizes the center to transport children during field trips. If an emergency arises during on or off site, staff will obtain emergency medical care if warranted. The School has **specific** guidelines for all field trips by car, by bus, and spontaneous, short excursions. Copies of these guidelines are available through the office or from your child's classroom teachers.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are conducted twice a year. Conferences are scheduled during the day, usually at naptime. Parent-teacher conferences are limited to 30 – 45 minute time frames. If more time is needed this can be scheduled at the mutual convenience of parents and teachers. Conference time is used to discuss your child's interests and developmental progress.

TV, Video and Computer Usage

TV and Video

Although we may show an occasional educational video in the classroom, as a general rule we do not allow children to watch television, movies, or cartoons at school.

Video Camera

The Acorn School owns a video camera that is sometimes used to record special events such as the Pre-Kindergarten Graduation and other special events.

Computers

Computers are an asset to the classroom and are used as an additional learning tool to teach basic skills, develop hand-eye coordination, promote critical and analytical thinking, encourage teamwork and pro-social behaviors, practice fine motor skills, and facilitate number and letter recognition. The computers include developmentally appropriate software that is educational in nature, and are used only for short periods of time when they are available as a choice.

Administrative Information

Hours of Operation

The Acorn School's hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Please note that *school does not open until 7:30 a.m.* Teachers may arrive before this time to open their classrooms, but please wait in the parking lot until 7:30 a.m. before entering the building.)

Available Schedules

We offer three options for full day schedules:

- Full-time (Mon. – Fri.): 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
- Mon./Wed./Fri.: 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
- Tues./Thurs.: 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

If a child cannot attend scheduled days for any reason, tuition is still due. Please note that because of the complexity of enrollment, switching days or sharing schedules is not permitted for part-time families, but drop-in care is an option.

We require a one month notice from families who are interested in changing their schedules from full-time to part-time but, please give us as much notice as possible. We will put you on the wait list and do our best to accommodate your request.

Drop-In Care

Drop-in care is available to families when a child who is currently enrolled is absent, leaving a space open for a different child. You may call your child's teachers to check availability for any given day, or let them know in advance of days that you are hoping to drop-in so they can alert you to any availability. Drop-in schedules are as follows:

- **Half days** (7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or 12:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.) **\$49.00**
- **Full days** (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.) **\$78.00**

Please note that 12:30 p.m. is the cut off point in determining half day versus full day drop-in fees. If your child arrives before 12:30 p.m. and stays after 12:30 p.m., the full day fee applies. Children enrolled in part time schedules may not switch regularly attended days for drop-in care. If drop-in care is used, it must be paid for the day it is used. **Please be aware that rates may change on January 1, which marks the beginning of the fiscal year.**

*Our policy for Drop-In Care is that parents pay for drop in the day it is used. Please put payment for drop-in fee in the tuition box the day you drop-in your child. The staff person will highlight the sign-in sheet when a child is dropped off on a day they are normally not scheduled to attend. This sheet is turned in weekly to the office and the Program Director will match the payment to the sign-in sheet.

* effective 10/05

Withdrawal Procedures

Two months notice and full tuition payment for those two months is required when you withdraw your child. If two months notice is given and your account is current, your tuition deposit will be returned in full. If you withdraw before the two-month notice, your deposit will be forfeited. (Our waitlist is confidential, and outgoing families should not get involved with the process of enrolling new families).

The Acorn School is a year-round program with an emphasis on kindergarten readiness. Our program is special because of the long-term relationships your child will make. Please let us know if you do not plan on being here for the duration of the program, or if you are on the wait list for another program. With our long wait list, this helps us plan our departures and arrivals smoothly.

Re-enrollment Procedures

If you wish to re-enroll your child at a later time, we cannot guarantee a place or provide preferential treatment for your child on the wait list.

Termination of Services

Although we strongly believe that by positive communication and working together it is possible to work through any issue, when any of the following circumstances exists it may be necessary for us to ask a family to leave the program.

- 1.) Aggressive Behavior of a Child: If after working closely with a child and his/her family and utilizing other outside resources to help with aggressive behaviors we are not able to find a solution that helps the child deal with his/her behavior in a more appropriate, safe way, child care services will be terminated.
- 2.) Failure to Follow School Policies: If policies stated in the Parent Handbook and Parent Agreement Form are not followed, child care services will be terminated.
- 3.) Failure to Make Tuition Payments & Consistently Late Payments: If tuition is not kept current, child care services will be terminated.
- 4.) Refusal to Communicate and/or Resolve Issues: If parents refuse to resolve issues with school personnel, or treat staff members disrespectfully, child care services will be terminated.
- 5.) Evidence of Drugs or Alcohol: If a parent attempts to pick up a child from school while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, child care services will be terminated.

Closures

Staff development, support, and retention are of primary importance to The Acorn School. After six months of full time employment, our teachers are eligible for paid days off according to the schedule below. Parents who have chosen our program understand that they are responsible for providing care for their children during these times. Full tuition will be charged for weeks in which these holidays occur and also during any vacation days your family takes during the year.

Closure Days for 2008/2009

Labor Day	September 1, 2008
Thanksgiving Break.....	November 27-28, 2008
Winter Break	Dec. 22, 2008-Jan. 2, 2009
Martin Luther King.....	January 19, 2009
Presidents Day	February 16, 2009
Spring Break.....	March 23-27, 2009
Memorial Day.....	May 25, 2009
Independence Day (observed).....	July 3, 2009
Fall Teacher Planning Day	August 14, 2009

Finding Alternate Care

There is an official “babysitter’s club” phone list indicating teachers who are interested in babysitting. This list is located on the bulletin board in the front hallway and in each classroom. We ask that you ask only these teachers to baby-sit. Calling any other teacher at home for any other reason is not appropriate--please respect each teacher’s privacy. Please understand that if a faculty member agrees to sit for your family, The Acorn School is in no way responsible for anything that might occur outside of the The Acorn School. In addition, there are other temporary child care facilities available. There is a list of temporary facilities posted in the front hallway or you may call the office for more specific details. We know that finding alternate child care is difficult, especially during the extended times Acorn is closed. The Acorn School provides a list of willing staff members who are available during those times and distributes that list to parents as soon as it is available to assist with your child care needs. This is not a service of Acorn, but a way that we try to work with families.

Finances

Tuition

Tuition is due the 1st of every month. When the 1st falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or a day that the school is closed, tuition is due the Friday *before* the 1st. A \$20 late fee will apply to payments received after the 5th. If a monthly payment is not made by the end of the month, your child is subject to suspension from Acorn effective the 15th of the following month. Please place your tuition check in the Tuition Box located in the hallway next to the office. We ask that you place your payments in the tuition box personally rather than handing them to a staff member. If you wish to receive a monthly receipt for your tuition, please notify one the Program Director and a receipt will be provided for you each month, in your child's folder.

Rates for January-December 2008

Rates for Infants/Toddlers (0-24 mo.):

- Full Time--Mon-Fri..... \$1,422 per month
- Part Time--Mon/Wed/Fri \$998 per month
- Part Time--Tues/Thurs \$718 per month

Rates for Preschool I/Preschool II (2-3½ yrs.):

- Full Time--Mon-Fri..... \$1,376 per month
- Part Time--Mon/Wed/Fri \$966 per month
- Part Time--Tues/Thurs \$695 per month

Rates for the Mixed Age (3½-5 yrs.):

- Full Time--Mon-Fri..... \$1,314 per month
- Part Time--Mon/Wed/Fri \$900 per month
- Part Time--Tues/Thurs \$680 per month

Tuition rates will be reviewed in the fall and new rates will be set on January 1st (the beginning of the fiscal year). Over the past 3 years, rates have increased between 4%-6%. In cases where siblings are enrolled at Acorn, full tuition is charged for the higher rate, and a 5% discount is applied to the tuition of each child in the family thereafter, regardless of whether the schedule is full or part time. Please be aware that we do not issue tuition refunds. If your child misses a day, tuition is still due.

Financial assistance in the form of scholarship is available to eligible families based on family size, income, and need. We also welcome CCCAP, CLIFF, and GAP participants. Scholarship applications are kept confidential to protect the privacy of our families. To apply for a scholarship, please see the Executive Director.

Fees

- There is a nonrefundable Pre-enrollment application fee of \$50 per family.
- A \$300 deposit will be required to enroll your child. If, at the time of graduation, your account is current, your deposit will be returned in full.
- If you withdraw your child prior to graduation, you must provide at least 2 months notice and have a current account to receive the deposit back in full.
- Deposit refunds will be issued within 30 days of your child's departure.
- Parents often choose to donate all or part of their deposit back to the program as a tax deductible donation and can indicate how they would like their donation to be distributed on the "Deposit Donation Form".
- There is a late fee of \$20 charged for tuition payments received after the 1st of the month. Delinquent accounts will be sent to collections after 30 days.
- The fee for returned checks is \$25.
- If you are late to pick up your child, a fee of \$1.00 per minute, per child will be charged beginning at 5:30 p.m. Emergencies will be taken into account. Please call the school if you have an emergency.

Donations & Fundraising Programs

The Acorn School for Early Childhood Development is a tax exempt, 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization. Our ability to provide high quality child care services to your family is dependent upon the financial support, and in-kind donations of current and previously enrolled families, grandparents, local businesses, foundations, corporations, city, state, and federal government agencies, and community members. All donations are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.

A percentage of The Acorn School's revenue budget each year relies on parent participation in fundraisers such as grocery scrip, personal giving, and workplace giving. You will be asked to support these programs, and we thank you in advance for your support. If you have any questions about Acorn's fundraising needs, or the individual programs listed here, please see the Executive Director.

Daily Reminders

Daily Attendance

Please call the teacher line (303-938-9503) to inform us of absences, late arrivals, and early or late pick-ups.

Daily Sign-in, Sign-out

In each classroom, teachers use the daily sign-in sheets to keep accurate attendance and allow us to know exactly which children are present at any given time throughout the day. It is imperative that parents sign-in and sign-out each day with full signatures.

In addition to using the sign-in sheets to take accurate attendance, we also continually ensure that all children are present and in sight. In the unlikely event that a child ever became lost, all staff members would conduct an immediate school-wide search. If necessary, we would call 911 and the child's parents immediately.

Late pick up/ No pick up/Alternate Pick up

Please arrive early enough to pick up your child and exit the school and surrounding grounds by 5:30 p.m. If a parent arrives after 5:30 p.m., a late fee of \$1 per minute, per child will be charged. If it is unavoidable to be late, please call the teacher line (303-938-9503) to let your teacher know when to expect you. According to State regulations, if a parent fails to pick up a child after closing and the school has not been notified, we are required to contact Social Services. In the event we have not heard from you by 6:15 p.m., and we are unable to contact your authorized pickup contacts, we will contact city emergency services to help determine your whereabouts. If we cannot locate you, we are required by law to contact child protection services.

Please inform the administration and your child's teacher if you need to add someone new to the list of individuals authorized to pick up your child. You must request that the administration add the new name to your child's authorization form. The administration and teachers must be notified *in advance* before a child will be allowed to leave with someone new. We are required to ask all new pick up persons to show proof of identity with a photo ID before we release your child to them. It is equally as important to **remove** the names of individuals from the pick up list who are no longer authorized to pick up your child. We cannot release children to minors under the age of 18.

***Our policy for a late pick-up is: when a family arrives after 5:30 p.m. to pick-up their child/ren, the staff person on duty will highlight the child's name on the sign-in sheet, write their name in the comment section, and put the actual time that the parent is arriving for pick-up. The parent initials the sign-in/out sheet.**
10/3/05

Supplies Your Child Needs

Parents are required to supply the necessary diapers and baby wipes for their child/ren. Also, if your child uses diaper ointment, powder, etc. you must provide the necessary products and clearly label them with your child's first and last name. These items are kept in a stored container in the classroom, out of reach of children. Please do not leave any item with the label "keep out of reach of children" in your child's cubby or diaper bag.

Sunscreen

The Acorn School provides Rocky Mountain Sunscreen for all the children, with permission from their parents. Teachers will apply sunscreen to children throughout the day, as needed, for outdoor play.

Pets

With the exception of classroom pets (goldfish, hamsters, gecko, etc.), animals are not allowed on school property.

Visitors

We love visitors! Parents are always welcome to visit the school. All visitors must sign the visitors' book at the center entrance and must check in with the administration. We encourage parents to visit their children at school and to bring relatives and friends when possible.

Parking

Please increase your awareness of your surroundings as you enter the parking lot. This area gets very busy between 5:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Please respect the 10-minute parking limit during this time frame, as there are not enough parking spaces to accommodate everyone. If you arrive after 5:00 p.m. and would like to spend more than 10 minutes visiting the center, please park on the street. It is also important that drivers park only in designated parking spaces. The staff is committed to leave all parking spaces in the lot for parents between 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Also note that when drivers are backing up it is sometimes difficult for them to see children. We ask that you please take your child by the hand as you exit the building and continue to walk through the parking lot. Thank you for being safe and helping us to make the best of our parking situation.

Health and Safety Information

Health

Your child's health is of utmost importance to us. Upon enrollment, you must complete a health form and have it signed by your pediatrician. It is a child care licensing requirement that all children in child care have updated medical forms every year. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests the following schedule for routine health assessments: At 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, one between 15 and 18 months, and one each year following. Please obtain a medical form from the office before your child's doctor appointment and return the completed form, signed by your child's doctor.

The Acorn School Sick Policy

Please do not bring your child to school when he/she is ill. If your child has a contagious illness, they cannot return to school until they are no longer contagious. When a child becomes ill but does not require immediate medical help, a determination must be made whether the child requires exclusion.

The caregiver/teacher should determine if the:

- Illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
- Illness results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- Illness poses a risk of spread of disease to others.

For example: Your child has an axillary (under the arm) temperature of 100° or more and he or she is acting abnormally sluggish and uninterested in participating in normal daily activities.

If any of these criteria are met, the child will be excluded, regardless of the type of illness.

If your child has exhibited symptoms of being sick, you *must* keep your child at home for a minimum of 24 hours, *even if your pediatrician has given authorization for your child to return.* If your child exhibits sick symptoms at school we will contact you immediately. You must pick your child up within one hour of notification. This helps us keep all of the children healthier.

Please alert your child's teachers of any medications your child has received within the last 12 hours. This information is important to know for The Acorn Staff to provide the best care possible for the children we serve.

**The Acorn School for Early Childhood Development
2008/2009 Parent Handbook**

There are services that provide for temporary child care for mildly ill children if it is not possible for you to remain at home with your child. One option is Take-A-Break 303-665-9741. Pre-registration is required for this service.

Note: Pre-registration is required for these services. The organization listed above is independent of The Acorn School, and Acorn is not responsible for any situation that may occur with these organizations.

Immunizations

Please inform The Program Director when your child has had immunizations so she can update immunization charts. In accordance with Colorado State laws, we may deny enrollment to families whose children are not immunized, however we may enroll children that are not fully immunized.

Administering Medication

Only Certified Medical Administrators or our Child Care Health Consultant may administer medication to children when necessary. All administered medications are documented.

All prescription **AND** over-the-counter medications must come in original container labeled with a pharmacy prescription label which need to include: child's name, name of medicine, time medicine is to be given, dosage, date medicine is to be stopped, licensed health care provider's name, and name and phone number of pharmacy.

All medications must be accompanied by written and signed permission and instructions from the parent **AND** from an authorized health care provider. The Acorn School **CANNOT** administer medication without this authorization.

-Medication authorization forms are available in the office and in your child's classroom.

In the case that medication needs to be given on an ongoing, long-term basis, the authorization and consent forms must be reauthorized on an annual basis. Any changes in the original medication authorization require a new written order by the prescribing practitioner and a change on the prescription label. Verbal orders taken from the licensed prescriber may be accepted only by a licensed registered nurse.

Children are not allowed to bring medications to school unless accompanied by a responsible adult. If a medication is out of date or left over, parents are responsible for picking up the medication. If parents do not pick up the medication, the school is responsible for the disposal of medications according to school policies and procedures. Disposal of medications is documented.

Meals and Nutrition

Food is a priority at The Acorn School, as good nutrition is vital to a child's development. The School provides breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack, all included in tuition. All meals are prepared with love and care by our Chef, who gives full attention to special diet needs and requests.

Our Chef serves meals family-style, and even the youngest children are encouraged to help at mealtimes. The Chef rarely uses packaged or processed foods, and never serves red meat. The Chef tends to use fresh herbs and spices to flavor foods to the children's liking. Children are encouraged to try new foods, and a choice of fruit in season is offered to each classroom daily. Meals are "kid-sized", appealing to the eye, and tasty.

The Acorn School participates in the Colorado Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program. This program provides food reimbursement given that we meet specific nutritional guidelines. As required by CACFP, we will request that you complete an Income Eligibility Form (IEF) each August to maintain our status in the program. Please note that this information is kept confidential.

If you want your child to have breakfast at school, please keep in mind that breakfast is served from 8:30-9:00 a.m.

Menus are posted in the classrooms of all meals and snacks as well as written on a communication board daily.

Breastfeeding and Bottles

If your child is using a bottle, we ask that each day you provide enough bottles to be used for the time he/she is at school. These bottles need to be labeled with your child's first and last name. Please talk to the infant staff about setting up a "back-up" system for times your child is hungrier than could be anticipated.

We welcome mothers who are breastfeeding to come to school to feed their babies. If you are not able to do this, please be aware that we have special guidelines we are required to follow when handling breast milk. Please help us by following these steps:

- 1.) Prepare bottles with breast milk at home, label each bottle with your baby's first and last name along with the date the milk was expressed and place it in the refrigerator door. Breast milk can be used up to 48 hours after it has been *refrigerated*.
- 2.) Breast milk "Back-up" Supply:
 - a) Place breast milk in a bottle or secured bottle liner and store it in the freezer. Please label the bag with your baby's first and last name along with the date the milk was expressed.
 - b) It is helpful if you keep individual servings of breast milk stored together in a larger plastic bag, labeled with your child's first and last name. When you come to school, please place the supply in the freezer. Breast milk can be used up to 6 months after it has been *frozen*.
 - c) Please make sure we always have enough breast milk to satisfy your baby and that it has not passed its expiration date.

Please also be aware that your baby may take more than one attempt to finish a bottle and that we can only heat bottles once, so it is important to make sure your baby always has a supply of bottles.

Special Diet Requirements

Special diet needs and food allergies are given full attention. Your child's needs are communicated thoroughly between the teachers and our Chef. We make a special effort to accommodate the individual diet needs of children for breakfast, lunch, and snack. We provide special foods such as soy, rice, dairy free, gluten free, and egg free products. If your child has special diet requirements for any reason, please clearly communicate these guidelines to your child's teachers and our Chef. Please be sure to keep us updated if any changes arise.

Sanitation

We work closely with the Boulder County Health Department to ensure we are providing a healthy environment for children. Hand washing is our first defense against the spread of illness. Not only does the staff ensure that they are conscious of good hand washing techniques but they also teach the children the appropriate times and methods of hand washing as well.

We sanitize toys throughout the day with a bleach solution designated by the Health Department, with larger equipment being wiped down at the end of each day. Nap mats and sheets are sanitized and laundered on a weekly basis. Crib mattresses and sheets are sanitized and laundered daily.

Emergency Information

Emergency Consent

In the case of any emergency on or off site, by signing the Parent Agreement Form, parents give permission for the school to obtain medical care if warranted. These steps will include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- 1.) Attempt to contact a parent or guardian
- 2.) Attempt to contact the child's physician
- 3.) Attempt to contact the person listed as emergency contact on your child's application form
- 4.) Attempt to contact parents through any of the persons listed on your child's application form

If we cannot contact the child's parents or physician, we will do any of the following:

- 1.) Call another physician or the paramedics
- 2.) Call an ambulance
- 3.) Have the child taken to the emergency room in the company of a staff member

Incident/Accident/Illness Form

If your child is injured or becomes ill at school we document that information and place it in your child's file. Your child's teacher will use an "Incident/Accident/Illness Form" to describe the incident and present it to you for your signature. If you would like a copy of this form, please let your child's teacher know.

Emergency Evacuation

It is crucial that parents record their child's arrival and departure from school each day on the classroom Sign-in sheet. The Sign-in sheets are used for taking accurate attendance, and for the event of an emergency or fire drill. In the event of any emergency (flood, fire, etc.) requiring us to remove the children from the premises, evacuation would take place in the same manner as a fire drill. Teachers would lead the children out of the parking lot, take a left hand turn on the Folsom St. sidewalk, and continue to walk to Parkside Park.

School-wide evacuation drills are held several times a year. Written procedures for school-wide evacuations are available in the office.

Lost Child

If a child becomes lost, all staff on location are notified and then the parents are notified immediately. If necessary, local authorities are contacted.

Serious Weather Conditions/ Closures

In the event of serious weather conditions, the school will typically close in accordance with the Boulder Valley School District.

There are several quick ways to find out if The Acorn School is closed due to inclement weather:

- 1.) Go to our website, www.theacornschool.org, and click on the Weather Closures link on the Home page. You will automatically be linked to the BVSD's home page. There you will be able to find accurate closure information.
- 2.) Call the Boulder Valley School District at 303-447-1010. If schools are closed, the information will be on the outgoing message. The information is available as early as 6:30 a.m., or sometimes the night before, depending on the severity of the forecast.
- 3.) Call The Acorn School teacher line at 303-938-9503 or the main number at 303-938-8233. If school is closed, it will be announced on the outgoing messages.
- 4.) Listen to 850 KOA am radio for a cancellation announcement for Boulder Valley Public Schools.

If school closes before 5:30 p.m. because of bad weather, parents will be contacted to pick up their children. Please be prepared for such an instance by informing individuals listed as emergency contacts that if parents cannot be contacted, they will be called to pick up children. Please be sure emergency contact information is current and correct with your child's teachers.

Hot Weather

In excessively hot weather, we keep the children indoors, engaged in quiet activities. In extreme cases when it is not possible to operate appliances or other equipment we close until operation is possible. Parents will be contacted to pick up children.

Loss of Electricity/Telephone/Water

If the school loses electrical or telephone service, we will close until service can be restored. Parents will be contacted to pick up child/ren.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted once a month. Each class evacuates the building and meets at a designated spot in the parking lot.

Tornado Drills

In the case of a tornado warning, children will be moved to the interior of the building. Tornado drills are performed quarterly in the spring and summer months. During a tornado alert, all children move into interior sections of the school. A disaster kit is stored in the staff restroom for any emergencies.

Disaster Preparedness

In case of any emergency, a disaster kit is located in the staff restroom. Supplies include medical aids, light sources, and a radio.

Communicable Diseases

In the unlikely case that a communicable disease is contracted by a child or staff member, The Acorn School is required to report the instance to the Health Department. However, an effective sick policy and proper hygienic practices can protect members of the school community from such occurrences.

Suspected Child Abuse

The State of Colorado Division of Child Care requires that we inform parents that as child care professionals, we (all Acorn staff members), are mandated reporters, and are **legally required** to report any suspicion of neglect or abuse to the Department of Social Services. The Acorn School and the Department of Social Services will keep all reports, questions, concerns, conversations, and documentation regarding the suspected abuse anonymous and confidential. We are strongly advised by the Department of Social Services **not** to inform parents when a report is being made. **Failure of a mandated reporter to report suspected child abuse or neglect is punishable by a fine and/or a prison term, and the possible revocation of The Acorn School's child care license.**

How to File a Complaint

The Acorn School is required to inform parents how to file a complaint if you suspect that a school or child care center is not following regulations. Licensing violations can be reported to:

The Division of Child Care
The Colorado Department of Human Services
1575 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203-1714
303-866-5958

As with most licensed facilities, we at Acorn make every effort to provide a safe and healthy environment for children. Unfortunately, on very rare occasions, an incident of physical or sexual abuse may occur. If you believe that your child has been abused, you should seek immediate assistance from the staff at Acorn. If you need to file a complaint, you may do so with the local county department of social services at:

Boulder County Department of Social Services
3400 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80304
303-441-1240

Release of a Child

Parents must list, in writing, the individuals who are authorized to pick up their child/ren with the office. A copy of the list is kept in the classroom file. Authorized pick-up individuals must be prepared to show proof of identity with a **photo ID**. School personnel will not release a child to anyone without **prior written** parent authorization and **proper ID**.

If someone is listed in your child's file as "Unauthorized to Pick-Up" and attempts to do so, staff members will use the following guidelines (not necessarily in this order):

- 1.) Ask person to speak with administrator on duty.
- 2.) Call parent(s).
- 3.) Call 911.
- 4.) Take child as far away from person attempting to pick up as possible.

If a person **threatens harm**, we are required to release the child and call 911. **If the person attempting pick-up is a legal parent or guardian, we are required to release the child unless we have a copy of a court order stating otherwise.**

Drugs and Alcohol

If school personnel suspect that a parent or guardian is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol when picking up a child, The Acorn School will notify the Local Law Enforcement.

Change of Address/Phone Numbers

If, at any time, your address or any phone numbers change, **please inform the administration and your child's teachers immediately.** There is a Change of Information Form available in the office and in your child's classroom, which you can fill out to inform us of such changes. It is extremely important for both teachers and the office to have your current information to be able to reach you at all times.

Leadership and Governance

Roles and Responsibilities of the Staff, the Board of Directors, and the Parents In Partnership (PIP) Committee

From time to time questions come up about the differing roles of the Staff, the Board of Directors, and the Parents In Partnership group at The Acorn School. While there is a certain amount of overlap in every organization, the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers are actually quite distinct.

As a general rule of thumb in non-profit organizations, boards primarily govern and staff primarily manages. The Board of Directors provides counsel to management, and does not get involved in the day-to-day affairs of the organization. The Board's duties are very distinct from those of the Executive Director. Board Members have fiduciary responsibilities, and are required to act within their authority primarily for the benefit of The Acorn School. The Board selects and works with the Executive Director, amending by-laws, approving the annual budget and long term strategic plans, and while the E.D. may conceive, develop, and implement the School's plan, the Board approves and monitors the process and provides valuable advice, guidance, and assistance.

The Executive Director's duties are distinct from the Program Director. The Executive Director is responsible for the overall management of the school including fiscal management and control, financial development, licensing, quality assurance, accreditation, and supervision of the Program Director and the Bookkeeper. The E.D. develops and manages the annual budget and ensures the maintenance of current financial reports, cash flow, accounts payables, and payroll summaries. The E.D. oversees the financial assistance program and the grants program, including the actual grant writing. The E.D. is responsible for all aspects of State of Colorado child care licensing, and State of Colorado business practices for non-profits. The Executive Director provides key leadership for all quality assurance measures such as staff and parent satisfaction surveys, ITERS and ECERS evaluations, NAEYC accreditation, and annual health, fire, and safety inspections. The E.D. hires, supervises, advises, sets goals with, and conducts the annual performance appraisal for the Program Director. The E.D works closely with the Board of Directors on board development, recruitment, and training. The Executive Director is the School's liaison and representative to the Early Childhood Community of Boulder County, staying abreast of changes in regulations, legislation, and serving on committees and groups that impact the field of Early Childhood Education. The E.D. is also the primary contact person for foundation, corporation, and private giving, and is the school's primary representative to Foothills United Way.

The Program Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization including hiring, training, scheduling, supervising and reviewing teachers, meeting enrollment goals and processing classroom intake, maintaining the wait list, and conducting monthly tours and new family and new staff orientation. The Program Director plans staff meetings, teacher planning days, and special events. The P.D. oversees all aspects of classroom design and management, ensures the use of *The Creative Curriculum*, and provides teachers with resources and materials for implementing curriculum. The Program Director supervises the Chef and the Custodian, and is responsible for preventive maintenance and minor repairs to the facility.

The role and mission of the Parent In Partnership Committee is to enhance the partnership between parents, administrators, and teachers through constructive communication and teamwork. PIP volunteers support The Acorn School through activities such as building and grounds improvement, donations, special events, fundraisers, public relations and promotion, and National Teacher Appreciation Week. Unlike the Board of Directors, the PIP has no legal responsibility for the School. The PIP supports and advises; it does not govern, monitor, or supervise the organization or its staff.

Communication and Participation

Communication between Parents and Staff

Communication between parents and teachers is critical to ensure that your child is receiving the highest quality experience at The Acorn School that is possible. Parents are asked to have daily “check-ins” with their child’s primary caregivers at both drop-off and pick-up times. Parents are asked to read and familiarize themselves with the policies listed in the Parent Handbook before enrolling their child. The teachers and administrators also communicate with parents in the following ways:

- 1.) flyers on doors and sign-in sheets
- 2.) notes in your child’s cubby or folder
- 3.) dry erase boards in each classroom listing daily activities
- 4.) nap, potty and meal record charts in each classroom
- 5.) parent communication boards in each classroom
- 6.) children’s journals
- 7.) parent communication boards in the hall outside the office
- 8.) Acorn’s bi-monthly newsletters
- 9.) annual parent questionnaires
- 10.) administrative updates at PIP meetings, and minutes of PIP meetings
- 11.) administrative updates in the form of letters to parents
- 12.) school-wide email announcements

Personal Information

If it feels comfortable to you, please let us know about issues at home that would help us understand your child’s behavior at school and, thus, better meet their needs.

Problem Solving

Clear communication is essential for healthy relationships and role modeling for children. We teach the children conflict resolution and communication skills beginning at a very young age. We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of role-modeling these skills for them. Even though it is sometimes difficult to voice concerns, school personnel are always available for parents and encourage them to bring problems to our attention right away. Any concerns that involve a teacher must be addressed with that teacher immediately or should be brought to the attention of the Program Director. Any concerns regarding administrative issues must be brought to the administration.

Procedures for Resolving Problems, Issues or Concerns Involving Parents

If a problem arises involving a parent or parents, the teachers and administration will use, but are not limited to, the following techniques:

- 1.) The child’s teacher/s will voice the concern with the individual/s involved and discuss a solution.
- 2.) The child’s teacher/s will voice the concern with the Program Director to receive support and feedback from the Program Director.
- 3.) The Program Director will contact the parent/s and voice the concern, discussing options for solving the problem.
- 4.) The Program Director will set up a meeting between the individuals involved to discuss the problem and possible solutions.
- 5.) After meeting with parents, the Program Director will send written notice to the child’s parents and teachers describing the problem and listing the requested behavior that will resolve the problem.
- 6.) The Program Director will discuss the problem with the Executive Director.
- 7.) The Executive Director will meet with the parties involved.
- 8.) The Executive Director will inform the Board of Directors of the issue and invite them to participate in the form of giving advice and counsel.
- 9.) If a mutually acceptable solution cannot be reached, the Executive Director reserves the right to request that a family withdraw their child/ren.

Family Participation

We are a non-profit organization with a strong and enthusiastic volunteer base. Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in a wide variety of activities and committees. Please feel free to bring your time and talents to our program! Our Parent Volunteer form describes many of the ways that parents can volunteer their time and energy. Your in-kind donations of materials, equipment, and class supplies make a world of difference, as do your financial contributions. One of the reasons this school is a success is because of the high level of parent participation and teamwork between parents and staff. Please see the Parents in Partnership Policy for more details. We appreciate all of your support!

We also encourage families to come together at our various social events and gatherings throughout the year. These are great opportunities to get to know your Acorn School Community better.

Parents In Partnership Committee

The Acorn School Parent In Partnership Committee (PIP) was formed to help facilitate communication between parents and the teachers and staff at the school. The PIP's mission statement is as follows:

"The mission of The Acorn School PIP is to enhance the partnership between parents, administrators, Board Members, and educators at the school through constructive communication and team work. The goal of the partnership is to meet the needs of all parties while preserving the high quality of child education."

All parents are enthusiastically welcome to attend PIP meetings, held every other month throughout the year. For more information on PIP, please see the Executive Director, the PIP Chairs, or your child's "Room Parent".

A Final Word

We are so happy that you have made the choice to enroll your child The Acorn School for Early Childhood Development. Please take the time to get to know all of us, as we are here to serve you and your children. Thank you for the honor of entrusting your children to our care.