



Make Learning & Play a Part of Your Child's Day

Welcome to Kids Garden! We are committed to providing a safe, clean, captivating, and environmentally friendly space for children and families of West University and the Greater Houston area.

Parents can rely on Kids Garden's flexible, hourly drop-in concept and the superior quality of our enrichment classes designed for every child's development needs. Our diverse curriculum and interactive programs encourage intellectual curiosity and provide children with amazing opportunities for social, physical and cognitive development. We strive to make each visit a new and positive learning experience for your children.

Our West U. location is conveniently located within walking distance of Whole Foods Market, boutique fitness centers, medical services, dining and shopping, so busy parents may enjoy some time to themselves.

Childcare License

Kids Garden has been licensed by the State of Texas. Our learning center meets or exceeds all state standards pertaining to building code, classroom equipment, staff ratios, safety and health procedures, nutrition, curriculum and play equipment. All pertinent information is posted inside the center, including: our state license, applicable regulations, communicable disease chart, parental access notice, fire and severe weather evacuation notices, and management staff identification. Our center carries liability insurance to ensure another level of professional care for you and your children. Kids Garden management is required to report to the appropriate state agenc(ies) suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation. Parent concerns or complaints regarding the operation or policies of the center may be addressed to Kids Garden.

Our Philosophy - Safety First, Healthy Always

Kids Garden is a creative arts learning center, based on Montessori and Reggio Emilia teaching methodologies, where children ages 12 months (and walking) to 12 years are free to explore, interact, and create in a fun and natural way, while parents get that much needed break.

Kids Garden has created the best possible environment for your children. Our unique center is Houston's first and only eco-friendly and non-toxic learning environment. Every aspect of the space, operation, and programming was carefully designed for health and safety, first and foremost:

- No VOC or lead paint used during the creation of our space
- Splinter-free, chemical-free Northern White Cedar indoor playscape
- Large selection of natural wood toys
- Non-toxic art supplies and use of upcycled materials for creative arts projects
- Organic snacks and healthy food options (Peanut-free facility)
- Shoe free facility
- Access Security Keypads and Security Monitoring
- Open floor plan allows teachers to see children in all working centers at all times
- Smoke free facility
- Kid-friendly and environmentally-friendly cleaning products
- CPR/First Aid trained staff

Providing a safe environment for your child is extremely important to us. We promote safety rules and regulations to minimize accidents; however, should a serious accident occur, parents will be notified immediately. The Childcare Director will assess each accident to decide if parents should be notified by phone, or not. An incident report will be written for all accidents and provided to parents.

Operational Policies & Procedures

This handbook will familiarize you with Kids Garden policies and procedures. We have included most, if not all, of the critical components of our operation and facility. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact us.

Registration:

Every child must be registered before entering the learning center. Parents are responsible for reviewing, completing, and signing all State required paperwork for admission and our Kids Garden Client Agreement. We must have these forms signed and on file prior to your child's enrollment in the Center.

Admission information includes detailed information about your child's health, medical needs, immunizations, allergies or dietary restrictions to ensure the safety of all our children. If your child(ren) is not already enrolled in a pre-kindergarten or school away from Kids Garden, the Admission Form MUST be signed by a physician. If you have any additional medical concerns, please inform our Director. Additionally, all emergency contact numbers and the names of individuals that are authorized to pick up your child are also required. All records of children including name, address, and family information are kept confidential and secure in our software system. These records are only accessible to the Kids Garden Director to ensure the privacy and safety of your children. Any updates to our policies will be communicated to parents via our monthly e-newsletter and in the center.

Please allow extra time during your first visit to complete all required paperwork and photo identification checks. To save time, you can download all registration forms from our [website](#) and bring completed forms with you on your first visit. Please make sure to include your current email address on all registration paperwork, as any new policy changes and center updates are shared in our monthly newsletter.

Upon your first visit, there is a \$40 registration fee per family. This fee covers the processing of paperwork for each family. Optional Kids Garden membership registration is a \$100 annual fee, and \$25 for each additional sibling. Members have access to the

best hourly rates and early registration to special events. Sign up for emails for more information about upcoming seasonal camps, parents night out, and other special promotions.

Hours of Operation*:

Monday - Friday: 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Saturday: 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Sunday: Private Birthday Parties (by appointment only)

*We are closed to observe the following holidays:

New Year's Day, Easter Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Hourly Rates*:

	Non-Member	Member
1st Child:	\$17	\$13
Each Sibling:	\$12	\$9

**Toddlers under the age of 2 are an additional \$1.00 per hour.*

Drop-Off / Pick-Up Procedures

Kids Garden provides a check-in area to allow for safe and easy drop-off and pick-up during inclement weather. Please DO NOT leave your car unattended for any length of time. You should always accompany your child into and out of the center, but if you wish to stop and talk with the teacher or management, please use the Kids Garden designated parking spaces in front of the center..

Kids Garden uses a detailed software system to manage every drop-off and pick-up. Each child is checked into the center when they enter and checked out when they leave for the day. Counts and roles are done throughout the day and recorded on our software

and white boards throughout the centers to ensure each child's safety. We will release a child only to the parent or guardian who enrolled the child, or to persons specifically authorized by the parents or guardian. All authorized adults must be submitted to the family's file account on our system. Both parents will have free and full access to the child unless we have a court order that stipulates otherwise.

Drop-Off:

- Upon your first visit, informational registration paperwork **MUST** be completed. Your child will be checked in by a Kids Garden staff member.
- After your first visit we will use your name and profile information to access your family account. Please sign in as well at the front counter.
- For safety and cleanliness, no shoes are allowed and socks must be worn inside the play space.
- Storage cubbies are provided in our welcome area for shoes, coats, and any other items that require safekeeping. Please put these items in a cubby prior to entering the play space.
- Once checked in, a Kids Garden staff member will assist your child into the play space. Our software tracks the children's exact check in and check out time by the minute; therefore, we do not round up or down on the time spent within the learning center.
- Our staff accounts for the presence of each child in the center as they enter and exit the center using our software, white boards, current child list for the class and hour, as well as verbal communication with staff members should the activities be differentiated by age or ability
- Children will wash hands upon entering the space, before meals and free play.
- Parents are to be in the immediate vicinity and immediately available while children are participating in classes at Kids Garden.

Pick-Up:

- A child will only be released to a custodial parent or guardian, or designated emergency contacts named on the registration form. In situations of custody agreements, Kids Garden will follow court ordered documents. Our secure pick-up policy requires any and all authorized persons to show valid photo

identification for child pick-up. Should a family like to add a new authorized adult for the release of children it must be done in person or in writing so that our system may be updated.

- If a different person will be picking up your child, you will need to notify us at the time of drop-off, establish an appropriate “code” word for release of the child, and identifications will be required. Parents are to be immediately available to Kids Garden and our staff.
- Telephone authorization to drop off/release a child to someone who does not usually pick up the child will be accepted ONLY if prior written authorization has come from the custodial parent or legal guardian.
- During checkout you will pay for the exact amount of minutes used while enjoying the learning center.
- A staff member will assist your child out of the play space.

Late Child Pick-Up:

Please note that once the center closes (after regular operating hours), there is a \$1.00 penalty for every minute you are late. Fees will be collected at that time. Besides being respectful to the children, it is important to the staff as well. They have their schedules and personal lives to live. When parents are late, not only do they have to work overtime, but we have to pay them overtime as well. We want to provide our children and families with happy, warm, and energetic teachers, not tired and unhappy ones. Thank you for your cooperation.

Visitor's Policy:

Kids Garden monitors all visitors entering the facility. Any and all visitors entering the center must sign the visitors log book and leave a valid picture identification at the front desk. Visitors may be asked to return at another time based on activities within the center and capacity of children.

Parent/Child Interaction:

Parents are welcome to visit the Center during the Center's hours of operation to observe their children from the check-in area. To observe the Center's operation and

program activities, we ask that you coordinate with the Childcare Director to secure prior approval.

Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care. A seating area is available in front of the center and in our toddler area for comfortable seating and privacy.

Possessions:

We ask that children leave items in cubbies in the welcome area. For safety and health reasons we do not allow any outside toys or electronics in our learning center. Kids Garden has dedicated extensive research to sourcing the best manipulatives and products for our eco-friendly center. Our center is a time for new discoveries, and we encourage children to try new activities, classes, and programs. For young children we do allow a soft blanket or small comfort item while spending time at Kids Garden. Please label all items with your child's name. Kids Garden will not be responsible for clothing or other personal belongings brought to the play space. Lost and found items will be donated to Goodwill if not claimed within three weeks.

Children in Diapers:

- Children should arrive in a clean and dry diaper.
- For children in diapers we ask that you supply us with at least 4 extra diapers and wipes for your child, so we can change appropriately.
- There will be a \$1.00 charge for any diapers provided by Kids Garden.
- Kids Garden supports cloth diapering. We do ask that you supply a wet/dry bag for used diapers.
- We have diaper checks and changes scheduled throughout the day, however our staff is trained to conduct spot checks and pay attention to individual child signs.
- Please advise staff of any children that are potty training. Please also bring extra clothes for your child.

Our Staff

With the belief that children are strongly influenced by the adults they interact with in their early years, we not only hire well experienced educators, but also warm, loving, and caring individuals. To support the experience, education, and profession of our teachers, we ask that our families address them as Miss and Mrs. We thank you for your reinforcement of this practice.

Kids Garden has an extensive training process. Therefore we do choose to provisionally employ staff while complying with Texas laws and regulations. This allows for extra time during our training process for new staff to observe and learn while being in the provisional category. All staff members are CPR and First Aid Certified.

Chain of Concern:

When you have a concern, question, or comment, you should reach your center director as your first resource. They are usually able to answer questions, not only about classroom procedure, but also more general questions about child development.

Emergency and Accident Policies

Our center is equipped with modern safety features for everyone's protection. It is protected with fire detection and emergency exit equipment, security system, child-proof doors/cabinets, and entry/exit access control points to alert staff and control visitors entering or exiting the center.

The following are policies for various emergencies (low probability events, however we are properly prepared):

- Accident: In the event of an injury, Kids Garden is equipped with a fully-stocked first-aid kit. Instructions from the poison control center or a physician will be followed when providing first aid procedures or administering emergency medications.
 - a. 911 is called if further action is necessary. Parents will be contacted immediately. If a parent can not make it to the center prior to the

transport of a child by the ambulance, a staff member will accompany the child. All children will be transported to Texas Children's Hospital, unless emergency officials deem another location more appropriate.

- b. Incident/Injury Reports* will be completed and signed by the staff member in charge, if any of the following occur:
- An illness, injury or accident that requires a first-aid treatment
 - Head injuries
 - Out of ordinary event that jeopardizes the safety of children or staff
 - Emergency transporting

**All incident/injury reports will be provided to the parent or guardian, then signed and kept on file.*

- Fire: The staff will evacuate the building with all the children holding on to our fire rope. Attendance will be taken inside and outside (a safe distance from the building).
- Tornado/Earthquake: The staff will calmly lead children to the back of the play center away from window glass and away from large objects.
- Safety Hazard: The staff will call the fire department and, if needed, evacuate the building with the children. Attendance will be taken inside and outside (a safe distance from the building).

Staff training is completed on all emergency preparedness and evacuation plans upon orientation and preliminary employment. Furthermore, monthly drills take place to keep everyone up to date on procedures. Colored Emergency Preparedness cards are located at the check-in counter for staff reference and guidance.

**Kids Garden, the center, the staff, and its owner are not responsible for any physician, hospital or medically related bills resulting in a visit from any occurrences, accidents, illnesses or injuries that might have occurred in the learning center.*

Inclement Weather:

For severe weather or emergency evacuation of the building, emergency plans are posted in the check-in area and each room. Kids Garden usually follows Houston ISD's

schedule for school closings. Closure will be determined at the discretion of the Childcare Director. Parents will be notified as soon as possible of any closing of the center.

Emergency Medical Plan:

In the event of a medical emergency, the staff will:

1. Make every attempt to contact the parent.
2. If CPR or First Aid is necessary, trained staff will administer treatment.
3. If needed, an ambulance will be called to the center.
4. A Kids Garden staff member will remain with your child until the parent arrives.
5. The parent is responsible for all medical costs for injury or illness. All accidents will be reported to the parents on an incident report requiring the parent's signature. A copy will be stored in your child's file.

Disaster Plan:

In the event of a disaster that required the evacuation of the center, the following steps will be taken:

1. Public Safety (Fire or Police) would be called to assist staff with crowd control.
2. Parents would be called immediately to pick-up their child.
3. In the event of an immediate emergency evacuation, we will walk to the following locations (UPS Store; 6711 Stella Link Rd, Houston, TX 77005) or using EMT's, should that be necessary.

We will remain with your child until they can be picked up. Teachers train on all policies at the orientation when starting employment with Kids Garden. Should medical attention be needed, EMTs will transport to Texas Children's Hospital.

Sick Children and Illness

Kids Garden is a childcare service for well children. Sick children need rest and comfort from their own homes. If children are sick with colds, flu, fever, chicken pox or other contagious illnesses, they are not to be admitted into the center. A runny nose with colored discharge and a cough with mucus secretion can spread bacterial and viral

infections. Please do not expose our staff or other children to your sick child. Having a sick child is hard enough. Please do not create more sick children within the learning center. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

If your child exhibits a change in mood or behavior after check-in, a health screening may be conducted by our staff to determine if your child is ill. The health screening may include a visual or physical assessment of the child and/or the use of a thermometer to reveal the child's temperature.

If children develop any of the following signs or symptoms, parents will be called immediately to pick up their child and must arrive within 30 minutes of the phone call. If the parent or guardian is unable to pick up the child, an authorized person on the child's emergency card will be contacted. When a child is ill, they need a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care. We are not licensed to provide get-well care, therefore, ill children must be excluded from our care. **The following conditions are causes for exclusion from the Center:**

- Diarrhea or bloody stools
- Vomiting
- Earache, irritability or confusion
- Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, continuous coughing
- Pink-eye, eye infections or conjunctivitis
- Severe cough involving whooping or redness in face
- Colored runny nose, draining eyes or ears
- Fever or elevated temperature - Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100°F or higher taken under the arm, 101°F taken orally (a child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to Kids Garden, that means the child is fever free without the aid of fever reducing substance)
- Lice, scabies, other parasitic infestations, rash, untreated infected skin patches or frequent scratching of the body that resemble childhood diseases
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic
- Treatment and cessation of fever
- Chickenpox/shingles, until all sores have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)

- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling
- Pertussis, until 5 days of antibiotics
- Hepatitis A virus, until after 1 week after onset of illness
- Measles, until 4 days of onset of rash
- Rubella, until 6 days after onset of rash

For sanitary practices, we have hand sinks throughout the center and ask that all children wash hands before classes, meals or free play.

Child Return after Illness Policy:

- Children must be symptom free for 24 hours, unless otherwise stated.
 - A doctor's note is required for all returns before 24 hours. We do not care for mildly ill children.
- Children have been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours, unless otherwise stated.

Medications:

Kids Garden does not administer any regular medication to children in the center during your child's stay. If your child does happen to be on a medication schedule, please plan his/her time at Kids Garden accordingly. Also please notify the staff if your child has any symptoms that might occur, so you may be contacted immediately.

We will administer life saving medications, such as an EpiPen or Inhaler for children with asthma or allergic reactions. EpiPens and Inhalers must be labeled with the child's name, and before your child is admitted to Kids Garden, a release form must be signed by you and your physician. The medication must be in its original container, clearly indicating the child's name, physician's name, and the prescribed dosage along with the proper working equipment.

The staff will NOT apply sunscreen, sun lotion, or any insect repellent to the children unless given a doctor's order..

Exceptions: According to Texas DFPS Rule § 746.3803 (d) of Minimum Standards for Childcare Centers, parent authorization is NOT required to administer medication to a

child in a medical emergency to prevent the death or serious bodily injury of the child, provided that staff administer the medication as prescribed, directed, or intended.

COVID Policies

Attendance

Children and Staff who are not displaying coronavirus symptoms are welcome to attend Kids Garden. If a parent has reason to believe their child(ren) is clinically immunocompromised, please inform the Center Director immediately and follow the advice of your pediatrician.

If your child tests positive for COVID, or is forced to isolate due to contact tracing, they should isolate for 5 days and if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), follow that by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. OR produce a negative test result from a recognized laboratory or clinic

Check-In and Pick-Up:

Please adhere to social distancing while waiting to check-in or pick-up. Prior to parents checking-in, a trained staff member may take the temperature of their child(ren) and will ask parents the following questions:

- *Do you live with anyone or have you had close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 5 days?*
- *Do you or anyone in your household have a fever, cough and/or shortness of breath?*
- *Do you or your child(ren) have any other signs of communicable illness such as a cold or flu?*

Children and staff will be required to wash their hands immediately upon entering the building and scheduled times throughout the day. When children are dropped-off, they

will be escorted into the nearest sink where their hands will be washed prior to being brought to their classroom/child care area.

Healthy & Clean Environment:

- Trained Staff will follow a detailed cleaning schedule to disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, light switches, faucets and toilets, toys and games that children play regularly
- Staff will have access to anti-bacterial hand sanitizers and disposable gloves and use them as needed
- We will not share arts and crafts materials, toys, and staff equipment, unless sharing is necessary, and if so, items will be sanitized between use
- Families are encouraged not to bring items from home into the Center; only labeled water bottles are allowed inside during visits.
- Staff will wash/scrub their hands and children's hands a minimum of hourly (noted by the CDC as the most effective preventive measure)
- Disposable single use hand towels and/or wipes will be used when drying hands and cleaning surfaces
- Hand sanitizer, although inferior to handwashing, will be made available at the front desk and throughout the center out of reach of children
- We will perform an enhanced deep cleaning every night in all areas, on all touched surfaces
- No center tours will be given until further notice to reduce the number of visitors in the building
- All Visitors entering the premises may have their temperature checked, regardless of length of stay. Any person with a temperature >100.4 will not be allowed to enter. Where visits are required, visitors will be provided a mask and shoe covers to enter the facility.

Child Hygiene & Wellness:

- Staff will receive education on COVID-19 symptoms as well as preventive measures
- Children who start to experience symptoms of respiratory illness, including a fever of >100.4 while at child care, will be isolated from other children until they can be picked up

Meal Preparation & Service:

- All surfaces will be disinfected before meal preparation and feedings using CDC- or EPA-approved products
- All staff will wash hands before and after meal preparation and feeding
- Staff members
- Every snack and meal will be plated on disposable plateware and served by staff, who must wear gloves when handling any food

Staff Hygiene & Wellness:

- Staff will wear masks while on premises
- All staff will receive additional training on infection control and workplace disinfection
- Staff will check their temperature at the beginning of each shift and notify their supervisor if >100.4 as well as self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and notify their supervisor if any develop (fever or respiratory symptoms)
- Staff will not be allowed to work if they are feeling ill or experiencing respiratory symptoms
- Staff will wash their hands immediately upon entering the program and immediately prior to leaving
- Staff will not share their phone, devices or meal or utensils with one another or children

- Staff members and parents will maintain physical distancing as much as possible during drop-off and pick-up; Our contactless credit card reader minimizes exchange of material during transactions

Payments & Refunds:

- As long as Kids Garden is open and your child is in attendance, payments will be due in full (This includes if we are only accepting reservations for set hour blocks)
- If your child's is forced to isolate as result contact tracing back to a confirmed positive case within their program, any prepaid fees for the isolation period will be credited for use on a future date; Kids Garden allows six week make-up period from the date your child can return. During this time, we cannot offer or extend the makeup deadline any further, as we do all we can to honor each child's reserved spot
- If your child(ren) are forced to isolate due to a family member or source outside of Kids Garden is experiencing symptoms or has tested positive, Kids Garden will not reimburse or credit time back to you.
- If you choose to pull your child out and not pay, there is no guaranteed spot upon a request to return
- If you are laid off or are part of a reduction in staffing and need assistance with childcare, please reach out to your local child care agency, as many are issuing vouchers to help families during this time

Communication:

- If the current situation changes and it becomes necessary to update our procedures or close our program temporarily, we will notify families by email
- You may follow our social media page for late-breaking program updates as well as hours of operation

Immunization Requirements for Children

Immunizations are required for all children attending childcare in the state of Texas. You must show proof of the appropriate immunizations BEFORE your child can attend the center. We must have a written plan of action signed by your child's physician, if the immunizations are not meeting the Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for childcare facilities.

Exceptions: Exceptions for immunization requirements must meet criteria specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services rules in 25 TAC§ 97.62 (relating to Exclusions from Compliance). You must contact the local health department to find out what you must provide to us in lieu of the immunization record.

All children must have a Health Statement signed by their physician and submitted within the first seven (7) days of enrollment. Every child four (4) years of age or older must have a vision and hearing screening signed by their physician to be in care. TB testing is not required by Harris County for children to attend child care.

Allergies:

Many children have allergies, of which some can be very serious. It is the responsibility of the parent and/or guardian to inform our staff of any allergies. Children with seasonal allergies must have a Doctor's statement on file. If the allergies persist to the point of extreme coughing, respiratory distress, or head congestion, the Director will call the parent to pick up their child.

Parents of children with life-threatening allergies to foods or insects should provide the Director and all the child's teachers during the day a note for their file explaining the symptoms and treatment procedures related to the particular allergy.

In order to keep all children in our space healthy and safe we are a Peanut-Free facility. Please do not bring peanuts and or peanut products (granola bars, candy, etc. containing peanuts) into Kids Garden.

Naps and Rest:

Kids Garden is a drop-in, learning center, where children only come for a few hours per visit. We do not offer naps; however, if your child seems tired and needs to rest, we have soft pillows and quiet areas for him/her to relax.

For children staying later on Saturday evenings for our Parents Night Out program, they may bring their own sheet and or blanket for quiet time and/or movie time. Children may also bring or wear sleepwear to transition more easily once home.

Confidentiality of Records

Children's records are accessible only to the child's parent or legal guardian, Kids Garden Director, and authorized employees of the Texas Department of Health and Human Services.

Kids Garden staff records are accessible only to that staff member, the Director, and authorized employees of the Texas Department of Health and Human Services.

All files will be stored in our locked director's office. All employees have read the Kids Garden Employee Manual and signed statements of understanding. Staff are expected to share information concerning a child with caregivers who have contact with the children, Kids Garden management, and the child's parents only. Staff should not share information concerning a child with other parents or visitors.

License & Reports

You may ask the Director to show you the most up-to-date copy of Minimum Standards for this Childcare Center; these are also available on the web at www.dfps.state.tx.us or your local Childcare Licensing Office.

Parents are entitled to see the following information:

- The most recent DFPS Inspection/Investigation Report (compliance information is also available on the web at www.dfps.state.tx.us or your local Childcare Licensing Office)
- Kids Garden Operational Policies and Procedures (hand book)

Keeping Children Safe

Reporting Abuse or Neglect:

Texas Law requires caregivers to report suspected child abuse or neglect. When it appears that a child is being seriously neglected or abused, the Center's Director will notify:

- Texas Department of Health and Human Services
- Local law enforcement officials
- Call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 to make confidential reports.

Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a crime. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against caregivers who make reports in good faith. These are also available on the web at www.dfps.state.tx.us or your local Childcare Licensing Office at 713-287-3238.

The Texas Family Code (sections §34.07) states, failure to report: (A) A person commits an offense if the person has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be further adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to report it, in accordance with Section §34.02 of the code, (B) An offense Under this Section is a "Class B" Misdemeanor.

Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect of Children:

Employees are required to obtain a minimum of 24 clock hours of training each year relevant to the age of the children for whom the caregiver provides care. At least one clock hour of annual training must focus on prevention, recognition, and reporting of child abuse and neglect, in accordance with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Rule §746.1309 of Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers.

Resources are available at: www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Reporting/resources.asp for employees and parents on increasing awareness and prevention of issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including warning signs that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect.

Kids Garden will work with community organizations to provide guidance and contact information for parents/caregivers on preventing and reporting abuse or neglect.

Gang-Free Zone:

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a childcare center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Snacks & Meals

All snacks and meals served at Kids Garden are balanced and nutritious, so that your children can maintain and learn healthy eating habits. Kids Garden offers organic snacks for \$3.00 at scheduled times throughout the day. Lunch is offered daily for \$6.00 between 12:00 - 1:00 PM, and dinner is served between 6:00 - 7:00 PM on Saturday evenings during the Parents Night Out program. If your child is here during our meal hours and is hungry, we will provide the meal at cost.

Vegetarian options are available, upon request. We do ask that you notify us during drop-off as we place our orders for these requests at least 1 hour prior to serving. If your child has a food allergy, please let us know!

Clothes & Shoes

Children should come to Kids Garden wearing clothes that can get dirty or stained. Aprons may be used, but don't always prevent clothes from becoming soiled. Our creative space offers children lots of different mediums to experiment with, including: paints, ink, sand/mud, shaving cream, etc. It is through these interactions and

experiences that children learn about textures, colors, density, mass, and volume. Children should wear comfortable play clothes that don't inhibit them from these valuable experiences. Children need to feel free to experience "messy" activities without having to worry about "staying clean".

Physical Activity

More and more evidence shows that children who are active tend to have fewer behavioral and disciplinary problems, perform better in school, and have longer attention spans in class.

Physical activity also helps children:

- Develop motor skills and build strength, flexibility and endurance
- Improve social skills and brain development
- Develop and maintain strong bones
- Decrease stress and depression
- Develop good sleep habits
- Build confidence
- Have less behavioral and disciplinary problems
- Maintain a healthy weight

Our daily schedule, available on our website and posted in the learning center, includes a balance of active and quiet play, incorporating both structured group exercises and unstructured free play and activities. At a minimum, our schedule includes 60+ minutes of active, free play on our indoor playscape.

Behavior and Discipline

We strive to help children learn how to collaborate and socialize effectively with others and how to be a successful part of our world. Our disciplinary methods involve redirecting, distraction and verbal problem-solving to affirm self-esteem, even when behavior is unacceptable. Nurturing, listening and supportive care are the most effective means of minimizing the need for discipline. Interactions with children are authentic,

caring and respectful. We DO NOT allow corporal punishment. All families sign a facility agreement upon registration to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of our behavior and discipline policies.

Kids Garden's open floorplan and creative environment is designed to promote positive and productive interactions; therefore, minimizing potential behavioral problems. Kids Garden staff are trained to be consistent with all children, as children function best when there is the safety of consistent rules. When limits are placed, it is for the safety of all children in the center.

Kids Garden Guidelines:

- Shoe-free Zone- Socks welcome to roam
- No throwing toys
- Use inside voices
- Take turns and share with friends
- Feet and hands to yourself
- Keep food on tables and eating area
- No toys on the playscape
- Slide DOWN the slide
- Keep ears and eyes open

Disciplinary Actions

In taking disciplinary action, staff members consider what is most appropriate for a particular situation and the age of children involved. The outcome should be to resolve the conflict as well as empowering the children to gain self-awareness and problem solving skills.

1. **Intervention:** Intervention is needed to stop actions that have become disruptive. It is important that children know an adult is stepping in to take control, when they have lost control themselves.
2. **Resolution of Conflict:** Clarify what happened, how each person is feeling, then question and examine possible solutions with the children.

Note: Feelings, both children's and adults, are an important part of life requiring attention and expression. We encourage and support open and direct communication. We believe that both positive and negative feelings are real and valid and that our center should be a safe place to explore them.

3. **Redirection:** When a child is unable to behave appropriately in certain areas, with certain children or toys, the teacher may ask the child to play in a different area until he/she is able to behave appropriately on their own.
4. **Separation from Group:** This is sometimes needed when a child cannot regain self-control and/or for the child to relax and not feel influenced by others. The staff acknowledges the child, and the child is supervised. Then, the staff will encourage him/her to join the group: "Let me know when you are ready to try again".

Kids Garden Staff WILL NOT:

- Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children. Our Staff will not use corporal punishment of any kind.
- Make fun of, yell at, ignore, frighten, reject, threaten, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse children
- Shame or punish the children, when bathroom accidents occur
- Relate discipline to eating, resting, or toileting
- Allow discipline of children by other children
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents or families
- Emotional abuse is prohibited, including: profane, harsh, demeaning, or humiliating language; threatening, humiliating, or ignoring a child; Withholding, forcing, or threatening to withhold or force food, sleep or toileting is prohibited.
- Leave children alone, unattended, or without supervision; Unsupervised isolation of a child shall not be allowed. Children shall be within sight of staff if isolation from the group is used.
- Children shall not be restrained through drugs or mechanical restraints.

Dismissal Policy

Kids Garden reserves the right to remove any child from the program without prior notice, if it is the opinion of the Director that it is in the best interest of the child, family or center. There are a number of serious offenses which, if committed, will lead to immediate termination of a student's registration/membership such as:

- If a child is a danger to themselves, or to Kids Garden property.
- Refusal or inability of the child or family to adhere to program policies and procedures.

Baby-Sitting

Any provision of baby-sitting services by the Kids Garden staff, after business operating hours and off Kids Garden premises, for children registered in the center, is not sponsored by Kids Garden. Our goal is to provide families with excellent quality care; therefore, due to the cost of hiring and training staff, we request that you do not ask for babysitting services from our staff.

These services are not included in the liability insurance covering the Kids Garden. The arrangement for these services, provision of these services, and the payment for these services is an arrangement exclusively by the child's parent/guardian and the adult who will be providing the baby-sitting services. The actions of any Kids Garden employee outside the center premises and hours of operations are not the responsibility of the Kids Garden.

Transportation

These services are not offered at Kids Garden - West University at this time.

Water Activities/Field Trips/Animals

These services are not offered at Kids Garden - West University at this time.

Employee Immunizations

Child Care center employees have a unique opportunity to protect children at their place of employment and lessen the spread of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) by getting immunized. VPDs are conditions which are preventable through vaccines available to protect against specific diseases. A current list of VPDs can be found at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

We continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, as the health and well-being of our patrons, staff, and their families is our first priority. We are following the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as well as meeting or exceeding the guidelines issued by state and local governments.

The following are our most recent policies and guidelines to support our commitment to a healthy and safe operation and community:

- To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and its variants, Kids Garden employees are encouraged to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as other VPDs listed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. While we are NOT currently mandating vaccinations, all employees must follow and comply with any and all vaccine mandates from state and local governments.
- All employees, regardless of immunization status or qualified exemptions, are responsible and expected to protect the children in your care from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Kids Garden conducts staff health screenings and temperature checks, daily. Employees are required to stay home if they have illness symptoms or fever, and remain at home until fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever reducing drugs. Where required by state and local agencies, all patrons and staff will answer a health screening questionnaire at check-in.
- Wearing Personal Protective Equipment, like face masks/ shields, are encouraged for employees; however, per the new CDC mask guidelines, at a minimum fully-vaccinated staff are no longer required to wear masks indoors or outdoors, unless required by state mandate.
- Kids Garden will routinely disinfect and sanitize all toys, books, craft materials, cubbies, and other high-touch surfaces throughout the day.

- Frequent handwashing is always required for children and staff and for a minimum of 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer will also be available throughout the center.

Non-discrimination Policy

Kids Garden is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352), The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-135), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112).

This is an equal opportunity program. No person, in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, political beliefs, or religion, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination. If you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, age, sex, a disability, political beliefs, or religion, you may lodge a complaint against Kids Garden West University by immediately writing and/or calling the Civil Rights Department or the Texas Department of Health Human Services: P.O. Box 19030, Austin, Texas 78714-9030; Phone: 512-450-3630.