

The Learning Forest



Parent Handbook



The Learning Forest ***Childcare Home and Preschool***

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The Learning Forest Philosophy and Introduction

Imagine a beautiful forest-like play area with lush grass, garden boxes and tons of outdoor fun. Rain or shine, students get to go outside and experience hands-on play in a large, safe outdoor arena. Indoors there is a warm color on the walls with every room embodying an aspect of nature. The lush backyard is an imaginative outdoor forest where hands-on learning takes place. In this place all you hear is laughter and sounds of scholars being formed.

This place is ***The Learning Forest***: an early education home that is nurturing the very core of its preschoolers, so they can become more-than-ready to enter into kindergarten and beyond. Children are yet but sprouts that with the proper care and love they will grow into strong, beautiful trees that produce much fruit. At The Learning Forest, we believe that a strong preschool foundation is the key to a child's success in future education. Our philosophy is *Together we will grow our beautiful seeds into the strong trees of the future!*

Our program gives children ages 12 months through school-age enriching opportunities to develop the whole child. We focus on learning through both child-directed play experiences and curriculum time. We believe a balance of play and preschool enhances growth and development in all areas: physically, socially, emotionally, creatively, and intellectually. This is achieved in a safe, secure and loving environment with caregivers who are dedicated to enriching children's lives.

We provide Children the opportunity to learn about themselves and others through center based learning, reading foundations, math, science, world language exploration, technology readiness, plenty of outdoor fun, dance and song. We teach basic principles concerning positive character traits such as loving one another, sharing, kindness, taking care of our environment and self-control. We focus on having good manners, and teach about reciprocal respect and responsibility.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

The Learning Forest does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, or national or ethnic origin in admittance, education, or other administrative policies and extends to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the school.

Required Policies

The Learning Forest is licensed and regulated by the State of California Child Care Department. The following policies are required by Child Care Licensing. With these policies in place please rest assured that your child is being well taken care of by our loving staff. The Learning Forest is your home away from home preschool.



1. HOURS OF OPERATION

The Learning Forest is open from 7:00 am-6:00 pm, Monday-Friday, year round. We close to observe all federal holidays: New Year's Day, MLK Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Indigenous Peoples day, Veterans day, Labor Day, Presidents Day. As well as Thanksgiving Break (3 days), Winter Break (*Winter break can vary depending on how Christmas falls and covers Christmas and New Years Day*), 1 week Spring Break, Summer Break (1 weeks, dates vary). **Full tuition is due even for holiday months. There is not a discount given for families going on vacation.** .
**More information about dates upon inquiry.*

NOTE: In some cases, if the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, The Learning Forest may close the day before or the day after the holiday. Parents will be updated on each year's holiday schedule in January. In any case, where the Director may be ill or on leave, a substitute teacher(s) will be called in.

2. RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Per California state laws, parents have a right to access their child at anytime. However, we do have a drop off time request of 8:45 am each day so that the child can take part in our full educational program. In the event that a parent is unable to pick up their child, they may authorize another legal adult to pick up. Children will not be released to a minor. Authorized adults must be listed on the enrollment form to pick up and the authorized adult must bring a picture ID. Children will not be released to adults without a picture ID.

3. ILLNESS AND EXCLUSION POLICY

Children who are ill should not attend preschool. The Learning Forest observes the standards set by the California Department of Family and Protective Services for ill children. The most common standards for exclusion are:

1. Illness that prevents the child from participating in child care activities, ***including outdoor play.***
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety and supervision of the other children.
3. Touch less temperature of 99.9 (or significantly higher than the child's normal temperature based on logged temps.)
4. Symptoms and signs of possible illness such as:
Fever or chills, Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Fatigue, Muscle or body aches, Headache, New loss of taste or smell, Sore throat, Congestion or runny nose, Nausea or vomiting, Diarrhea lethargy, abnormal breathing.

If a child becomes ill while in our care, we will contact the parent immediately. We will care for the child with proper supervision and give extra attention to hand washing and sanitation practices.

Parents need to pick up children within 1 hour of notification. In the event of *severe* illness or injury, or if a parent fails to pick up their child within a reasonable amount of time, The Learning Forest may call for an ambulance at the parent's expense.

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If a child is sent home sick from our program, they may not return until the child is symptom-free for 24-hours. ***If severe sickness is suspected (such as COVID or other Novel virus) we will follow the guidelines of the CDC and community care licensing on a case by case basis.***

4. MEDICATION

Please inform your physician that your child is in full-day or part-day preschool and that you prefer to give medications at home, morning and evening. Knowing this, many doctors will order longer acting medications. Limiting medications dispensed away from home prevents medication errors. Please remember, The Learning Forest is designed for **well** children.

5. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING EMERGENCIES

In case of minor injury or accident, the staff will administer basic first aid. All injuries or illnesses not requiring immediate parental notification will be documented and reported to parents when the child is picked up at the end of the day.

In case of medical injury or illness requiring immediate professional care (emergency), the staff will call 911, giving location and nature of emergency. As appropriate, the staff will administer CPR or first aid measures. Parents will be notified immediately. If parents are unavailable, those individuals designated as emergency phone contacts will be notified. **All children must have an emergency medical release form on file in case of such an emergency.**

If a child ingests or comes in contact with a poisonous substance the staff will contact the Poison Control Center 1.800.222.1222.

6. PARENT NOTIFICATIONS

Open Communication with parents is very important to children's success. The Learning Forest has multiple ways of communicating with parents. In some situations, parents may be asked to sign documents acknowledging that communication has taken place. Listed below are ways that The Learning Forest may communicate with parents:

- Through REMIND app notifications
- Text, phone calls, emails
- Verbal communication with the child's teachers and director

7. DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE POLICY

The Learning Forest staff members are trained to use a positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self direction. Just a few examples used in this situation are: praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior; reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements and redirecting behaviors. There may be times during the day when a supervised separation time is needed. This is a "time-out" and is used according to the child's age and development and limited to one minute per year of the child's age. Our staff will never use Corporal Punishment or negative discipline that may hurt or humiliate a child.

Research has shown that positive guidance teaches children skills which help them get along in their physical and social environment. This aim is to develop personal standards in self-discipline, not to enforce a set of inflexible

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rules. Giving children understandable guidelines and redirecting their behavior helps them to develop internal control of their actions and encourages acceptable behavior. **The Learning Forest reserves the right to terminate care for the child for discipline problems at any time.**

8. Lunch and Snack

The Learning Forest provides breakfast for all students present before 9:00 am. Also morning snack for all children during morning outdoor play. Lunch is provided and served at 11:30am. Afternoon snack is served after the rest period around 3:00pm, and for the school-age kids as they arrive after school. Please advise the preschool of any allergies. Meal time is a great time to build community and teach about appropriate table manners and to learn about the food groups. We have a garden where some of our fruits and vegetables are grown.

9. IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Immunization records must be current for all children enrolled in the Infant-Toddler, Preschool and Pre-K programs. A copy must be in the child's file. **It is the parent's responsibility** to ensure that your child's immunizations are current. Failure to keep children current on immunizations may lead to disenrollment.

10. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Upon selecting The Learning Forest to meet your child's educational needs, all enrollment paperwork is required before the child can start our program. Incomplete paperwork will not be accepted. Paperwork required for enrollment includes:

- Enrollment Packet (State mandated forms)
- Tuition Agreement

When removing your child from the home you must give a **1 months no written notice**. If a 1 month written notice is not given you are still responsible for paying for the monthp.

Parents will be notified within 30 days of any policy change in writing. Signatures from parents may be required.

11. PARKING

- Ø Children shall be loaded and unloaded at the curbside of the vehicle, or in a protected parking area.
- Ø PLEASE DO NOT BLOCK NEIGHBORS DRIVEWAY OR DOUBLE PARK

12: CHILD ABUSE REPORTING LAW REQUIREMENTS

The Learning Forest staff are **REQUIRED** by CA State law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services (CPS) any instance when there is reason to **suspect** the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation. Our staff receive annual training on recognizes and preventing abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and are Mandated Reporters. The Learning Forest will also coordinate with community organizations on strategies to prevent abuse and neglect.

If parents feel they need assistance with possible child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, we encourage you to get help. Please call the National Parent Hotline at 1-855-427-2736 or visit www.helpandhope.org/find-help.html

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The statewide Abuse & Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you would like to report any suspected abuse or neglect.

13. WELL CHECKS

The Learning Forest staff will do a visual check of the children upon arrival each morning. We only accept WELL children at school each day. If a staff member notices anything unusual they are required to point this out to the parent at that time. If your child has an accident overnight, please notify staff members when dropping off so that we can assist in watching the child for side effects.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

14. TUITION AND FEES

Monthly Tuition may be paid Debit card, Cash, Cashiers Check, (copayments or partial payments can be made using Zelle or CashApp). **Payments are to be made on the 1st of each month (prior to care).** You can request to pay weekly or bi-weekly as well. **Weekly payments are due on Thursday each week by 6:00pm. Bi-Weekly payments are due on the 1st and on the 15th by 6:00pm.** There is a \$30.00 late fee due the next business day thereafter. For Bi-weekly payments, if the 1st or 15th fall on the weekend then the payment is due the Friday before. For weekly payments, the late fee is due the next day (Friday). If payments and late fees are not made by the agreed due date, **your child will NOT be allowed to return to the child care home and your child may lose their space.** If payments are not made on time; upon receiving payment (if there is a space available) parents will be required to **re-register child.** *This includes new paperwork and tuition that is past due as well as late fee.*

***To avoid this please make payments on time.**

Tuition will NOT be refunded for any reason under any circumstances.

15. EXTRA FEES

***Deposits to hold a open spot more than 2 months out is 1 ½ months tuition. A deposit of \$200 is needed to hold a spot 60 days or less. Your deposit will go towards your first months tuition.**

Please see your tuition agreement for details about tuition rates.

***An one time materials fee of \$100 will be due with the 1st months tuition.**

Our program is open Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 6:00pm. The Learning Forest is only licensed by the CA Department of Family and Protective Services to care for children during these specified times. If you are late picking up your child, there is a \$20.00 late fee charge and \$1 PER MINUTE late penalty after the first 5 minutes (*i.e. 6 minutes late is \$21.00*). Late penalties **must be paid upon pick-up or the next day your child is scheduled for care.** ***Please be on time for pick up.**

For parttime families, if you need your child to stay an extra day during the week the fee is 100.00\$.

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For families with state allotted hours, if you need your child to stay later than scheduled hours then the fee is 20.00\$ per hour.

16. PARENT REFERRALS

We greatly appreciate your business and know that you will be so pleased with our service that you will tell all your friends and acquaintances about us! If one of those families decides to enroll their child(ren), we will credit your account the amount of 1 week's tuition after that family has been with us for 90 days. Our greatest advertising asset is you!!

17. CONFIDENTIALITY

While your child is enrolled in our program, parents may come across confidential information about our program, our staff, and sometimes other children. All information received from The Learning Forest must remain confidential at all times. Breaching confidentiality may lead to disenrollment.

18. PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Please understand, young children are present in our building. Some adult language is not appropriate for young children. The Learning Forest prohibits swearing or cursing on our property.

Threatening staff, children, or other parents will not be tolerated per CA Department of Family and Protective Services. The Learning Forest has the right to terminate care in the event of disruptive behavior from a parent or guardian. See section 26.

19. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Children must be signed in and out at the welcome table when arriving and departing the home. Please understand that due to liability issues, staff of The Learning Forest is not permitted to take children home from our child care home.

In order not to confuse school toys with a child's personal property, we ask that children not bring playthings from home. The Learning Forest staff cannot be responsible for lost or broken personal toys.

There are several ways you can help us maintain the best possible teaching atmosphere for your child:

- Ø Communicate any concerns regarding our program or your child immediately to staff.
 - Ø Pick up your child's papers/projects daily. Their work is very important to them and provides another means of communication between parent and child and helps the parent share in the child's day.
 - Ø Please be aware of the scheduled meal times of breakfast and lunch, before 9:00 am and 11:30am, and make sure your child arrives in time to be included in those meals, if necessary.
 - Ø Please do not allow your child to bring gum, chips or candy to the school. Outside foods are not excepted.
- **The CA Department of Family and Protective Services do not allow smoking on the premises, either indoors or outdoors.

20. CURRICULUM and Birthdays

The Learning Forest uses a variety of age appropriate curriculum. We believe that children learn best through actively engaging with people and things in their environment. Children are involved in hands-on experiences, real-life adventures, and assisted discovery as they explore concepts through play and teacher direction. The Learning Forest is a place where essential readiness skills are nurtured through play, investigation, and of course, fun! Our programs provide developmentally and age-appropriate activities and materials for exciting and wonder filled environments. Holidays and Birthdays are not formally celebrated at The Learning Forest to respect all



families beliefs. Instead we focus our lessons on a seasonal holistic curriculum. Refer to our *The Learning Forest Way* handout for more details.

21. BITING and Destruction of property

Biting is a common issue in early child development. The best way to deal with biting is consistency between providers and parents. Biting could occur for multiple reasons. Proper communication will help determine why a child is biting. The Learning Forest will work with parents when biting becomes a problem. We will make every effort to solve the issue as soon as possible. If your child is responsible for destruction of property due to behavior or not listening to their child care provider, the parent will be responsible for the cost of replacing the destructed property and child may be terminated if behaviors continue.

22. Termination of a Contract

We reserve the right to terminate your contract if our child care home is not a suitable match for your child. We will let you know in writing with a three day notice. We also would support a smooth transition from our school by recommending alternative programs that suit your families needs if you would like.

23. DIAPERING AND TOILET TRAINING

We do not allow pull ups at the preschool. Pull ups make it difficult during diaper changing for clothes have to be completely removed. Pull ups are only allowed if they are the kind that you can unfasten and refasten on the sides and during nap times.

Toilet training is started when students near 2-years-old here at the preschool or show signs of readiness. Toilet training can be a very emotionally charged experience for children, parents and teachers. We would like the training process to go as smoothly as possible. In toilet training parent-teacher cooperation is essential. Toilet training is one of the major hurdles in the socialization of the child.

If your child begins school needing to be potty trained we will work with you and your child to make this a success. We will let you know and have you begin bringing panties/underwear and lots of extra clothes. Once we start working with your child they must be brought to the preschool in panties/underwear. If you bring your child in a diaper (we consider pull ups diapers and don't recommend them) then they will stay in diapers that day. We ask that you will work on toilet training with your child at home simultaneously so that they can have an easier transition. We will create a potty plan together.

We, The Learning Forest, know that you trust us with your most valuable treasure, your child, and we strive to serve our families the absolute best in preschool education and childcare. We believe that excellent early childhood development is the foundation for a bright future for our children at The Learning Forest. With our nurturing environment, and a home away from home approach, we feel confident our children will grow to be well rounded and developmentally on or above age level when they leave our program for Kindergarten.

Together we will grow these beautiful seeds into the strong trees of the future!

NOTES: