

Quality Early Childhood Education Provider



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Philosophy and Mission

The purpose of Hilltop Children's Center is to offer a high-quality, positive, and fun place for children while accommodating the needs of working parents by being both convenient and affordable. We are dedicated to providing a safe, nurturing, and academically enriched environment for our children. Our program's focus is on balancing student learning, physical activity, and emotional growth for children in a stimulating and enjoyable atmosphere. Hilltop Children's Center maintains clear policies and procedures and actively encourages both open communication and parent involvement.

Curriculum Goal

Our curriculum, Frog Street®, is designed to encourage social, emotional, physical, and educational development that is age-appropriate and promotes growth while taking into account each child's unique interests and abilities.

We strongly believe optimal learning takes place when we provide learning opportunities that build on the children's existing knowledge and prior experiences. Children first learn simple, concrete concepts and then use these concepts to understand more complex ideas. Through interaction with peers, adults, and various materials, children strengthen social skills and continue to learn about the world around them.

GOALS FOR CHILDREN

At Hilltop Children's Center, we strive to create and maintain an environment where children can acquire knowledge and skills to become fully functioning human beings who:

- Grow in all areas: socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.
- Develop self-awareness and acceptance of their own physical, social, and emotional selves.
- Develop creative problem-solving skills.
- Grow in self-confidence and willingness to try new things.
- Become inner-directed.
- Become responsible.
- Become creative thinkers, aware of choices.
- Acquire a sense of unity, connection, and belonging.
- I appreciate individual differences and cultural diversities.

Registration Process

While maintaining the confidentiality of your information, we ask that you complete an updated admission form every August to make sure we have the most up-to-date information possible. We need to update your contact numbers, address, and emergency contact information as soon as possible whenever there is a change. You may email your updated information or any other pertinent information to htccenter@yahoo.com, or update your child's information on

www.MyProcure.com using the email address you provided us at registration.

We will also ask you to sign a statement acknowledging receipt of a copy of this parent handbook, which obtains our operation policies. We request that BOTH parents/legal guardians review this handbook to become familiar with our policies. The Enrolment Contract requires both parents' signatures. There is a copy of the handbook on our webpage at www.HilltopChildrensCenter.com. If we need to change any of these policies, you will be notified of the changes in writing before the change takes effect.

The registration packet for Hilltop Children's Center program must include:

- Completed Registration form.
- \$150 registration fee
- Updated Record of Immunization
- Disciple and Guidance Policy
- Parent Handbook Acknowledgement
- Signed DFPS Admission Information form & Physician Statement
- Annual \$90 supply fee and first-month tuition (maybe prorated by the director)

A few things to remember when registering:

- The registration packet must be completed and signed in its entirety before it will be accepted.
- The Emergency Contact must be someone **other than the parent/legal guardian of the child**, preferably a local person.
- The registration form must be signed by the child's parent/legal guardian.

When pre-registering your child more than 30 days in advance, you will be asked to pay half of the first month's tuition in addition to the registration and supply fee. These fees will be refunded to you if you choose to cancel your registration with a written notice of at least a 30-day notice to Hilltop Children's Center. You may send an email to htccenter@yahoo.com, expressing your desire to "withdraw" your child's preregistration, and request a tuition and supply fee refund. Please note the registration fee is not refundable. **This also applies to Fall pre-registration for current students.**

Emergency contacts

You need to provide the name, phone number, and full address of two (2) contacts who preferably live within a 20-mile radius of the Hilltop Children's Center. Your contacts should know that they have been recorded on the card and are responsible for your child in the event that they need to pick up your child at any time throughout the day. Your emergency contacts listed on your emergency card will be contacted in the event that you are UNABLE to be reached.

Operation Hours

Hilltop Children’s Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. We offer 5 Full-Days from 7:00 AM to 6 PM or 5 Half-Days from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

Children thrive on routines that give them a sense of security and help them develop self-discipline. The five-day-a-week program gives the children stability and a sense of security. It helps reinforce the instruction and the kids can hold on to the concepts build from those and learn more. When there's inconsistency in attending school, even the preschool, it will get the child out of routine and harder to adjust.

The After-school program is open from 3:30 (or Liberty Hill bus drop-off time) until 6:00 PM. **Early drop-off (before school care) is available for After-School program and must be prearranged.** As of Fall 2020, only children in Santa Rita Elementary will be transported to the Hilltop Children’s Center by Liberty Hill ISD transportation. We are currently working with the Childcare Licensing to acquire transportation permit for other area schools.

At Hilltop Children’s Center, we follow the Liberty Hill ISD calendar and weather-related closings. Care may be available during the school holidays and breaks for kindergarten through 2nd graders. Please ask the Director for more information.

Tuition and Fees

A \$150 non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of registration. This ensures your child a place in the class. There is a \$90 supply fee due with your first month's tuition and with September tuition annually.

The tuition is based on monthly payments and is due on or before the 1st day of each month or bimonthly on the 1st and the 15th of the month with Tuition Express Autograft. Please note that tuition remains the same regardless of holidays, vacations, sickness, bad weather closing, and closings beyond our control.

Hilltop Programs	Toddlers (18 mo to 36 mo old)	Preschool (3 & 4 years old)	Pre-K (4 & 5 years old)
5 Half Day (8:30 AM – 12:30 PM)	Not Available	\$715 (limited availability)	\$690
5 Extended Care (7:00 AM – 6:00 PM)	\$1275	\$1195	\$1150

Tuition effective January 2024. Tuition may change in September 2024

As of September 2023, meals will not be included in the tuition and will be optional for the parents to purchase. Please see the director for the current meal plan price.

Tuition payments may be placed in the tuition box provided in the director’s office on or before





the first school day of each month. All checks should be made payable to Hilltop Children’s Center. We also offer Tuition Express; a safe, convenient, and easy automatic payment processing system using your bank account or credit card. You can review your account and make online payments at www.MyProcure.com using the email address we have on file.

If payment is not received by the end of 3rd day of each month (or the 16th for the second installment), a late fee of \$10 will be charged for each school day payment is late. You can avoid late payment fees by using Tuition Express as a secondary payment method. Ask the director for more information.

Checking or automatic deposits from your bank are acceptable methods of payment. If Hilltop Children’s Center receives a check back due to insufficient funds a \$35 fee will be assessed, in addition to any late fee payments. Any non-sufficient funds payment will be automatically resubmitted electronically up to three times. Fees will apply each time. Once a check has been processed electronically, the check is no longer negotiable and will not be returned. You will be responsible for the principal amount, all returned check fees, and any late payment fees. You will be required to pay by money order for the next three months. If more than 1 check is returned, then all future payments must be made by cash or money order.

Pick-up time is at 12:30 (half-day) or 6:00 PM (full-day and after-school). We realize that an unexpected event may delay your arrival to pick up your child. If you are more than 5 minutes late picking up your child, a fee of \$5 will automatically be added to your account plus \$1 per minute past your child’s scheduled pick-up time. The late pick-up charge must be paid within five working days of the late pick-up.

Children must be fully toilet trained and be able to verbalize/communicate their needs clearly in order to move to the Preschool classroom. The transition from one age group to another is based on the child’s developmental stage and not his/her birthdate. Children who will be attending Kindergarten the following school year will be moved to PreK in Fall.

School Age	
 After School Care Only	\$450/month
 Before & After School Care***	\$495/month
 Weekly Camps (8 AM to 3:30 PM)	\$260/week (meals included)
 Daily (Past or Present Hilltop Family Only)	\$50/day (meal NOT included)

After-school care includes full care for the days that LHISD is closed, while Hilltop Children’s Center is operating. These include mostly Holiday breaks and Spring Break. The last day of the After-school program coincides with the last day of LHISD. Please see the attached Hilltop Calendar for more details.

If the account is delinquent for more than one week, you may be asked to withdraw your child until the account is made current. The school cannot guarantee a child’s spot will be held when a

child is withdrawn due to non-payment of tuition. Any unpaid tuition fees may be sent to a third-party collection agency.

There will be up to a 5% tuition rate increase each year effective September 1st. New tuition rates may be used in new registrations after the first of the year and will be available for existing parents' review at least 3 months before they go into effect.

Attendance Procedures

Regular attendance is important in any school program. It is difficult for the child to feel part of a group if attendance is irregular, and bad habits and poor attitudes toward school may be formed. Also, it can be disturbing to your child, besides the other children, to enter a group already involved in an activity if he is always tardy. Please make it a habit to have your child here no later than 8:50 A.M. so that they can participate in all activities.

The safety of each child is paramount to the staff of the Hilltop Children's Center. If a child will not be attending the program as scheduled, it is essential that the child's parent calls the center at 512-966-1106 to report the child's absence from the program by 10:00 AM. You could also message us through the Procure app or email at htccenter@yahoo.com.

Unfortunately, we cannot credit your account for missed days due to illness, vacation, or a weather-related closing. You may reserve your child's space for any full month's absence by paying 50% of regular tuition with 30 days advance notice to the director. This includes during the summer months. Any child who has chosen to withdraw from the program for any length of time will have to re-register and pay a \$90 supply fee.

Immunization Requirement

For the protection of your child as well as the other children in care, your child must have all vaccinations required by the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#). You must provide an immunization record upon enrollment and provide updates to the record whenever your child receives more immunizations.

Admission to the school is not allowed until records are produced showing that (1) the child has been immunized in accordance with the rules; (2) the child has an exemption affidavit from immunization requirements on file with the school in accordance with the rules; or (3) the child is entitled to provisional enrollment.

Although we encourage every child to be immunized, exclusions from compliance are allowable on an individual basis for medical contraindications, reasons of conscience, including religious belief, and active duty with the armed forces of the United States. A newly revised (2/17) Exemption form must be submitted to HTCC within 90 days of notarization and will be valid for two years from the date of notarization.

Each parent or guardian who signs a vaccine exemption affidavit form also is acknowledging that their child may be excluded from school attendance in times of emergency or epidemic

declared by the Texas Commissioner of Health.

For more information about immunizations, please visit the health department's website at <https://dshs.texas.gov/immunize>

Our staff is not required, but highly recommended, to ensure they are up-to-date with all their immunizations

Tuberculin Testing Requirements

TB tests are not required at this time.

Vision and Hearing Screenings

State law requires vision and hearing screenings for four-years-old children. Your child's doctor should provide these screenings at their 4-years old checkup. We can provide you with the appropriate form for the doctor to fill out and sign. Please provide copies of your child's screening results within 60 days of the child's fourth birthday. There may be additional expenses associated with the center initiating the screening.

Holidays

Our School follows most of Liberty Hill ISD calendar closings during the academic year. All holidays will be observed in accordance with this school year calendar unless otherwise stated.

Care may be available for school-age children on some days when LHISD is closed. This will be included in your After-School tuition. Please check with the director for details.

The center **will be closed** for a week during the Christmas Holiday, as well as for a week in July. We will also be closed on the following Holidays:

- January 31st, and New Year's Day
- MLK Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day before and after.

If any of these days fall on a weekend day, the Director will determine which day of the week will be observed. Please review Hilltop Children's Center Calendar or the Parent Board.

Snow Days, Inclement Weather, and Delayed Openings

Hilltop Children's Center will be closed whenever Liberty Hill Schools are closed due to inclement weather. Credits will not be issued for days when school is closed due to snow, and no additional charges will be incurred for the bad weather make-up days.

Withdrawal & Termination Policy

Registration for each child is a commitment of enrollment for the entire school year (September 1st through May 31st). Should you choose to withdraw from the program before the end of the school year, parents must give Hilltop Children's Center a **30-day WRITTEN (or email)** notice on the first day of the month. Without this notice, parents will be responsible for the payment of one month's tuition.

If you withdraw your child from the program and decide to re-enroll at a later date, you must pay the full Registration fee as well as the Supply fee.

Hilltop Children's Center reserves the right to withdraw any child from the program at any time if: behavioral and/or emotional problems with a child disrupt the day-to-day operations, other person's safety is jeopardized, or Hilltop Children's Center staff determine the child makes it unreasonably difficult to meet the needs of the other children in the program. Please see the Challenging Behavior section for more details. There will be no refund of tuition for the month of termination.

A child may also be suspended if the required health and emergency documentation is not up-to-date/complete or if payment is not received within one week of the due date.

Drop-Off and Pick-up Policy

It is imperative that a parent completes the sign-in/out sheet for their child every day. This is our attendance sheet and is necessary in the event of an emergency. This procedure is extremely important for attendance records and safety measures in emergencies. **This is a state minimum standard.** The sign-in sheet/computer is available at the desk in the lobby as you enter Hilltop Children's Center. Each authorized pickup person, including the parents, must have their own computer ID and password. Please ask the director for help in setting up your account.

You may sign in/out your child in several different ways. There is the Procure computer software where you can sign in/out using your unique ID and Password. You may also use a 4-digit code provided to you on the Procure app to sign your child in or out on the tablet. You may also scan the QR code on the tablet to sign your child in or out. Lastly, you may turn on Geo Locator on the app and sign your child in or out from the app while in the parking lot.

After signing in, please accompany your child into the classroom, or into the playground, and let a teacher know that you have arrived. Please **DO NOT** leave your child in school without his/her teacher's acknowledgment of his/her presence. When picking up your child, please sign out and notify a teacher that you are leaving.

Hilltop Children's Center utilizes a checkout system to ensure that each child is dismissed to the proper person at the end of the program. Children will not be allowed to leave the center unattended. Please speak directly to the teacher in charge when picking up your child from the

center. The children can help with this responsibility by getting in the habit of saying goodbye to their teacher. Children may not go into the classrooms alone; they must be accompanied by a parent or teacher at all times while on campus. Once you SIGN your child out with the teacher in charge, he/she is considered “signed out” and is your responsibility. For safety reasons, please do not let your child run ahead of you inside or outside of the building.

Parents who spend a little time in their child’s classroom at day’s end need to also remember that while their child is in his/her classroom with them, class rules that encourage appropriate behavior still apply to your child.

Anyone who will be picking up your child needs to be on your authorized pick-up list and will need to bring their photo ID. If a staff member is unfamiliar with any person picking up a child, the staff member will ask to see a picture identification before the child is released. Please make us aware if an authorized person, besides yourself, will be dropping off or picking up your child. We will not release a child to someone who is not listed on the authorization form.

At Hilltop Children’s Center, our first responsibility is to protect the health and safety of the children in our care. When parents drop off and pick up their children, we want to make sure their children are transported safely. In the event that a parent or other authorized person arrives to pick up a child and he or she appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, at risk of distracted driving, or failure to use an appropriate car seat, a ride home, or other appropriate assistance, will be offered in order to ensure the safety of the child. Upon refusal, Liberty Hill Police Department will be called to report an unsafe driving situation.

Supervision of Children

All staff are responsible for the supervision and whereabouts of the children assigned to their care at all times; this includes conducting regular and accurate headcounts any time a group moves from one area to another. Teachers are aware of where children are at all times and remain in sufficient proximity at all times in order to intervene quickly if/when necessary. The supervising teacher does not engage in any other activities or tasks that could unnecessarily divert their attention from the supervision of children.

Classroom teaching staff supervise Toddlers (18 months – 36 months) by sight and sound at all times, including when children are sleeping. Classroom teaching staff supervise Preschoolers (3 years to 5 years) by sight and, for brief intervals, by sound (e.g. when a child walks from one adjoining room to another or can use the toilet independently), as long as the child is back in sight and sound within one minute.

Please note that once you have reunited with your child and are departing, Hilltop Children’s Center is no longer responsible for your child. For safety reasons, please do not let your child run around in the school, ahead of you inside or outside of the building. We teach the children not to touch any doorknobs and wait for an adult to open a closed door for them. Please follow the

same school rule when you pick up or drop off your child.

Emergency & Exclusion Criteria

The health policy of the Hilltop Children's Center is designed to best meet the needs of our children, parents, and staff. Although no policy will eliminate the problem of illness endemic to group care – especially of young children – we try our best to decrease the transmission of infectious diseases among our children. Hilltop Children's Center staff are required to use common-sense hygiene practices, especially frequent and thorough hand washing. Staff will perform a daily health check on each child upon drop off every morning.

We understand that illness among young children is frequent, and many parents want to bring mildly ill children to childcare programs, but our exclusion policy is in place to decrease the risk of transmission of infectious diseases and the demand of sick children for increased adult attention, which may exceed the resources of our center.

Per **state minimum standards**, we **cannot** care for a child who:

- Cannot participate comfortably in the center's activities.
- Has an illness that requires more care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of other children.
- Has a fever with an oral temperature of 101 F or above 100 F under the arm.
- Has had two or more episodes of vomiting or diarrhea.
- Has rash, with fever or behavioral change, until a physician has determined the illness is not a communicable disease.
- Has communicable (contagious) disease
 - including head lice or scabies

When children have been exposed to communicable diseases such as hepatitis, chicken pox, measles, strep infection, or covid-19, at Hilltop Children's Center, all staff members and parents shall be notified immediately by the administration. The Director will contact the local health department when necessary.

If your child, or anyone in your household to which the child has been exposed to, has a communicable or contagious disease, the parents are required to notify Hilltop Children's Center within 24 hours so that the parents of other children may be notified as needed.

The child can return to the center once he/she has been **free of symptoms for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication** or if the child's doctor provides a statement verifying the child is no longer contagious.

Please do NOT administer a fever-suppressant and bring your child to the center. This is unfair not only to your child but also to other children and teachers. For the safety of our children and teachers, we reserve the right, per Director's discretion, to require a medical clearance for any

child that shows signs and symptoms of a communicable disease.

We do understand that parents often find it difficult to miss work, but if we call you and ask you to pick up your sick child, we expect you to do so as quickly as possible. Please make arrangements for your child to be picked up within one hour for the sake of their well-being as well as other children at the center. We will keep your child separated from other children until your arrival.

Procedures for Dispensing Medication

We will administer medication once a day. All medications will be administered by the director or the designated person in charge. You may wish to come during the day and give the medication yourself. If so, bring the medication to the office and fill out the appropriate form. For the safety of the children, medication cannot be stored in the cubby or backpack.

Medications must be in the original container labeled with the child's full name. You must sign a form that authorizes our staff to administer the medication.

Authorization for medication form: Medication forms can be obtained from a teacher or the director. The form must show the date, name of the medication, dosage, time to be administered, number of days administration is to continue, and must be signed by a parent or guardian.

All medication must be given to a teacher or the director along with instructions. Never leave medication in your child's cubby or lunch box. Please bring a measuring utensil with the medication. All medication containers will be returned to the parent when no longer needed, empty and/or when the medication has expired.

Medical and Dental Emergencies

In case of a minor accident or injury, basic first aid will be performed. If any treatment is administered, no matter how minor, an Incident Report will be filled in the Procure App and will be immediately sent to the parent. You may be asked to sign a copy for your child's file.

Depending on the severity of the illness or injury, 911 may be called. The staff, who are all CPR and First Aid trained, will apply First Aid, and the parent will be called right away. If the parents are not available, the emergency numbers on the child's emergency card will be called. If the parents or authorized emergency contact cannot be reached right away in the event of a serious illness or injury, the child will be taken to Cedar Park Hospital's Emergency Room unless the parents have designated a different emergency plan. The school will obtain emergency medical/dental care without specific instructions from the child's parents or authorized emergency contact as agreed upon in the consent form.

Clothing

Children should wear clothes and shoes that will allow them to participate in all activities in

Hilltop Children's Center. Children go outside every day in our programs, for we consider outdoor play an essential element of the curriculum that supports children's growth. Schedules may be modified to accommodate inclement weather, which will include temperatures falling below 35°F and above 100°F. Please always dress your child in warm layers in cold weather and apply sunscreen and bug spray on hot days.

We do not allow children to wear short shorts, overly revealing shirts, and/or slogans that will encourage inappropriate behavior or comments. Underwear should be covered at all times. If a child is wearing a dress, they must have shorts or bloomers underneath. Also, should spaghetti straps be worn, they must fit correctly. Clothing "malfunctions", so to speak, often produce an unnecessary, age-inappropriate conversation.

Shoes should be comfortable and provide adequate protection for the feet during outdoor play. Flip-flops, open-toes sandals, jelly shoes and any shoes with heels are prohibited because they present a safety hazard. Please make sure the shoes are easy for your child to put on and take off. Most of our preschoolers do not know how to tie their shoes, so it would be much easier for them to wear Velcro tennis shoes.

All children, regardless of age, need at least one complete weather-appropriate change of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, and socks) at the center in case of a spill or accident. Bring an extra pair of shoes if available. Please pack the extra set of clothing in a zip-lock bag with **THEIR NAMES ON EVERYTHING** including each item of clothing. We are not responsible for lost items. If it is labeled and goes missing, it will surely find its way back. As the seasons change, please change the outfits left at the center. Young children may need several changes of clothing each day.

If a child needs "loaner" clothes from Hilltop Children's Center, a \$10 **Loaner Fee** is charged that is refunded if the items are returned washed and cleaned within one week.

Toilet (Potty) Training

The procedure of toilet Training at the center typically takes place in the two-year-old classroom. When you feel your child is ready for toilet (potty) training, we ask that you begin teaching at home during a weekend or vacation. See our checklist, "Is your child ready to be potty trained?" We will follow through and encourage your child while in care with the understanding that it will only work if we work together.

Toilet training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family. Our approach toward toilet training is one of positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children are never humiliated or punished for having an "accident" or shamed into using the toilet. The child's inability or unwillingness to use the toilet for elimination is referred to as an "accident" and treated in a matter-of-fact sort of way. We recognize that toilet learning takes time, and we do not rush the process.

We ask that children who have not fully learned to control themselves be in pull-ups at all times. Please make sure they have three changes of clothing and a bag of pull-ups at the center during this time. Also, please make sure they are wearing clothing that can be easily pulled up and down to encourage self-help skills. NO OVERALLS, BELTS, ONESIES (shirts that snag in the crotch), ONE-PIECE OUTFITS or ZIPPERS. An elastic waist is the best for kids and gives them a feeling of self-accomplishment when they can pull them up or down by themselves. Soiled clothes during any accident will not be washed at school. They are bagged and sent home. Please make sure to replace the clothes you took home with clean ones the next day.

Children 3-years old and up must be able to use the bathroom independently and be able to speak clearly before they move up to Preschool group.

Is Your Child Ready to be Potty Trained?

- Follows simple directions.
- Remains dry for at least 2 hours at a time during the day.
- Dry after naptime
- Regular and predictable bowel movements (some may have bowel movements every day and some may have them less frequently)
- walks to and from the bathroom, pulls down their own pants, and pulls them up again.
- Seems uncomfortable with soiled or wet diapers.
- Seems interested in the toilet.
- Has asked to wear grown-up underwear.

If the child has most of the skills marked, you can assume the child is ready to start toilet training.

Tooth Brushing

Children are provided an opportunity for tooth brushing to remove food and plaque. Toothbrushes and toothpaste are provided by parents and should be changed every 6 months.

Meals & Food Service

Each day the children have a fun time together around the table as they eat. Mealtime teaches patience, manners, independence, language development, and nutrition. Our menu policies are structured to provide children with a variety of foods that contain different colors and textures. The menu also includes whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, less processed items, and foods that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans established by the USDA. Mealtimes should be a pleasant time; therefore, children are always offered food but are not forced to eat it. Children, who choose not to eat, will not be served food until the next meal or snack. The menu is based on a 4-week rotating cycle, developed by Dr PJ Yazdi, a registered dietitian.

If your child has any food allergies or dietary restrictions, please let us know. If your child

requires an alternative meal, milk or substitution, a note from a doctor may be required. The doctor's note must include a recommended substitution. We will try to accommodate his or her dietary needs to the best ability.

As of September 2023, you have the option to purchase a meal plan or send a lunch box with your child.

We serve a healthy breakfast consisting of 1% organic milk and cereal until 7:45 as children arrive at school and a morning snack at 9:00. Please have your child here by these indicated times if you want them to eat breakfast or snack at the center. Children who arrive after 9:00 AM should eat breakfast/snack at home. Food and drinks are not allowed on the playground. A healthy lunch is served between 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Afternoon snack is served after nap time (3:00 PM) for Preschoolers, and at 3:30 for our After-School Program when they arrive at the Center. The monthly menu will be posted on the Parent Board.

If the meals we serve do not meet your criteria for whatever reason, that's perfectly fine; however, in this case, the child's breakfast and lunch will have to be provided by the parent. You may send a healthy lunch with your child. Sugary and/or high-sodium snacks are not allowed (cakes, donuts, candy, chips, etc.). Please remember we cannot refrigerate any outside food in our refrigerator. Therefore, we ask you to put a cold pack in your child's lunchbox to keep food at safe temperatures. Please review the HOME LUNCH PRACTICES below.

Following the State guidelines, the daily menu shall have the following components:

Breakfast - Milk, Fruit or Vegetable, Cereal or Bread alternative.

Snacks - Two of the following: Milk, Fruit or Vegetable, Bread or Bread alternative, Meat or Meat alternative.

Lunch - Milk, Fruit and Vegetable, Meat or Meat alternative, Bread or Bread alternative

If your child is going to be late to school, please let us know by 10 AM, so we can count him/her in our lunch planning or else there may not be enough food to serve your child. Otherwise, please make sure to send lunch with them to school if they arrive before 12.

PROGRAM PRACTICES

Written policies include the following:

- a) Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach.
- b) Staff are educated on food allergies, and they take precautions to ensure children are protected.
- c) On days that providers serve meals, prepared food that is brought into the program to be shared among children is commercially prepared OR prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials.
- d) That healthy snacks (as listed by the Texas Department of Agriculture) are available for

school aged children as students arrived.

e) That staff do not reward good behavior or clean plate with foods of any kind

f) That, on days that providers serve meals, milk, fresh fruit, and vegetables are available for children who bring lunches from home.

HOME LUNCH PRACTICES

Although we do not encourage it, children may bring a nutritious "sack lunch". **WE ARE A NUT-RESTRICTED CENTER**, so please do not send any food that contains peanuts or any tree nuts. A morning and afternoon snack, milk, and water will be provided by the Center. The lunch should include bread/grain (preferably whole grain), fruit, vegetables, and protein/meat products. **Lunches cannot be heated up or kept in a refrigerator.** Please ensure there is an ice pack for refrigerated foods or the use of a thermos to help maintain safe food temperatures.

Although we do not restrict all allergens, we would like to acquaint all our parents with the top 8 allergens: milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans.

We provide additional nutrition information in our parent resource handbook. Please feel free to ask any questions or express any concerns to the director.

Birthdays & Celebrations

If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday at Hilltop Children's Center, please discuss your plans with the classroom teacher at least one week in advance. He or she can advise you of any food allergies or scheduling conflicts.

Below is a list of approved nutritious snack foods; please choose from this list.

Recommended Party Foods

Fruit/cheese kabobs
Fresh fruit
100% frozen juice bars
Rice cakes with sprinkles
Banana pops
Yogurt with fresh fruit/parfait
Vegetable sticks with yogurt dip
Homemade banana bread
Homemade pumpkin bread
Homemade bran or fruit muffins
Quesadillas
Assorted Trail mix
Tortilla chips with homemade salsa & guacamole

Party Foods to Avoid

Cakes, cupcakes & cookies
Candy & gum
Marshmallows
Potato chips
Doughnuts
Fruit punch or fruit flavored drinks
Soda

If you celebrate your child's birthday away from the Center, we cannot distribute invitations in

the classrooms unless the entire class is invited.

At Hilltop Children's Center, we celebrate holidays and special occasions, such as Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Winter and Spring Festivals. We embrace diversity and believe it enriches our curriculum. If you have any family/cultural holidays or celebrations you would like us to include, please let us know. If you do not wish for your child to participate in any of these holidays or celebrations, please let us know that as well.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent Policy

Children spend a great deal of time outdoors during most days. If you would like your child to use sunscreen, please apply it in the morning before coming to school. Parents who want children to have a sunscreen touch-up in the afternoon will need to sign an authorization for applying sunscreen prior to outside play. If you are providing your own sunscreen, it must be a spray and have an expiration date on it. You must write your child's name on the bottle.

Hilltop Children's Center follows the recommendations put out by the State of Texas, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Cancer Society. Sunscreen and bug spray are considered over-the-counter topical medications and may not be safe for every child. Each product is unique and may have a different concentration of repellent. The labels should indicate the concentration and how many hours the repellent is capable of being effective before another application is needed. As with all other medications, parents must provide written permission for childcare providers to apply sunscreen to their child(ren).

Sunscreen and insect repellent should be applied to a child's skin only once a day BY THE PARENT but may be sprayed on clothes for later trips outside. Products containing DEET must have 10% or less concentration (of DEET) to be used unless otherwise indicated by a child's physician. Products must be EPA-approved.

Field Trips

Your child cannot participate in any field trip without your approval and written permission. You will be notified in advance of any field trip.

Physical Activity

Hilltop Children's Center recognizes the importance of physical activity for young children. Implementation of appropriate physical activity practices supports the health and development of children in care, as well as assisting in establishing positive lifestyle habits for the future.

To promote physical activity and provide all children with numerous opportunities for physical activities that are appropriate for their age and are fun Hilltop Children's Center will provide a variety of play materials (both indoors and outdoors) that promote physical activity. Weather permitting, toddlers (ages 1 through 2 years old) will be provided with at least 60-90 minutes of

daily outdoor active play opportunities, whereas preschoolers and school-age children (ages 3 thru 12 years old) will have at least 90-120 minutes of daily outdoor active play opportunities across 2 or 3 separate occasions. If the weather limits the outdoor time, indoor active playtime will be increased so that the total amount of active playtime remains the same.

We do not withhold active play from children as punishment for undesired behavior. If children's behavior during active play endangers themselves or others, they may be given time to calm themselves down before resuming cooperative play or be given the option to play alone.

Water Activities

Your child cannot participate in any water activities without your approval and written permission. We do not offer swimming activities. Water activities will be limited to water table-type activities. During the summer months, we will have "Splash Day" almost every week. We will have a sprinkler set up on the playground and other fun things to do. Please send a swimsuit, towel, spray sunscreen, swim shoes, swim diapers if in pull-ups, Ziplock bag for wet items, and a change of clothing to the Center with your child on these days.

Television Viewing

Hilltop Children's Center provides an activity-focused early learning environment. We believe children learn best through active participation, hands-on experiences, interactive conversation, and exploration.

We do not rely on television, movies or computers to fill space in our daily schedule. We strive to build daily routines that promote physical active play, and cognitive and social development.

In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation, children under age two, will not have access to television viewing, which includes watching videos, or DVDs, playing with video games, and using the computer.

For children ages 2 and older, television screen time is limited to around 1-2 hours per week and is limited to PBS Kids. Friday afternoons are dedicated to Movie and Popcorn Day. There will be an age-appropriate G-rated cartoon showing while the kids eat their afternoon snack. Our program does not include commercial broadcast television, commercial movies, or recreational computer use. There may be special learning occasions when a teacher may choose to show something that would follow a special topic she has covered with the children. We do not allow screen time during meals or snacks.

Technology in the Classroom

Each classroom has one tablet in the Technology Center. When this center is open, children will be allowed to log in to their Khan Academy account, set by the teacher. Once the timer goes off,

they must find a new center. Khan Academy offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that empowers learners to study at their own pace in and outside of the classroom.

School-age children and staff members are not permitted to use cell phones on campus. Staff is not allowed to text children or take pictures with cell phones or “friend” them on any social media site. Children are not able to carry personal cell phones, iPads, or iPods and if they have one it will be turned off and placed in their backpack.

Transportation

Currently, we have very limited transportation capabilities. After-School Program children at Santa Rita Elementary will be dropped off at Hilltop Children’s Center by the Liberty Hill ISD school bus. Please call Hilltop Children’s Center at 512-966-1106 as early as possible if your child will be absent.

Animals

Children learn responsibility and love by having pets, we do allow classroom pets (hamster, gerbil, or fish) at the center. All school pets should appear to be in good health and have all required immunizations. Because of the risk of a salmonella infection, reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets. Children shall be closely supervised while interacting with pets and instructed on safe behavior around animals. Any visiting animal will have the same documentation as classroom pets.

Please note that kids will try to pet the dogs next door. If your child has any allergies, please notify the Director and/or his or her teachers.

After-school Homework Policy

Hilltop Children’s Center stresses the importance of homework and sets time aside every day for the children to complete their school assignments. They will have access to a computer for schoolwork, as well as reference materials. Staff members are available to supervise the homework area and to assist the children with their work, however, a child who needs individual help with his or her homework must ask. Private tutoring may be purchased separately.

Children who do not wish to use homework time to complete their homework may use the time to read a book.

Biting Behavior in Young Children

The Centers recognize that biting is a normal stage of development that some young children go through. It is something they will outgrow in time. Young children who bite, bite for reasons, all of them normal and developmentally understood. Common reasons why children bite is teething,

exploring, stress, frustration, imitating behavior, personal space is violated or crowded, lack of vocabulary, signs of affection, to obtain attention.

To minimize incidents of biting we “shadow” the child who has exhibited biting behavior. We carefully observe the child who has bitten to determine if there is a pattern of when the biting behavior occurs. We comfort the child who has been bitten and firmly let the child who bit know that "biting hurts." and we offer an object to bite such as a teething ring or cold cloth.

Action Taken When a Biting Incident Occurs

- The child who was bitten is comforted;
- The child who bit is firmly told that “biting hurts” while we continue to comfort and focus on the child who was bitten;
- The bitten area is washed thoroughly with soap and water and inspected for broken skin;
- If the skin is broken, an administrator is immediately notified. Both sets of parents are contacted and advised to call their pediatricians; open wounds on the face or hands are the most vulnerable to infection;
- An injury/incident report is written for each of the children involved;
- Ongoing dialog is kept with parents and staff on classroom and home strategies being used to address and curb the biting behavior;
- Relevant articles are made available to parents and staff.

Challenging Behaviors

We believe all students and staff have a right to a safe and healthy environment. Where they can observe, learn, and practice the many social skills they need to get along and build friendships with their peers. We will discuss how to treat each other with kindness and respect.

If a child is having a difficult time maintaining positive behavior, the teacher, Director, and parent(s) will have ongoing conversations to express concerns and discuss strategies for addressing the behaviors. Conversations will be framed around school readiness and the objectives of our program. Parents will be kept informed of their child’s progress.

Challenging behaviors could be but are not limited to verbal (yelling, teasing, insulting, and threatening to cause harm), physical (hitting, kicking, spitting, biting), relational (excluding, turning friends against one, spreading rumors), cyberbullying (sending hurtful messages or images through the internet) and sexual harassment.

Each behavior will be addressed on an individual basis and may include an “Ouchie” or incident report, communication log, or other written document. The first time a behavior is observed at Hilltop Children’s Center, we will warn the child(ren) with an explanation of why the behavior is not acceptable and notify the parents of children involved in writing. The second time it happens,

the child will be removed from the classroom, and a parent conference will be scheduled. Parents of all children involved will be notified in writing. The third incident will call for immediate action. Parents are notified and must pick up the child and take them home. An administrative meeting will be required to discuss the continuation of the child with the Center. We reserve the right to deny the return of a child who is a risk to the safety and health of the staff and other children. Tuition will not be refunded for the month of termination.

Although the materials, supplies, and equipment at Hilltop Children's Center are chosen with durability in mind, misuse may cause permanent damage. You are responsible for any damage above and beyond normal wear and tear, whether intentional or not, caused by your child.

Discipline & Guidance

Our policy concerning behavior management ~ sometimes referred to as discipline ~ is based on the individual needs of the child, the ability of each child to understand what he/she is doing, and the consequences of their actions.

A child is never made to feel that the outcome of an act will result in physical or verbal abuse. Children are not told to "sit out" and "time out" is not used.

Created by Dr. Becky Bailey, Conscious Discipline® is a comprehensive classroom management program and a social-emotional curriculum. It is based on current brain research, child development information, and developmentally appropriate practices.

We emphasize the teaching of appropriate behavior, not the punishment of bad behavior.

Discipline at Hilltop Children's Center is:

- (1) Individualized and consistent for each child.
- (2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- (3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

Our staff uses positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- (1) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only on unacceptable behavior.
- (2) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements.
- (3) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- (4) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There is no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment.
- (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training.
- (3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child.
- (4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument.

- (5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth.
- (6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child.
- (7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
- (8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
- (9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Conscious Discipline® has been specifically designed to make changes in the lives of adults first. The adults, in turn, change the lives of children. When any staff member feels that he/she is unable to manage a situation with a child in an effective manner, he or she will direct the child to another staff member and take a break. Staff members assist one another in creating a positive, relaxed atmosphere.

Parent Conduct

It is a proven fact that children learn from what they see. All Hilltop Children's Center staff are expected to be courteous to every person who enters this center. In return, we expect the same treatment from anyone who enters our Center.

Cursing, rude, obnoxious, degrading, or sexually explicit language will not be tolerated in the Center or anywhere on the property of Hilltop Children's Center. Any person not adhering to this rule will be asked to leave the premises immediately. If the person(s) refuses to do so immediately, the Liberty Hill Police Department will be notified, and charges may be filed. If the person(s) in violation of this rule has children that currently attend our Center, the child's care may be terminated. If anyone is heard to be speaking in the above matter to any child, including their own, he or she will be referred to the Texas Department of Family Protective Services.

Hilltop Children's Center will not tolerate any type of physical abuse in our Center or anywhere on the property. Fighting of any type will not be tolerated. If the physical altercation involves a child, whether enrolled at our Center or not, the proper authorities will be immediately notified.

The only information teachers should share with parents is information concerning his or her child. Conversations about other children, other parents, co-workers, supervisors, etc., are unprofessional and illegal.

We reserve the right to discontinue your child's enrollment at any time if we find parent/guardian behavior to be detrimental or disruptive to the program or staff during indoor or outdoor activities. If you do not agree with or no longer prefer the services of our program and how we facilitate them, you have the right to discontinue care at any time.

Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting

At Hilltop Children's Center, we feel that child abuse and neglect is a very serious situation, and we take all evidence of such behaviors very seriously. We strive to make our Center a place

where all children feel safe and secure. All staff members of Hilltop Children's Center are mandated court reporters. We are required by law to report all incidents of child abuse, neglect, and/or deprivation to the Texas Department of Family Protective Services. Each staff member has been specifically trained to identify these particular behaviors in young children. It is neither our intent nor desire to judge anyone, but the safety and well-being of our students is our first priority. If any type of child abuse and/or neglect is suspected, the incident will be immediately documented and reported to the proper authorities.

Personal Belongings

Often children may want to bring in items related to the unit being studied or share items from a vacation. You should check with your child's teacher to see if there is a day designated for sharing such items. Please label all items brought to school.

We ask that children's toys stay at home unless they are brought in for a pre-arranged sharing at group time. Toys from home are difficult to share at other times, and we cannot be responsible if they become lost or broken. We realize that this is sometimes very hard --leaving a toy in the car during the day is a tactic that sometimes works if you can't leave the house without that special something. Comfort toys for naps are the only exception and should be kept in the child's cubby unless needed at "difficult" times.

We ask that children DO NOT bring the following items to Hilltop Children's Center:

- Toys and other items that may cause a distraction to the program in any way.
- Items such as toy guns, swords, knives, and any other toy of this nature.
- Items of significant importance and value to your child or family due to the possibility of loss or damage.
- Gum and candy
- Money
- Cosmetics and jewelry

Supporting Family Needs

Families and culture are celebrated at Hilltop Children's Center. The role of parents is vital. Family involvement and connectedness is an integral piece of what makes our program strong. Families are frequently visible in and around the center, sharing life and what they love with the children. Their role in informing and working together with their child's teacher is the glue that keeps our center in place. It is important to us that we develop skills and knowledge to work effectively with our diverse families. Our staff will use a variety of formal and informal strategies (including conversation) to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure, their preferred child-rearing practices and information families wish to share about their socio-economic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Program staff will actively use information about families to adapt the environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to the families we serve.

Parent Communication

Good communication is important in building a relationship between Hilltop Children's Center staff and parents. Please keep your child's teacher informed about any significant events happening in your child's life. We will keep you informed of any significant happenings at our Center through our monthly newspaper or on our Parent Board in the lobby.

Although we encourage that you give a quick report to your child's teacher about his/her mood, it may not be possible for you to have a long conversation with your child's teacher at drop-off or pick-up times as the teachers are responsible for supervising all of the children in their care. The Communication Board in each classroom should provide you with the general activities of your child's day.

If you have a special concern or would like to have an in-depth conversation with your teacher or the Director, a conference time can be scheduled. If there is a need for a long discussion outside of the conference times, please call the office at 512-966-1106, and we will arrange a convenient time for a meeting or phone call. You may also email your child's teacher through the Procure app with questions or concerns.

One parent-teacher conference will be scheduled during the year (usually in February or March) to share your child's progress. Please remember that staff usually cannot converse with you at length during arrival and departure time, since they must give their full attention to the children in care. You may request an additional parent-teacher conference anytime during the year.

Children often receive minor injuries (small cuts, scrapes, and bruises) during the course of their active play. You will be notified of any incidents through the Procure app. We will contact you immediately in the unlikely event that your child sustains a more serious injury or is put at risk in any way.

Texas Childcare Licensing rules require us to complete a written report on serious injuries and incidents. You will receive a copy of the report and will be asked to sign the report.

Electronic Communication, Photography, and Media

Hilltop Children's Center staff may use the center's digital camera or tablet to document children's activities. These photos are primarily used to document your child's progress and may be hung up for viewing in the Center. You will receive a release form during the registration process, granting or declining permission to Hilltop Children's Center and all staff to use still, motion, video, or audio recording of your child's image for use in conjunction with the production of visual bulletin boards, social media or other educational purposes.

With your permission, the Director will take pictures and videos of children for the program

brochure, email newsletter, member newsletter, and web page for advertising. Hilltop Children's Center has a public Facebook page as well as a closed page for parents. All parents will receive a release form during the registration process.

You are allowed to photograph, videotape or audio record your child, but not other children, while she or he is at Hilltop Children's Center. However, this recording may only be used for lawful and private home use. You may not publish, publicly display, or sell such recordings.

Parents are welcome to call Hilltop Children's Center to leave a message for their child at the After-School Program when necessary, but it is not possible for children to make or receive telephone calls while at Hilltop Children's Center.

Annual Program Evaluation

Once annually, usually in May, we request the parents to fill out an anonymous parent survey. All parent input into the program is greatly appreciated. The surveys are collated and reviewed by the Director. The results of the survey are then shared with the staff and are used to make subsequent changes based on the evaluation results.

Open Door Policy

It is our goal for you to feel comfortable with our program and philosophies. We have an open-door policy so please visit anytime! We encourage and support our families by offering gatherings throughout the year. We are always looking for new ideas on how to best include your family in our program so please share any suggestions you have with us.

If you have a question or concern that cannot be addressed by your child's teacher, please contact the director to arrange a meeting or call to discuss your concerns.

Parent Referral Program

The highest compliment our parents can pay us is the referral of family or friends to our schools. The trust and confidence that you place in us each and every day means a great deal. In appreciation of that trust and confidence, **you will receive a \$50 TUITION CREDIT for the first three months (total of \$150) a new enrollment as a result of your referral.** There are no limits on referrals! Each time a child is enrolled at Hilltop Children's Center as a result of your recommendation to other parents, you will receive a **\$150 TUITION CREDIT.**

Parent Visits and Participation

Parents may visit the center at any time. However, if there are problems arising from parent visits that interfere with the deliverance of quality childcare, then the parent(s) may be asked to leave the classroom. We suggest visits not be made between 12 PM and 2 PM as this is naptime.

There are several ways for you to participate in the class activities and events. You may be

involved by 1) Making things for the program, 2) Share your culture, hobby, or special interest
3) Share a talent or a job 4) Participate in special class activities or field trips.

Please talk to the Director about volunteer opportunities. We have several parties to celebrate holidays such as Christmas and Valentine's Day. We welcome your assistance and attendance to our parties.

If you volunteer, we will ask you to provide information for a criminal background check, complete a notarized affidavit about your background, and attend a short orientation session.

We are always looking for ways to improve our programs and we welcome your suggestions.

Gang Free Zone

Any area within 1000 feet of Hilltop Children's Center is considered a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized activity are subject to harsh penalties. Please the Parent Board for posting related to "Gang Free Zone".

Firearms, Weapons, and Drugs

In accordance with State Laws, smoking, alcohol, illegal drugs, firearms, hunting knives, bows and arrows, and other weapons are NOT allowed on Hilltop Children's Center premises and/or parking lot.

Pursuant to sections 30.06 and 30.07, penal code (trespassing by license holder with a concealed handgun or an openly carried handgun), a person licensed under subchapter H, Chapter 411, government code (handgun licensing law), may not enter Hilltop Children's Center with a concealed handgun and/or a handgun that is carried openly.

Law enforcement officials who are trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty may have firearms or ammunition on the premises of Hilltop Children's Center.

Emergency Preparedness

When the decision is made to evacuate Hilltop Children's Center facility, the Director – or person in charge – will make the announcement in the most expeditious way possible that all persons are to evacuate to their assigned assembly area and await further instruction. The building is to be evacuated completely. The Director, or person in charge, will notify appropriate personnel and communicate what type of emergency is present. A binder containing parent and emergency contact telephone numbers for each child in care, authorization for emergency care for each child and attendance record information for children in care at the time of emergency will be taken to the designated safe area. The children will be relocated to the designated safe area by the staff. 911 will be called from a cell phone outside the building once the evacuation is complete and all parents will be notified. The designated safe area is Margarita's Restaurant located at 10280 Highway 29, Liberty Hill 78642, phone number 512-515-0808. We will be

conducting lock-down, fire, and storm drills on regular basis. An in-depth emergency preparedness plan is available upon request.

Breast Feeding

Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their children while in care. If your child is still being breastfed, please let us know. The Center will provide a room with a seat for parents who would like to come in and breastfeed their child.

Upon request, a compilation of breastfeeding education and support resources in the community is provided to the parents.

Policy Revisions

Revisions to policies and procedures, contracts, and forms we make may be done with a minimum of 2 weeks' notice UNLESS it is a new regulation – these changes will take place immediately. Policies, contracts, and forms will be reviewed at least annually and updated, if necessary. We will notify parents in writing of any changes. All previous forms will become obsolete.

Reviewing Standards and Reports

A copy of the minimum standards is available for review in the office. Our most recent licensing inspector report is always posted on the Parent Board. You may also review the standards and our compliance history at www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/.

Contacting Child Care Licensing

We are regulated by the Department of Family and Protective Services (license # 1544107). You can find out more about the regulation of childcare facilities by visiting their website at www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/. You may contact the local licensing office by calling 512-834-3426.

You may report the suspected abuse or neglect of children by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800- 252-5400 open 24 hours/7 days a week.