



Hillcrest Children's Center

INVOLVEMENT • ACCEPTANCE • QUALITY • DIVERSITY • FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

I am struck by the fact that the more slowly trees grow at first, the sounder they are at the core, and I think that the same is true of human beings. We do not wish to see children precocious, making great strides in their early years like sprouts, producing a soft and perishable timber, but better if they expand slowly at first, as if contending with difficulties, and so are solidified and perfected. Such trees continue to expand with nearly equal rapidity to extreme old age.

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Hillcrest Children's Center

Mission Statement

Hillcrest Children's Center provides a quality play-based early childhood education program.

Program Description

As a parent-governed non-profit, Hillcrest supports the Anchorage workforce by partnering with working families to provide early childhood education programs. Since 1967 Hillcrest has welcomed and served children from six weeks to 12 years through full-day, year-round play-based educational programs. Hillcrest focuses on social-emotional development, inclusive classrooms, being outside, and open-choice play. This setting provides a strong foundation so that children enter Kindergarten ready to learn and with the skills to be positive members of their community.

Program Philosophy

Hillcrest focuses on play in a safe, caring, intentional environment designed to offer various experiences geared to the child's developmental needs. As children are always learning, the adults and the environment are the curriculum. Play that is meaningful to the child and supported by positive, responsive adults provides the best avenue for learning.

Values

The guiding values of Hillcrest are family, inclusiveness, and quality.

Organization Structure

Parents came together to establish the non-profit Hillcrest Day Care Center, Incorporated in response to the community's need for early childhood development and educational programs. In May 1994, the Board changed the name to Hillcrest Children's Center. Hillcrest is a tax-exempt organization defined in section 501(c)(3) of the tax code. Accordingly, all donations to Hillcrest are tax-deductible. The Board employs the Executive Director (Director). The Director has the authority to hire staff and handle the Center's daily operations. The Director oversees and performs those activities in the execution of the purposes and policies of the Center. All staff report to the Director.

Physical Facility

Hillcrest owns the building in which the Center operates. The physical facility complies with the building code of the Municipality of Anchorage. As required, the Board authorizes upgrades to the facility to maintain its quality and ensure the safety of our children.

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PROGRAM POLICIES

Behavior Guidance

Hillcrest's highest program goal is to guide children's social-emotional development to develop a foundation of self-regulation and empathy. These skills will encourage positive relationships with others and increase the child's ability to deal with everyday life. It is the "goal" of the program, not the skills we expect any child to have. Having realistic expectations based on the age and abilities of children is essential. Staff set the environment and routines based on the age and skills of the children in the classroom. **It is necessary to remember that behavior is a form of communication.** When a child behaves in an undesirable way, it is our job to figure out what needs the child is communicating with their behaviors. With this information, we try to avoid another situation where the child behaves in a socially inappropriate way by changing the environment, and teaching socially acceptable responses to meet that need.

To do this, staff need to react consistently to children's behavior. Hillcrest has five basic rules for positive behavior in a group, (listening ears, looking eyes, kind words, gentle hands, and walking feet). These rules are simple and state the behavior we want to see. When describing behavior, we use the straightforward language of "helpful" or "hurtful."

Children are trying to figure their way through their emotions and need guidance to do so. Discipline that is too strict allows adults to manage the behavior of most children through fear. While an authoritarian approach works well in the short term, as children develop, fear is no longer something that controls them. They learn that they can misbehave when there is no one watching or no one stronger around to control them. Discipline that is too lax does not help children know they are responsible for their actions. Adults who do not exert reasonable control fail to clarify the rules and expectations for behavior to children. Without proper guidance, children do not learn self-discipline (how to behave appropriately).

A middle ground between the extremes of strict and lax discipline works best in helping children develop the skills required for self-discipline. In this middle ground, rules are clear, expectations for behavior are age and developmentally-appropriate, and guidance is non-punitive and educationally sound. Children need to learn about rules, limits, and being responsible.

Prevention

The best discipline strategies are to prevent problems from even coming up or at least minimize problems that are likely in groups of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Staff in a classroom that is set up to avoid conflict and promote appropriate interaction understand what very young children can do well and what causes problems among them. They then arrange the children's environment to allow children to get along well with one another without unnecessary restrictions. Some discipline strategies that are preventative include:

- Maintaining a dependable routine
- Training staff and creating a supportive work environment
- Setting up spaces to meet children's differing needs (quiet vs. active play, sensory experiences, etc.)
- Keeping children busy, challenged, and interested
- Avoiding competition and crowding

Positive Methods of Discipline

Positive methods of discipline allow staff to control and guide children without emotionally or physically harming them. These methods are more likely to pay off in the long term to help children learn self-discipline and to cause less anger and hurt.

Examples of positive methods of discipline include:

Positive Attention

Children enjoy getting positive personal attention from adults. Giving children attention while behaving correctly makes it more likely for them to repeat the activity or continue it longer. Just showing enjoyment or interest is one of the most potent tools adults can use in helping children learn about acceptable behavior. Verbal praise is often empty of meaning if given too often, making children devalue it or, on the other hand, perform only for the praise. For example, a staff member creates bonds with children so that children trust, listen to, and want to please that adult by showing an interest in what children are doing, showing them affection or sympathy, listening to them express ideas, having fun, or helping them.

Redirection

Redirection is the most effective and positive means of guiding infants and toddlers because their actions are not usually determined by the kinds of understanding that an older child or adult will have learned. They are much more reactive and self-centered in their actions, not understanding that their actions might be dangerous or influence others. So, the best method to use is one in which they learn what to do, not just what not to do. Redirection means that when a child acts inappropriately (doing something not wanted by others), staff help the child focus on something else to do that is appropriate to achieve their goal. For example, if a toddler grabs a doll from another child, the staff points out that there are plenty of the same dolls to use in the baby bed and helps the child get one of those instead. Or if a child is throwing toys and staff members recognize that the child wants to practice throwing, they encourage them to throw bean bags into a box. If a child is wandering aimlessly (and heading for trouble), staff help them to become involved in an activity they enjoy. If a child climbs on furniture, staff members redirect them to another acceptable activity, such as climbing on a safe piece of active physical play equipment. Giving alternatives to aggression that are peaceful, such as touching gently rather than pulling another child's hair, is also an example of redirection.

Intervening and Working it Out

Conflict is a natural part of being part of a group. Staff will support children in handling social interactions and/or conflicts in a respectful and kind manner. During conflicts, teachers will model and support respectful words and gentle touches. "Inside voices" will be modeled. We will introduce the concept of empathy and working together.

Young children need to begin to experience how their choices affect others. Helping children understand the effects of their actions on others means that in addition to intervening positively to solve a problem, the adult calls the child's attention to their effect, explaining the response or feelings of the other person. Examples of staff helping children understand include:

- A mobile infant pulls on a sleeping baby, and as the baby wakes and cries, a staff member intervenes, gently saying, "look, Thomas. You woke up Roberto. They don't want to be pulled on. See their face. Roberto wants to sleep. I'll pat their back, and you can see them go to sleep. Then we will go and play."
- A child grabs the pacifier from another child's mouth, and a staff member responds, "Erica, Molly wants their pacifier back. See their sad face? Look here [calling Erica's attention to Molly's face]. We can wash this pacifier and give it back to Molly. Your pacifier is in your cubby. Do you want yours?"
- A child stretches out a hand to retrieve the marker taken by another child. When the other child does not respond, the staff member says, "Look at Emma, Charlie. They are asking you to give the marker back. See their hand? Can you give it back? They felt angry when you took it."

- Noah tugs on Jesse’s shirt, trying to move past him to reach a toy. Jesse shoves Noah in the face to stop them. Noah falls over and cries. The staff member responds, “You did not like Noah pulling on your shirt, did you, Jesse? But you can’t push them. You can say, ‘Stop.’ Put up your hand and say, ‘Stop.’ That’s right, ‘Stop.’ And Noah, next time, you need to walk around Jesse. See, you can go around them this way.”

- Cathy grabs a crayon from Thelma and hits them as Thelma reaches to take it back. The staff member responds, saying, “Thelma, are you OK? You did not want Cathy to take that crayon. You are still using it.

Cathy, you wanted that red crayon. You need to ask Thelma if they will let you use it. Hold out your hand and say, ‘Crayon, please.’ Now, wait to see if Thelma will give it to you. No, they are using it some more. Try again. Now they are giving it to you. Thank you, Thelma. Thank you for sharing the red crayon with Cathy!”

Although infants and toddlers do not intend to hurt others, they do learn that hurting is an effective way of getting some things that they want. For example, a toddler who bites another child to get a toy soon learns that biting works (if they do not get caught). Such negative behaviors may continue if adults do not intervene appropriately to teach that another communication is more effective and a more satisfying means to an end in the long term. The biter does not realize that no one will like them if the biting continues and that there are other problems with hurting others. They can only focus on what they want right at that moment.

Young children have little understanding that their actions impact other people differently from how they affect objects. When an infant pulls another baby’s hair, they only know they are reaching for something shiny and attractive. They are curious to see what it does when they grab it, just as they are curious to see what happens when they pull the string on a toy. They do not connect the crying noise they hear with the hair-pulling. Responsible adults must ensure that they do not allow the infant to treat others as objects while encouraging the learning necessary to understand their effect on others.

Similarly, the toddler who yanks another child from the tricycle they want only perceives the other child as an object in the place they want to be. They do not think about the personal consequences of pulling the other child from the tricycle; they only focus on their goal. (For toddlers, the attractive goal is very often what another child is doing, because toddlers are great imitators in their learning.) When toddlers see another child doing something fun, often they will want to do that activity too, as they learn by imitation.

Children's inability to understand the effects of actions on others often leads adults to misinterpret children’s intentions. They see the troublesome behavior as “bad,” so they resort to punishment to stop it, which causes physical or emotional pain for the child and weakens the bond between child and adult. It takes effort and intelligence on the part of staff to teach children that using communication is a more effective strategy to use in getting along with others. The earlier this is started with children, the better the results as children get older. Certain practices are required in teaching children the skill of using communication rather than physical aggression to solve problems.

Staff must:

- Intervene in a timely fashion when there is a problem of aggression
- For a child who cannot talk, encourage the gestures or sign language that help communicate the child’s need while providing the words to be used in place of aggression
- For a child who can talk, help by encouraging the use of words and appropriate gestures
- Ensure that proper communication attempts made by children effectively get what the child wants. Otherwise, children will go back to using what works, even if it is not acceptable.

Using Solution Kits or Feelings Area

Solution kits usually contain choices that children can make together to resolve problems, such as “Taking turns,” “Finding something else to play with,” “Sharing,” etc. Tucker Turtle is another method a child can use to work together to find a solution. These solution strategies teach children that they can handle social situations independently and appropriately.

When children experience a conflict in Preschool, we refer them to skills learned in the toddler classrooms and practice new solutions such as “get a teacher,” “ask nicely,” “ignore,” say “Please,” “play together,” say “please stop,” “share,” “trade,” “wait and take turns,” and “get a timer Sometimes.”, the solution may not be satisfying for a child, but it enforces an appropriate rule that protects others. For example, when toddlers fight for the doll, the staff member might say, “Jasmine had the doll. They were not finished playing with it. You cannot take the doll from them. Here is another doll you can use.” The other toddler might continue to want the doll held by Jasmine and not be satisfied with the solution. In this case, the way to continue with the positive method would be to reassure the child that the other doll will be available to play with again, accept their feelings, and help them to find some other fun activity to do (redirection).

Out of Control, Dangerous Behavior

Rarely, but at times, a child can become incredibly overwhelmed and begin behaving in a way that is unsafe to themselves or others and/or gravely disrespectful to staff or peers. This behavior may include hitting, kicking, spitting, biting (intentional by a Preschooler), knocking over furniture, throwing materials, and other behaviors that may persist and will cause harm to others or themselves if not addressed. **Again, we must remember that the child is communicating with us with their behavior, and we need to respond respectfully and safely.**

In response to out-of-control, dangerous behaviors, staff may **not** threaten, bribe, use ANY physical punishment, deprive the child of food or access to the bathroom, humiliate, isolate, or chemically or physically restrain them. These responses will likely lead to immediate termination of employment.

Other children may be directed away from the child to another part of the classroom, or the child may be offered a change of environment to provide space for the child to re-regulate. This is not to “punish” the child but done in recognition that the child’s brain has been overloaded and is in the alarming state of fight/flight/freeze. Use the words “our friend is having a hard time right now and is telling us that they need some space” in verbalizing what is happening to the other children. With an older child, offering them to step away from the other children into a neutral space is something the child may choose to do. With less stimulation, a simple change of space may provide a better space for the child to calm. Staff will stay near the child, maybe calmly rubbing the child’s back or just calmly cleaning an area near the child so the child knows someone is there when ready. It is important at these times to remember to limit verbal interaction with the child so they can work on getting out of alarm into regulation.

Once the child has calmed down, it is important to remember it is easy to re-escalate, especially if you talk about what just upset them. The young child’s brain is not developed enough to do much processing after the fact. If they were able to have chosen better, they would have. The goal is to have the child rejoin the classroom. If there is an ability to make amends if another was injured, help the child do so.

This may look like, “Mary looked hurt and scared when you grabbed the book out of their hands and hit them with it. Would you like to ask them how you can make it up?” We do not require children to apologize because it has little to no meaning to them. Instead, we look for ways for the child to “make it right.” Again, remember the goal is returning to the classroom activities, so do not push the point.

For those concerned that the above response is permissive and does not teach the child not to behave that way again, first, let us explain that when someone is in an escalated state, they are NOT able to learn anything. The time to teach socially appropriate responses to conflict is when the children are not in conflict through stories, and role plays. Hillcrest's policy is NEVER to call a family to pick up their child for poor behavior. This sends the message to the child that we cannot handle their behavior, which further causes them not to trust you.

It is important to document interventions used using the Behavior Report, noting who was involved; where was everyone located in the classroom/building; what happened before, during, and after, and why you think the behavior occurred (often, it was to get or avoid something). This is the process of being a “Behavior Detective” and will help your team support the child and you in the future.

The Director will notify the parent(s) and licensing if necessary. If a child was removed from the classroom for more than ten minutes for their or the other children’s safety, then both parties MUST be notified. The parents will be notified by phone and licensing through the correct form. Regardless if it requires notification, staff must document the incident.

Prohibited Responses to Children

Cruel, humiliating, or otherwise damaging disciplinary techniques are strictly prohibited and grounds for immediate termination. Examples of such techniques are as follows;

- Discipline associated with food or rest
- Punishment for bedwetting or actions regarding toileting or toilet training
- Having one child discipline or punish another
- Subjecting a child to verbal abuse, derogatory remarks about the child or family members, or threats to expel the child from Hillcrest
- Placed in a locked room
- Active physical restraint.

Next Steps

When a child repeatedly displays intense behaviors, we will schedule a meeting with the family to develop a plan that focuses on how to support the child. This meeting is an opportunity to share what the family and staff experiences with the child and what we believe the child may be responding to. The Director is trained in applied behavior analysis and classroom interventions. We will present any interventions we have tried and a draft plan of further interventions that we believe will help the child.

We will also discuss outside influences impacting the classroom, such as medical conditions. It is important to have completed a current ASQ:3 and ASQ:SE3 within the past six months. (See Developmental Screening section) We may recommend that the child seek further evaluation from outside agencies, such as early intervention services, to implement the best plans for the child’s success.

If the plan that we agreed upon and implemented does not give the desired outcomes, we may want to contact outside agencies for assistance. Sometimes, it helps to get assistance from an outside expert when problems persist.

Teachers sometimes need another point of view that is not found within the classroom or the Center. Another professional will likely look at the child and the environment more objectively.

The Director will schedule another meeting to discuss the recommendations for referral and complete the necessary paperwork.

We want every family to know that these situations are stressful for ALL adults involved, the staff, the family of the child displaying the behaviors, and the parents of the other children in the class. Hillcrest recognizes this, which is why we have in-depth training, policies, and procedures throughout this process. Providing support for struggling children requires a lot of energy and resources; therefore, we require that the family follow through on all recommendations for outside evaluation, services that the child qualifies for, and funding streams to support Hillcrest in providing our services. While Hillcrest will not remove a child from the program due to their behavior, we will terminate services from a family who does not follow through on our recommendations. (See the Concerns section.)

Child Abuse Reporting

Alaska State Statutes and Anchorage Child Care Center Regulations require that licensed childcare providers report all incidents of suspected or actual abuse and neglect of children regardless of whether they occur in or are related to the facility. This facility is therefore obligated by law to report such incidents within 24 hours to the Child Protection Office of Children's Services (Alaska Department of Health and Human Services) at 269-4000.

Centers must notify the Municipal Child and Adult Care Licensing Office of incidents alleging a child was abused or neglected when the Center is responsible for the child. Municipal Child and Adult Care Licensing Office: 343-6536

Clothing and Personal Belongings

Hillcrest is a play-based program that values spending time in nature. The children play outdoors for one hour each day unless it is below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, factoring in wind chill or especially icy weather.

Whether the weather be fine
Or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not.

Children must come dressed in comfortable clothing suitable for a variety of activities inside and outdoors. Children need to come to school in clothing used in a layering system that helps regulate your child's body temperature, keeping them warm or cool when needed. This includes a base layer, clothing, and then outerwear. We want to avoid having a child in tears because they are cold and miserable while their friends are having a good time playing.

While a limited supply of extra clothing is available for an occasional forget, we will not limit a class from going outside due to lack of gear. Hillcrest will purchase appropriate gear to be left at the Center and

bill the cost of the gear to the families of those who are not able to provide gear or forget it more than once a month. For more information, please see the packets regarding appropriate layers and gear for winter available in the entryway.

We require families to leave at the Center:

- two changes of clothes, including socks (every piece needs to be labeled)
- Diapers (if needed)
- Any ointments that you prefer
- Blanket
- Full rain/snow gear (depending on the season, after 12m) to include
 - o rain/snow boots
 - o rain/snowsuit
 - o gloves/mittens (for snow in winter and mud play the rest of the year)
 - o Hat
 - o neck-warmer in winter
- Classroom Shoes that can be taken on and off without adult assistance; stay securely on foot during activities (recommended to have a soft upper part with flexible soles that allow toes to spread and grasp naturally to promote natural, agile, confident movement and comfort while sitting on the floor)
- Water Bottle
- Preschool: Backpack
- Nap Items: fitted crib sheet with thin blanket or nap role, such as those from “Urban Infant.”

Developmental Screening

Because your child’s first five years of life are so important, we want to help you provide the best start for your child. As part of our services, we provide the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-3) to help keep track of your child’s development at different intervals. If a child could benefit from additional support, research has shown that receiving them as early as possible makes the most substantial impact.

Additionally, research has shown that less than half of children who qualify for additional services will be identified from parental concerns and/or a routine pediatrician visit. When developmental screening tools, such as the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-3 are used, the percentage increases to over 85%.

ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-3 is a set of questionnaires about children’s development. It has been used for more than 20 years to make sure children are developing well. It is called a screener because it looks at how children are doing in important areas, such as speech, physical ability, social skills, and problem-solving. It will ask you some things your child can and cannot do.

ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-3 can help identify your child’s strengths and areas where your child may need support.

While the leadership staff is trained in administering the questionnaires, it is strongly encouraged for family caregivers to complete the screening. Most screenings only take 15 minutes to complete with your child. If staff is to conduct the screening in the classroom, no child will be forced to complete the activities at any time. We ask that families complete the screening tool for their children every six months. We hope we will schedule a time with your family to compare results; at minimum, we will give you a copy of our results. You can find the link to the screeners on our website or email the office to have the link sent to you.

If the questionnaires show that your child is developing without concerns, we will provide some developmental activities and the subsequent questionnaire at the appropriate time. If the questionnaires show possible concerns, we will offer referrals for outside resources to obtain a more detailed assessment of your child. Staff will only share information with other agencies with your consent.

Enrollment into Hillcrest implies consent for the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-3 developmental screenings. To find more information about the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-3 please see their website at <http://www.agesandstages.com> and speak with the Director.

Drop Off and Pick Up

Children must be accompanied by their responsible adult into Hillcrest every morning and signed in to their classroom upon arrival. This is for protection in case of a fire or other emergency. All children must be picked up and signed out by an adult listed on the Emergency Child Record. The guardian must notify the office and make changes to the Emergency Child Record whenever necessary. At a minimum, guardians must update this form twice a year. In cases of emergency, guardians may call Hillcrest and give verbal approval for an alternative individual. However, this is strongly discouraged. Anyone not recognized by sight will be asked for a picture I.D. Parents involved in a custody agreement must furnish Hillcrest with a legal copy. Hillcrest cannot refuse the other parent access to the child without the court document.

Hillcrest reserves the right to not allow any individual onto Hillcrest property for drop-off or pickup if they have previously created a problem.

Electronic Media Use

Hillcrest does not rely on movies and/or television media to entertain or educate our children. However, this educational tool could have its place in the curriculum on a limited basis, no longer than 1 hour in 24 hours, not regularly, and not for children younger than 3.

Emergency Procedures

In any event, our building is not safe to re-enter after evacuating due to an emergency; Hillcrest has designated the following as our safe zone: Lighthouse Christian Fellowship (629 Hollywood Drive) and Calvary Baptist Church (401 E. Manor). We follow the Municipality of Anchorage's (MOA) lead for emergency closures. If the MOA sends all but essential personnel home, you are expected to pick up your child immediately. Suppose the MOA is continuing normal business operations, but we cannot. In that case, attempts will be made to reach all parents as quickly as possible to notify them of the situation.

Fire

In the event that the fire alarm goes off, we evacuate the building as fast as possible. We are required to practice a fire drill at least once a month. We do not take time to dress children in the winter or rainy season as we are trying to model the correct reactions to fire alarms: evacuate the building and go to the "safe" spot to meet their families or classmates. If a parent is in the building during an evacuation, we require you to escort your child with their class to the evacuation destination.

Enrollment

Hillcrest is licensed to care for 68 full-time children from the ages of 6 weeks thru 12 years.

Guaranteed Start Agreement

In most situations, Hillcrest uses a Guaranteed Start when filling openings. This allows families to know for certain when they will be able to start at Hillcrest. As soon as the decision that Hillcrest

is the place for your child(ren), we will sit down with you and tell you the projected time the next opening will take place in the age/developmental level group of your child(ren). This opening will be made available for you to reserve at that time. Openings are reserved when the Guaranteed Start Agreement is filled out with the proper payments. Prospective clients who do not choose to reserve the opening cannot be guaranteed that the opening will be available at a later date.

In some instances, the openings become available before we had originally anticipated. If this happens, you will be given the opportunity to move up your start date.

If you choose to move your start date up, your official guaranteed start date will become the agreed upon, and all the stipulations of this agreement will be effective on the new date.

The \$150 Registration fee and \$500 tuition deposit are due in order for you to be given a guaranteed start date (\$650 total). You will be responsible for full tuition effective the start date, whether or not your child is in attendance. Failure to pay the rest of the first month's tuition by the first of that month will constitute a forfeiture of the Registration fee, any payment toward tuition, and your child's spot in the Center. Tuition deposits are refundable if Hillcrest is given a written notice more than one calendar month before your guaranteed start date. Registration/Resource fee is non-refundable. Enrollment contracts supersede Waitlist Agreement forms.

Leave

There are situations that occasionally arise due to family emergencies and/or vacations requiring children to be away from the Center for more than one week. Hillcrest does not give refunds for days a child is away from the Center and does not hold open spots. However, a parent can arrange with the Director to pay 50% of the monthly rate for up to two months' leave to reserve a spot if the child will be gone for a full calendar month. If a parent chooses to pull their child for a month or two, they may:

- Fill out a Guaranteed Start date form and pay the fees associated with setting up a return date if one is known to be available.
- Take the risk of losing the spot by not paying. You can check with the Director frequently to see if a spot is still available.

Part-time Spaces

Part-time spaces are limited to space availability.

Three or fewer regularly scheduled days per week are part-time; otherwise, it is considered full-time enrollment. Families must commit to a set weekly schedule to enroll as part-time and are not allowed to switch days. If a family needs to add a day occasionally, they must email a request at least one day in advance. We will bill the daily fee to your account when approval is given.

Multi-child discount does not apply toward Daily Enrollments.

Required Documents

The following records must be on file before a child will be admitted to Hillcrest Children's Center. It is the parent's sole responsibility to get these documents to the Director and keep all information current. Failure to keep these records current may result in the child's dismissal from Hillcrest.

- Enrollment Contract
- Emergency Record Card (updated semi-annually)
- Child and Adult Food Program Enrollment Form and Confidential Income Statement (completed at enrollment and every October)
- Current Immunization Records (Provide updates each time immunizations are given) or a signed medical or religious exemption form approved by the State of Alaska.

- Annual Physical examination dated within the last 12 months. (Updated yearly)
- Current childcare assistance authorization, if applicable.
- Plan of Care, if applicable. While every child has special needs, some are more apparent than others. Hillcrest works with families and specialists to meet the individual needs of each child enrolled in our program. For a child who has been identified as not functioning according to age-appropriate expectations in the areas of cognitive, communicative, perceptual, motor, physical, or social development, Hillcrest is committed to working with the families and specialists to help ensure that child's success. The Director will create a Plan of Care with the families to be implemented by the teachers so that the child may receive the required help, program adjustments, or related services regularly to function in an adaptive manner.

Withdrawal

Parents must give Hillcrest a minimum of **ONE FULL CALENDAR MONTH'S** notice before termination of enrollment. An example would be notice given on April 18th; the earliest withdrawal date would be May 31st. Parents will be financially responsible for all tuition costs and other appropriate fees through the withdrawal date.

Hillcrest can mutually agree to an earlier withdrawal date if the office can fill the spot. This does not negate Hillcrest's ability to terminate a family's enrollment as otherwise specified in the Parent Handbook.

Concerns

It is Hillcrest's responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing group care experience for families that reflects our values of parent involvement, quality, acceptance, diversity, and family environment. It is essential to have relationships based on mutual trust with families. If we feel that any of these are compromised, the Director is responsible for making decisions that ensure that improvements are made.

Hillcrest strongly believes that parents need to act first and foremost to find a care situation that meets their family's needs, especially in having their child in a place where they trust in their child's ability to be safe and develop appropriately. When families have concerns or questions about Hillcrest, we ask they speak with the lead teacher and/or Director to express their concern and seek resolution as soon as the concern is realized.

Teachers balance supervision of children and communication with families at drop-off and pickup. A meeting may need to be requested to ensure that your concern gets the attention it deserves. When a concern is brought to the staff, a parent concern form should be filled out and sent to the office for a resolution. A parent should receive a copy of this form within two days.

Please follow up with the office if one is not returned. When families do not agree with the policies, procedures, or practices of Hillcrest, it is their responsibility to find other care arrangements.

Hillcrest reserves the right to terminate services at any time if it is decided that placement at Hillcrest is not in the best interest of either the registering family and/or Hillcrest.

Dismissal may occur if an adult is in non-compliance with policies, non-payment, breach of the enrollment contract, acts in a way that creates safety concerns, shows un-warranted disrespect or mistrust of personnel, uses threatening communications or conduct towards any participant, staff member, or others associated with Hillcrest that creates an unsafe or hostile work environment. Registering parents/adults must follow the policies described in this handbook, including attending parent conferences and paying childcare fees/late charges.

Confidentiality

Staff will not communicate information about a child to anyone, not on the Emergency Child Record.

While the staff is always willing to discuss your child with you, we ask that families do not inquire about

another child. Hillcrest strives to be a safe and accepting environment for all families. We ask that families refrain from holding conversations or commenting on others at Hillcrest that would not support a safe and accepting environment.

Field Trips

Hillcrest may include trips for children who are three years and older. Where possible, these trips are related to the current enrichment themes. Participation in all field trips is subject to written parental permission and the approval of the Municipality of Anchorage Child/Adult Care Licensing Department. Before the trip, Hillcrest will allow parents to view the plans and decline consent for their child's participation. Alternate care and appropriate activities will be available at Hillcrest for children not participating in field trips, excluding school-age programs which are field trip based.

Volunteering to chaperone a field trip is a great way to strengthen the bond between Hillcrest and home. As those who work with, and thus influence, our young children in a variety of ways, family volunteers have certain critical obligations.

- **Confidentiality:** all information (written or observed) belongs primarily to the children and their parents. We ask that anything visitors or volunteers see, hear, or are privy to during your visits not be shared in any way with anyone except the class teacher or Director.
- **Role-Model Behavior:** it is important that volunteers exhibit behavior worthy of imitation during outings. Please do your best to model fairness, integrity, a clean and odor-free appearance, and an appropriate demeanor for the group's activity (reverent and composed).
- **Class Culture:** our children are coming together as a community with different levels of confidence, trust, and skills. At no time, should volunteers make judgments, assessments, or comparisons of the children. We ask that all requests and comments are made from a strength-based approach, for example, "Use walking feet" vs. "Stop running."

Firearm Policy

Under Alaska state statute, Sec. 11.61.220, and Hillcrest's intent to provide a safe and healthy environment, firearms are not permitted in the building or on the grounds at any time unless secured in a parent's locked vehicle. Staff is instructed to call 911 immediately if a firearm is seen on the premises violating this policy.

Hours of Operation

Hillcrest is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. All families must be out of the building by 6:00 p.m., minus Board Meeting nights, to ensure compliance with labor laws.

The Center closes in observance of the following scheduled holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- President's Day
- Friday following Thanksgiving
- Memorial Day
- Christmas Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day

If a holiday falls on a weekend, either the Friday before or the Monday after, Hillcrest will be closed in observance of the holiday.

Hillcrest closes for In-Service days throughout the year. These days are used to conduct training for the staff. The Board of Directors approves the closure of the Center. Families on a part-time enrollment cannot attend another day of the week if we are closed on their regularly attending days without following the procedures outlined in the Enrollment section. You can find these dates on our website.

Occasionally, the Board will close the Center to accommodate special needs, such as facilities maintenance. Hillcrest will notify parents in advance to make alternative care arrangements when this occurs.

Insurance

Hillcrest maintains Property, Liability, and Worker's Compensation insurance.

Licensing Agency

Hillcrest Children's Center, Inc. is a licensed childcare facility and falls under the authority of the Municipality of Anchorage, Department of Health and Human Services, Child and Adult Care. Please see Appendix C: MOA Guide to Licensed Child Care Programs for contact information.

The licensing agency monitors and conducts extensive annual reviews for compliance with Anchorage Municipal Codes governing Hillcrest Children's Center.

The agency is also responsible for investigating complaints and coordinating fire prevention. Municipal Child Care Codes may be found at <http://www.muni.org/health1/index.cfm>

Hillcrest's records with the Child/Adult Care Licensing Department are available for review by contacting the Department of Health and Human Services, Child/Adult Care Unit, P.O. Box 196650, Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6650 or the Municipality of Anchorage's website: <http://hhs.muni.org/childcare/>.

Meals

Hillcrest provides breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack for children. Families can find the current menus on our website and posted in the kitchen.

The USDA Child Nutrition Program supports access to healthy meals for all participants, including those with disabilities who have special dietary needs. Under the law, a disability is an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, which can include allergies and digestive conditions, but does not include personal diet preferences. Any child needing accommodations from the school menu due to medical disability, non-disabling medical condition, or parental preference must complete the required documentation within one week of requesting the change.

Medical Disability or Non-Disabling Medical Condition

For children who cannot consume fluid milk due to medical disability, non-disability medical condition, or other special dietary needs non-dairy beverages may be served in place of fluid milk. Non-dairy beverages must be nutritionally equivalent to milk and meet the nutritional standards for the fortification of calcium, protein, vitamin A, vitamin D, and other nutrients to levels found in cow's milk and must be unflavored due to the higher sugar content of flavored varieties.

For children who have a medical disability or non-disabling medical condition that requires accommodation to their diet, families must submit a completed CACFP Medical Statement or documentation from a medical professional authorized to write medical prescriptions [Medical Doctor (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Physician's Assistant (PA) with prescriptive authority, Naturopathic Physician, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)] that entails the following

The medical statement shall identify the following:

- The participant's disability or medical condition with an explanation of why the disability restricts the participant's diet
- The major life activity affected by the disability or medical condition requiring accommodations;

- The specific diet or accommodation that the medical authority has prescribed. For example: “All foods must be in liquid or pureed form. Participant cannot consume any solid foods.”
- The type of texture of food that is required
- The specific foods that must be omitted and suggested substitutions
- The specific equipment required to assist the participant with dining. Examples might include a sippy cup, a large handled spoon, wheelchair-accessible furniture, etc.

Parent Provided Meals

Parents may choose to opt out of Hillcrest-provided meals by submitting the necessary documentation to the office. Food brought from home must meet the CACFP meal requirements for necessary components and serving size for each meal. This must come to Hillcrest in a labeled, dated container containing the day's worth of meals. Hillcrest cannot provide any refrigeration or heating of food brought from home. Families need to purchase the required supplies to ensure correct food storage.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800)845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Hillcrest Children’s Center prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information.

Notification of Program and Policy Changes

The Director presents any significant program or policy changes to the parent board for review at the regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The results of these discussions and subsequent changes are posted in the entryway on the parent information boards, updated in email news, sent home in flyers, and written in the newsletter.

Nursing Parents

Nursing parents, as all guardians, are welcome to drop by anytime. Nursing parents are encouraged to introduce a bottle to the infant before enrollment at Hillcrest. If the baby is nursing and has not learned to drink from a bottle, the parent must plan to come to the Center to nurse the baby as needed. If the parent cannot make it to the Center to feed the baby and the baby will not take milk from a bottle, caregivers are instructed to call to have the baby picked up from the Center. If a nursing parent chooses to skip the

bottle, it is mandatory that the infant has learned to receive milk from a cup or, at the very least, has had some experience with it. It is expected that parents are continuing to work through this learning process at home, helping to keep feedings consistent between home and Center.

Hillcrest's policy is that infants are fed on demand, whether bottle-fed or nursed. It is our goal to keep your baby happy. Please see our guide to breastfeeding that was put together by a parent and infant teacher.

Outdoor Play

Hillcrest values the importance of outdoor play. The play yards are equipped with a variety of equipment, as well as large open spaces for free play. The children play each day outdoors unless it is below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, factoring in wind chill or especially icy.

Whether the weather be fine
Or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not.

Children must come to the Center with the appropriate outdoor clothing. Children need a full snowsuit, boots, mittens, and hat or full rain gear, depending on the season. While a limited supply of extra clothing is available for an occasional forget, we will not limit a class from going outside due to lack of gear.

Hillcrest will purchase appropriate gear to be left at the Center and bill the cost of the gear to the families of those who are not able to provide gear or forget it more than once a month.

Please see the packets regarding appropriate layers and gear for winter available in the entryway for more information.

Outside Employment of Staff

Hillcrest Children's Center hires staff to work in a group care scenario, and this employment should not be seen as a qualification for providing outside employment, including child care services. Further, these arrangements and outside relationships can cause difficulties in group care settings. Therefore, Hillcrest strongly discourages staff members from engaging in private employment for currently enrolled families. Should a family and staff member decide to enter into a private employment arrangement, paid or unpaid, Hillcrest Children's Center requires that both parties disclose this in advance by signing an indemnification agreement and provide such agreement to Hillcrest Children's Center prior to babysitting. Failure to provide the indemnification agreement will subject staff to disciplinary action, and could result in the termination of staff employment or family enrollment.

Parent's Night Out

In addition to our regular program, Hillcrest offers a "Parent's Night Out" on the second Saturday of each month, except for December which is held on the first Saturday of the month. Parent's Night Out sign-up is sent out through Sign-Up Genius. A minimum fee will be billed to your account for all families who signed up, even if they cannot attend. The late fee policy applies for children picked up after closing. The "Parent's Night Out" Program is run by Hillcrest staff and includes developmentally appropriate activities and meals.

Parent Participation

Hillcrest was founded as a parent co-op and kept the creation of community as a core value. One of the ways that are accomplished is through parent participation. There are various ways to volunteer your time

and talents to the Center. The opportunities available at Hillcrest are only limited by what we know. There are long-term projects and one-time events.

There are opportunities to lead a project or to perform a single task—work projects, bi-annual cleanup, fundraising, special events planning, grant writing, etc. An ongoing list of opportunities is on the dry-erase Board in the entryway. Please share your talents and interests with Hillcrest by completing the Parent Volunteer survey, attending the monthly Board Meetings, or speaking with the Director. If you are ever concerned about meeting your volunteer obligations, please speak with the Director.

To ensure fair treatment and to meet operational goals, the Board moved in 2007 to require each family to donate a minimum of 20 hours per year at the Center. In 2010 the Board voted to allow for a buy-out option instead of volunteering.

Volunteer hours are tracked from July 1st through June 30th. At the end of June, a family who has not completed their volunteer hours will be billed \$20 per hour not completed. It is important to keep the Director informed of your volunteer hours by either writing it on the list in the entryway or by email. In addition, family volunteer participation is prorated on the time of year a family enrolls. If a family enrolls in April through June, we invite them to participate but will allow a three-month grace period to adjust to Hillcrest.

Enroll July thru Sept 20 hours

Enroll Oct thru Dec 15 hours

Enroll Jan thru March 10 hours

Parking Policy

Hillcrest has a drop-off area at the front of the building. Due to limited space in this area, please park in one of the parking spaces if you anticipate being in the building longer than 5-10 minutes. All vehicles in the front of the building may not be left running and should be locked when you come into drop-off or pick up your child(ren). Hillcrest is not responsible for items lost or stolen from vehicles, parking lot, or facility.

Pets

From time to time, Hillcrest allows pets on site for learning and nurturing opportunities in the classroom. Over the years, classrooms have had fish, hamsters, and bunnies. Currently, we have a hyper-allergenic dog, Marshall, that visits at times. Upon enrollment, an emergency card is on file and states any allergy a child has.

*NOTE: It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the Center immediately if your child develops an allergy to anything (food, pet, or otherwise).

Personal Belongings

Please make sure your child's clothing and belongings are **visibly labeled** with first name and last initial. All staff members work diligently to keep track of each child's belongings; however, items are misplaced sometimes. Please remember that our staff is here to focus their full attention on running the program. We want to minimize the time spent tracking down clothing and toys from home, so label all your child's items.

Teachers make classroom material decisions with the intent to provide opportunities for discovery, variety, and creativity. We ask that children not bring in toys from home as it distracts from the classroom's work, with the exception of a naptime stuffed animal. Any item deemed by staff to be unsafe or unsuitable will be returned to the parents with instructions stating that it is not to be brought to the Center again. Children are not allowed to bring toy weapons to the Center.

Photographs

Staff frequently take pictures or videos of program activities for programmatic purposes, news releases, brochures, reports, training exercises/examples, etc. Hillcrest also maintains a Facebook page and a private "Hillcrest Family" group, where pictures and program information are posted frequently. Please let the office know in writing if you would like not to have your child's pictures used in any manner other than in the classroom.

Poisonous Plants

Hillcrest minimizes the use of poisonous plants in the building and grounds. If a plant is necessary for a curriculum project, exposure to the plant is done under direct supervision. Toxic plants in the play yard used for curriculum purposes, such as tomato plants, will have a barrier around them. To minimize the potential injury from permanent poisonous plants, such as Birch Trees, staff members are trained on their presence, first aid procedures if a part of the plant is ingested, and work with children on appropriate safe interaction with plants, i.e., do not eat them.

Smoking

Under Anchorage Municipality law and Hillcrest Children's Center's intent to provide a safe and healthy environment, smoking is not permitted on the grounds at any time.

Supervision of Children

Children will be supervised appropriately at all times, even when sleeping. Staff/child ratios, including outside play and field trips, are always maintained. Hillcrest maintains lower than required staff/child ratios as finances permit and employs more caregivers than is required by the municipality, not to use a substitute or emergency caregivers. Refer to Appendix C: Municipality Parent's Guide to Licensed Child Care for details on the ratio.

Hillcrest has six child-centered rooms, each addressing a different level of development. Although there are approximate age groupings, it is important to note that age alone does not determine a child's room assignment. Your child(ren) will be assigned to one of six classrooms based on age *and* development. The Director considers parents, teachers, and space availability input in making placement decisions.

Hillcrest is proud to have high staff loyalty, resulting in exceptionally low staff turnover. Hillcrest honors and respects higher education. All staff members are encouraged to continue their education in Early Childhood Development. When monies are available, Hillcrest will help pay a percentage of the cost for specific classes, insomuch as they meet standards for early childhood education.

All staff, regardless of educational ambitions, are required to attend at least 24 hours of staff development training in early childhood education each year. We are proud to state that our staff average over 50 hours a year. Training topics include CPR/First Aid, early childhood development, guidance and discipline strategies and techniques, communication skills, & play as an essential educational tool. Other topics and concepts are addressed as needs arise during the year.

Transitions: Staffing and Classroom

The relationship between teachers and the children/families is paramount to the program at Hillcrest. Continuity in care between teachers and children within a larger building with multiple classrooms is the foundation of our Infant and Toddler program. We are fortunate to have a lower turnover rate than most childcare centers in Anchorage and use that to our advantage. We recognize that having children move to new classrooms with some new teachers is stressful, and the decision to do so is not taken lightly. The same with classroom teacher changes.

When we give a tour, the rooms are introduced with approximate room ages/developmental levels, and it is made clear that our procedure is to adjust the classroom to meet the developmental needs of the children. In the past, the Infant rooms have served children six weeks through 18 months, the Young Toddler rooms have children between 11 months and 24 months, Older Toddlers are between 18 months and 40 months, Preschool is between 30 months and four years, and Prekindergarten would be is age 4 and 5 years.

Hillcrest has a transition procedure that is a working document as we continually implement suggestions from families and staff. As part of this transition procedure and our plan for continuity of care, often teachers will make transitions with children to ease the process.

When making staffing changes, we strive to balance the skills and experiences of the staff, their availability and ability to maintain scheduled shifts, and their relationship with the children/families. There is a lot to consider when making these decisions, but there is not one “perfect” solution for everyone.

Transportation

The safety of children, passengers, and driver is of utmost importance in transportation provided by Hillcrest. All transportation will comply with state motor vehicle licensing requirements, traffic regulations, and state and municipality child care transportation regulations. Staff drivers will meet job and staff qualifications, complete a Vehicle Safety Checklist and review the Transportation procedure annually. When Hillcrest uses staff or parent vehicles, a Volunteer Driver Form with proof of registration, driver's license, and insurance is required.

Only insured, registered, well-maintained vehicles will be used to transport children, and the number of passengers will not exceed the vehicle manufacturer’s recommendation. All children transported by the program will have completed and signed Transportation Permission forms; children without permission forms will be refused transportation. Smoking, alcohol, drugs, and any substances or materials that could be considered harmful to or inappropriate for children are prohibited in vehicles at all times. Families can find a copy of the Transportation Policies, Vehicle Safety Checklist, and Volunteer Driver Forms on our website or by emailing the office.

Tuition

The Board of Directors establishes Hillcrest’s tuition rates. A minimum of 30 days' notice of tuition rate changes is provided to families. Current rates are outlined in Appendix B. Based on the input from families and the reality of constant increases in costs; the Board wants families to be aware that tuition will be increased annually starting in 2012. The Board anticipates that future tuition increases will coincide with Anchorage's consumer price index and actual costs for Hillcrest.

Annual Resource Fee

An annual registration fee of \$150.00 is due September 1st and is prorated quarterly for initial enrollment. This fee is prorated if the date of enrollment occurs in the:

- Enroll July thru Sept \$150
- Enroll Oct thru Dec \$125
- Enroll Jan thru March \$100
- Enroll April thru June \$50

Late Pickup Fee

Parents are charged \$10.00 for the first 5 minutes, then \$1 per minute per child for any child remaining after 6:30 p.m. Parents are requested to contact Hillcrest as soon as possible if they know

they will be late. It costs Hillcrest money in overtime when your child is picked up late, as we have to pay for two staff to stay later than their assigned hours. An exception to this rule: If you participate in a board meeting, you will not be charged the additional fee. We encourage every parent to attend board meetings!

Multi-child Discount

A 10% discount is applied to the child with the lowest rate in a family of two or more children enrolled at the Center.

Payment Terms and Fees

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month. A courtesy statement is sent out before the first by email that will include all charges and payments made that calendar year. Hillcrest will accept cash, check, or credit card. Credit Card payments are accepted at any time, and families can set up a monthly-automated payment for a small fee.

On the 10th a late payment fee of \$25.00 will be applied to all accounts with payment due unless otherwise agreed in writing between the parent and the Director. One reminder letter will be issued if a parent neglects to pay their bill on time. If a family is late more than two times, they may be required to set up a credit card agreement for payments or have a full month's tuition paid in advance. Children will not be able to attend Hillcrest after the last day of the month in which payment is due unless a payment plan has been submitted, approved, and signed by the Director. If there is no payment or failure to comply with the payment plan, care will be terminated, and past due accounts will be sent to collections or small claims court.

A \$30 fee will be added for checks returned/refused by your financial institution in addition to any late fees assessed.
monthly-automated for a small fee

Hillcrest accepts children whose tuition is paid through childcare assistance contracts. However, parents are responsible for the difference between Hillcrest rates and what the State of Alaska will pay.

Parents are also responsible for the co-pay listed clearly on the childcare assistance authorization form and for providing all the necessary paperwork in advance. Hillcrest will also notify childcare assistance of past-due accounts, which may limit access to further assistance.

Tax Information

Hillcrest emails out monthly statements showing year-to-date charges and payments. On January 1st, each family will receive an emailed statement showing the prior year's activity for tax purposes. Hillcrest's tax I.D. number is 92-0040360. It is the registering parent's/adult's responsibility to keep these emails. If you are not receiving these emails, please mark hillcrestak@gmail.com as a known email account and notify the office. There is a charge of \$20 for additional yearly tax information inquiries, and requires all requests submitted in writing. Allow up to 72 hours for processing of the request.

Visiting and Volunteer Policy

Hillcrest Children's Center has an open-door policy, which means parents are free to visit their children's classrooms anytime. Hillcrest invites and strongly encourages parents and other family members to visit the Center and participate in activities. Please see volunteer expectations under the Field Trip section. Family activities are held several times a year to provide wonderful opportunities to get to know your child's teachers and socialize with other families.

If other family members are visiting without the accompaniment of parents, it is a requirement that they notify the office so that staff can account for everyone in the building. If parents have concerns, they are encouraged to call the Center and check on their child throughout the day. If you, or any family member, want to assist further in the classroom or to participate more than 8 hours a month, please speak with the Director about meeting specific Municipality Licensing requirements.

Weather Closures

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies, Hillcrest will follow the Municipality of Anchorage's closures. If Hillcrest closes because of severe weather or other emergencies, the Center will be closed for the entire day. Every effort will be made to notify the Center's closures available on the voicemail and our Facebook page.

Please be aware that Hillcrest does *not* follow the Anchorage School District closings for the weather. In the event of severe weather and closures of ASD, which may cause inadequate staffing, Hillcrest will accept children on a first-come, first-served basis as the ratio allows. If you have a flexible work schedule, we ask that you minimize care use to accommodate those families who do not.

Wellness Policy

The wellness of all children and staff at Hillcrest is a priority. Teachers maintain sanitary practices throughout the day to minimize the spread of illness, yet illness is a part of childhood. If a child becomes ill at Hillcrest, parents are notified and expected to pick up their child within the hour. If the parent cannot be reached, numbers on the emergency card will be called to locate a responsible adult to pick up the child. It is in the best interest of all the children in the Center that sick children be kept at home so as not to infect others. It is the responsibility of parents to notify Hillcrest whenever a child will not be in attendance.

Excludable Illnesses

Hillcrest Children's Center does not admit children, parent(s), or employees showing signs of a serious illness or excludable symptoms, nor allow them to remain in attendance unless a medical provider approves their attendance. Medical approval shall indicate the safety and well-being of everyone at Hillcrest. All parents and DHHS will be notified if children are exposed to any one of the following illnesses: Diphtheria, German measles (Rubella), Homophiles Influenza, Measles (Rubella), Bacterial Meningitis, Mumps, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tuberculosis, Meningococcal Infection, Giardia, Hepatitis A, Salmonellosis, Shigellosis.

Excludable Symptoms

To provide children with a safe and healthy environment, Hillcrest determines if children shall be removed from and/or not be allowed admittance to the program through the utilization of the guidelines outlined in the most current edition of *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide*. A general rule of excludable symptoms is a high fever; behavior uncharacteristic for that child observed by: child not playing; child acting confused; persistent or inconsolable crying; open, oozing blisters; and/or loss of appetite characterized by refusing all solids or liquids.

Please consider the following in determining if your child is well enough to attend. First, consult your Dr. regarding concerns for your child's health. Second, consider the planned daily routine of your child's class and determine that your child can fully participate in those without compromising the needs of your child and those of their classmates. If your child cannot participate in the planned daily activities, such as going outside, that day will be excluded from care.

Medication

Hillcrest staff may dispense medication to a child only if a Medication Authorization is completed daily or Topical Products Permission is on file, and the following requirements are met:

Prescription Medication

Prescription medication must be in the original container with the prescription label that includes: the child's name, name of the medication, dosage, dosage intervals, name of prescribing physician, date the prescription was filled, and date the prescription expires. No prescription medicine will be administered after the expiration date.

Non-prescription Medication

Non-prescription medications such as Tylenol, Sudafed, cough syrup, etc., can only be given for four consecutive days without written notice from a physician. Non-prescription medications can only be administered in accordance with the directions on the bottle without written direction from a physician. If the bottle says age 2yrs and over or consult a physician, we cannot give the medication to a child under 24 months without written direction from a physician. Staff will only administer medication per medication instructions. Parents must provide daily authorization for Hillcrest Staff to administer non-prescription medicine.

Non-prescription Topical Products

Parents are required to fill out the Topical Products form for the application of non-prescription items applied externally, such as diaper ointments, insect repellents, sunscreens, lip balm, and skin creams. Medication must be in the original container and labeled.

Notification of Injuries

In the event of an injury, a staff member will apply first aid (i.e., ice, wash cuts) and fill out an accident form on LifeCubby. Sometimes a courtesy call will be given to parents to inform them of an accident before pickup. If the child's injuries are significant enough that they cannot play or participate in group activities, then the child's parents are contacted and requested to pick up the child as soon as possible. If the staff cannot reach parents, other names on the emergency contact card will be called to reach the parent(s) successfully.

In a life-threatening emergency, Hillcrest procedures require that the paramedics be called first to administer necessary aid and transport the child to an emergency care facility. The child's parents or designated contact persons are notified next.

Upon the child's enrollment, parents must sign a release authorizing Hillcrest to act in the child's best interest, granting permission to contact a doctor, nurse, hospital, or other qualified health care provider to administer emergency treatment as necessary.

Appendix A: Program Description

Infants

Every baby is unique, yet they all share a need for good health and safety, warm, loving relationships, and care that is responsive to their individual differences. In doing this, the caregivers create routines designed to meet the individual child's needs. Infants are fed, diapered, hugged, and cuddled on their schedule. Positive verbal communication and interaction are an essential part of the day, with caregivers promoting early literacy and language development using nursery rhymes, music, and lots of general day-to-day conversation with the little ones. Caregivers realize the need for special positive talk time during diaper changes, cuddle times, and floor time play. This classroom goes outside throughout the year, less frequently in winter, as the individual infant's schedule allows.

Respectful Caregiving

In many instances, adults “do” things abruptly to children, such as picking them up, pulling a pacifier out of their mouth, taking away a toy, wiping their nose, and handing them to another person. Usually, these are done as part of the tasks required in the routine. If an adult had to experience such treatment without warning or explanation, the adult would likely complain or feel insulted or mistreated. Staff should approach children with more respect, letting them know ahead of time what will happen and giving them time to adjust to whatever will be done to them.

Such treatment usually requires some kind of communication on the part of the adult to let the child know what will be happening. For an infant or young child with a developmental delay, processing time can take up to one minute, so be patient. Examples include staff:

- Saying, “Can we put your pacifier away now? Are you ready to let go?” and waiting for a positive response before taking it from the child's mouth.
- Holding hands towards a child, letting them read the gesture before picking them up.
- Verbalizing for an infant the signs of sleepiness that you observe and informing them that it will soon be time to go into the crib. Asking the infant if they are ready to go to sleep now or would like to wait a few minutes before picking them up and putting him in the crib, and giving the child time to process the idea.
- Holding out a hand when asking the child to give up a toy and respecting a child's response whenever possible.

It is important not to give “choices” when there is not one. Do not ask a child if they want a diaper change when they need one. You can give them the option if they want to go now or after their friend.

I Love You Rituals

I Love You Rituals is the social-emotional “curriculum” for infants. It is a playful means to promote optimal brain development, increase attention span, reduce hyperactivity, build self-esteem, amplify cooperation and facilitate language development. These transformative rituals between adults and infants provide a structured connecting activity that includes eye contact, touch, presence, and playfulness. These rituals foster healthy connection and development.

Toddlers

Life with young children is full of routines such as bedtime, chores, and mealtime. Routines are essential for young children. Routines help children learn to tell time and regulate their own internal clocks. They learn to predict what will happen next, and in doing so, they feel more empowered to tackle the task. The clearer the patterns for young children, the more brain-enriching the environment as they do not have to worry about what comes next. When the routine for the child changes, chaos and grumpiness can fill the space previously occupied by routine. Therefore we maintain the same daily routines for children year-round.

7:00-8:30 Table Top / Quiet Activities Play

8:00-8:30 Breakfast Eat

8:30- 11:00 Indoor / Outdoor Free Play Activities Play

10:00-10:30 Snack Eat

11:00-12:00 Outside Play Play

12:00-12:45 Lunch Eat

12:45-3:00 Nap / Quiet Time Rest

3:00-3:30 Snack Eat

3:00-6:30 Indoor / Outdoor Free Play Activities Play

The day's activities unfold unhurriedly, each day following the established rhythm, giving the child a sense of security and consistency. It is an environment of love, warmth, and harmony that serves as a gentle transition between the security of home and Hillcrest.

The Toddler Rooms provide opportunities for children to develop basic social/emotional and language skills and independence and self-care skills. These skills provide the foundation for future learning. At mealtime, you can expect to see the child sitting in a chair at a table (child-sized), drinking from a Sippy cup and later practicing drinking from a regular cup, using eating utensils, and cleaning up after themselves. Children will be allowed to have pacifiers during stress or sleep as needed. Typically, children will be weaned off of the pacifier and bottles within 1-2 months after being fully transitioned if not done before. Children over 12 months of age sleep on individual nap mats or cots. Proper hydration is important throughout the day, so we ask that families bring in a water bottle for their child to use at Hillcrest.

Toddlers are concerned about who they are and who is in charge. Beginning around 18 months of age, identity becomes the dominant developmental issue for children and is closely tied to questions of independence and control. Of course, the sense of security that began to develop in the earliest months and the desire to explore (with increasing purposefulness) continue. You will help the children find appropriate ways to assert themselves by supporting their individuality, giving them choices whenever possible, and introducing social guidelines. The classroom environment allows toddlers to be in control and participate in group play and independent activities that foster cooperation and facilitate the toddler's development of a strong sense of self.

As the children become older, we adjust the materials and activities in the room to meet the developmental needs of the children. Older Toddlers require a room full of opportunities and activities similar to Preschool, only on a simpler scale. Children will be introduced to family-style food service, which will continue into Preschool. Family-style meal service allows children and teachers to eat together and make food choices based on individual appetites and food preferences. It promotes mealtime as a learning experience to help children develop positive attitudes toward nutritious foods, share in-group eating situations, and develop good eating habits.

Baby Doll Circle Time

Baby Doll Circle Time® is a complete curriculum based on forming caring relationships and bridging the gap between the home family and the school family used in the toddler classrooms.

The children who choose to participate will each have a baby doll. We will sing, “Get your baby, get your baby, get your baby, time to play,” to the tune of “Oh My Darlin’,” signaling the beginning of the playtime. Then the fun begins.

The children will interact with their baby dolls in the same ways we interact with the children individually. If we play peek-a-boo, stop-and-go, or tickling games with a child, the child will play the same game with the baby doll. In doing so, the children re-experience our connection repeatedly, helping to optimize their development. Children who play these social games with their baby dolls will relive their loving bonds with you. This reduces the stress of missing you and increases the giggle moments.

The Infant and Young Toddler Classrooms

All classrooms are full of opportunities and activities that allow the children to explore the world around them through various curriculum areas. These areas include, but are not limited to: Reading, Block, Math, Science, Dramatic Play, and Art. Activities available in the different areas allow the children to learn and practice developmental skills in physical health, emotional and social well-being, motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, cognition, general knowledge, communication, language, and literacy as guided by the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines.

As early childhood educators, we look to best practices to guide our work. We look to the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) for classroom set-up. The ITERS looks at Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Books, Activities, Interactions, and Program Structure. You will learn more about this during your first-year training.

The infant classroom is set up with two play spaces, while the toddler classrooms are arranged with interest areas and play areas. A play area is a space where play materials are provided for children to use. In the infant room, we try to move the louder toys away from the sleeping area. An interest area is a clearly defined play area for a particular type of play, with materials organized by type and stored for easy access. The interest areas in the toddler rooms are Books/Cozy, Blocks, Dramatic Play, and Nature/Science for two-year-olds. Additional materials that are accessible depending on the developmental level of the classroom are fine motor, art, math, music, and movement.

Free play is a child-centered activity focused on the process rather than the product of the play. Teacher interactions during play vary from caregiving responsibilities, problem-solving, asking open-ended questions to expand the children’s thoughts, redirecting undesired behaviors, and enticing children into play themes. Teachers also teach social skills, such as how to enter into play with peers, empathy, and conflict resolution. We encourage sharing but do not force it if a child wishes to work alone.

Preschool

The Preschool classroom is designed for children approximately three to five years of age. Young children of this age thrive through successful social interactions and exploring roles around contributing to a group. Because of this, Preschool teachers provide an environment that nurtures social skills and encourages confidence. The classroom is divided into different learning centers that allow children to become active participants in small-group play and learn to use materials and activities so that they experience success. Children learn to be part of groups and develop a sense of belonging where they share excitement about learning in this hands-on approach rather than exposure to teacher-directed academic content. Children flourish when they don't have to worry about what's going to happen next, and the Preschool classroom is supported by carefully planned daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms. The daily rhythm of the Preschool is created by the teachers following a set rhythm each day.

7:00-10:30 Free Play in Activity Areas
7:30-8:30 Breakfast is open
10:00-10:30 Morning Snack is open
10:30-11:00 Cleanup, Morning Gathering
11:00-12:15 Outside Play Year Round*
12:15-1:00 Lunch
1:00-3:00 Rest / Quiet Time
3:00-6:30 Free Play in Activity Areas
 3:00-3:30 Afternoon Snack is open
 3:30-4:00 Afternoon Gathering Time

The weekly rhythm of our curriculum is accomplished by having different activities and a children's show and tell on different days. This creates a more meaningful relationship with each day and gives the children a concrete understanding of the world around them- knowing what the children can count on from day to day and week to week, as the day of the week becomes identified by the children with an experienced activity:

Weekly schedule**

Monday: Walk Day
Tuesday: Craft Day
Wednesday: Exploration Day
Thursday: Soup/Baking Day
Friday: Cleaning Day

The yearly rhythm is experienced in the Preschool with the help of seasonal stories and crafts and the children's birthdays. Seasonal celebrations (fall, winter, spring, summer) lead the children through the year, and each has its colors, foods, songs, and verses.

*Children go outside unless it is below 0, active downpour with wind or ice. We have moderate-to-vigorous indoor activities such as a dance party, obstacle course, or active game in these instances.

**The weekly schedule may change year to year to accommodate different needs. Families in that class will be informed of any changes.

The Preschool Day

Gathering Time

Gathering Time is when the children come together to have a shared conversation. This may be in a large group or with smaller table groups. It is an opportunity to practice the skills of respecting each other's voices, keeping our bodies in our own space, and working on following instructions. We keep this short,

between 10-20 minutes, depending on the day and topic. A child can always stay in the reading area instead of participating in a large group activity. The skills of attentive participation in Gathering times are foundational skills for Kindergarten. Teachers are expected to be participating in the gathering activity, modeling for the children's active participation.

Show and Tell (Morning Gathering Time)

Each week, your child may bring in one item from home on their assigned day that is tied to a "Letter of the Week ." Focusing on a specific letter each week helps the children learn to recognize each letter and listen for its sound. Children are provided the opportunity to practice introducing themselves and sharing information about their object. Having children present on different days allows more time to go in-depth without stressing their attention span.

Feeling Buddies (Afternoon Gathering Time)

Feeling Buddies is a comprehensive and innovative tool for teaching self-regulation. The Feeling Buddies curriculum and corresponding tools help children learn to identify what they are feeling, separate themselves from it, and regulate it through a five-step process. As children manage their Feeling Buddies, they learn a helpful language that eventually becomes their inner speech for self-regulation, emotional well-being, and healing.

Yoga/Mindfulness (Afternoon Gathering Time)

Yoga/Mindfulness time provides an opportunity for the young child to practice body awareness with a physical activity that is non-competitive and fun. As children learn the poses, it enhances their flexibility, strength, coordination, and concentration. It may become a technique they can utilize for calmness and relaxation that will enhance their health and help them navigate life's challenges more easily.

Free Choice Activity Time

Free choice time provides the opportunity for children to choose activities of interest from a variety of options. This may be done by oneself or with peers and/or adults. Children's attention span will expand as their play and investigations become more complex. Free choice activity time allows the child to develop and strengthen their peer and adult relationships through shared experiences, practice choice, initiative, and problem-solving, among other things, as they learn to manage themselves during this time. During Free Choice, children have access to various activities, most of which are child-initiated with no more than one teacher-directed option.

Appendix : Municipality of Anchorage Child Care Licensing Program: Parents' Guide to Licensed Child Care