



45 Clarendon Avenue Columbus, Ohio 43223

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www.hilltopearlylearning.org

A Guide to Our School Services

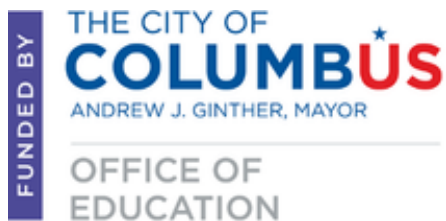




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ABOUT US

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Hilltop Early Learning Center (HELC)! You are now part of a new school family that offers free prekindergarten to most residing in the Hilltop community. In addition, an early learning and health facility that is the first-of-its-kind in the state of Ohio.

Columbus Early Learning Centers, the lead partner of the Hilltop Early Learning Center (HELC), in collaboration with all partner organizations will ensure uniformed center-wide standards and practices are offered to children and families. At the Hilltop Early Learning Center, the consistency in standards and practices promotes predictability, transparency, and a cohesive culture that believe in children's safety, health, education and social-emotional development are always at the forefront of our work. This whole family culture offers all the same comprehensive support services and experiences to promote readiness for kindergarten and beyond.

PURPOSE OF THIS FAMILY GUIDE

The Hilltop Early Learning Center school service guide was created to provide families **a snapshot** of our uniformed policies and procedures across all education partners, as well as privileges and opportunities, at HELC. ***If your child's classroom is operated by one of the education partners (YMCA, CDC or Columbus City Schools), it is very important that you refer to that organization's family handbook/guide for further details on policies and procedures.*** Please read this service guide and keep it handy as long as your child is enrolled. It will answer many of the questions you may have about HELC. At the beginning of each school year, HELC will send an electronic copy of this school service guide to each enrolled family via email.

BACKGROUND – AN INVESTMENT BY THE CITY OF COLUMBUS

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

OFFICE OF
EDUCATION



Research shows crucial brain development happens in the first five years of life and high-quality pre-k sets children up for academic success. In 2017, Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther created the Hilltop Early Childhood Partnership (HECP) in response to data showing fewer children residing in the Hilltop neighborhood were enrolled in quality early learning programs than anywhere else in the city. The [HECP 2018 Report](#) concluded the need for a local pre-kindergarten center along with raising awareness of the necessity of quality pre-k education.

The City of Columbus made a historic \$20 million investment in the Hilltop by constructing the Hilltop Early Learning Center. We opened our doors to our first students on June 20, 2023. The center includes

a state-of-the-art healthcare facility provided by Nationwide Children’s Hospital, 12 classrooms for 3 & 4 year-olds, indoor and outdoor gross motor play areas, commercial kitchen to provide a breakfast, lunch, and snack, multipurpose room for family engagement and education events, food security resources, counseling, and more – all in one location and at no cost for most in the Hilltop community.



EDUCATION PARTNERS

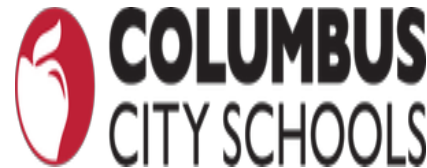
Hilltop Early Learning Center, with Columbus Early Learning Centers selected as the lead partner, is an extension of the community, with a team who understands what it takes to help children develop, families succeed, and neighborhoods thrive. Several early education providers will run classroom throughout the building matching their particular area of expertise with the unique needs of each child.

The first-of-its-kind facility includes classroom partnerships with:

- Child Development Council of Franklin County
- YMCA of Central Ohio
- Columbus City Schools
- Columbus Early Learning Centers



**The Child Development Council
of Franklin County**



HEALTH & WELLNESS PARTNERS

Many of our families work full-time schedules, with limited or no transportation, which causes a barrier in seeking comprehensive services for the whole family in one location. The Hilltop Early Learning Center removes this barrier by bringing community partners under one roof and as one cohesive team to provide wrap-around services and resources i.e. health and wellness checks, special needs, consultation, food pantry, family engagement events, and parent education to ensure the child, family, and the neighborhood thrives.

Major partners at Hilltop Early Learning include:



Nationwide Children's Hospital is committed to the best outcomes and health equity for all children, ensuring every child has access to the best care regardless of their ability to pay. Nationwide Children's operates a health clinic conveniently located inside the Hilltop Early Learning Center available for all children under 18 residing on the Hilltop. The center will provide routine preventative care, physicals, immunizations, mental health services, and more.



Columbus Speech & Hearing assesses children for hearing loss and speech/language delays onsite. Whenever possible, if a child is in need of intervention therapeutic appointments take place during the school day so parents do not have to miss work or find transportation which are often difficult barriers to overcome.



Our Lady of Guadalupe Center



In collaboration with Our Lady of Guadalupe Center and through the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, the Hilltop Early Learning Center offers a food pantry onsite with dry goods, produce and other home needs for anyone in the community.



MISSION, VISION, VALUES

OUR MISSION:

Hilltop Early Learning Center is committed to helping young learners develop, families succeed, and neighborhoods thrive.

OUR VISION STATEMENT:

We see a future in which all children have an early learning experience that gives them a foundation for future success in school and in life.

OUR VALUES:

Access, Equity and Inclusion

We welcome all children and families regardless of background and need.

Safe Haven

The physical and emotional safety of our children and families is the foundation of our work.

Play to Learn

A child's freedom to explore and create fosters meaningful cognitive, physical and social-emotional development.

Growth Mindset

We promote organizational sustainability through learning and collaboration in our classrooms, conference rooms, board rooms, and the neighborhoods we serve.

Making a Difference

Our team and community partners, together, do what it takes to advocate for changing the landscape, systems, and policies for early childhood education.



OPERATIONS

The Hilltop Early Learning Center's lead partner (Columbus Early Learning Centers and education partners are licensed separately as preschool providers by the Ohio Department of Jobs & Family Services and/or Ohio Department of Education. All Partner centers participate in a voluntary quality rating and improvement system (Step Up to Quality). Each partner's license, inspection reports, administration hours, HELC menus, staff/child ratios, and group sizes are posted in a designated area in their classroom.

HELC is open year-round, from January through December, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. HELC observes national holidays, and the centers close periodically to provide professional development to its staff. Students will not have school on days they are closed for professional development. All partners, except for Columbus City Schools, are required to adhere to our closure periods. A comprehensive schedule of center closings is included in your enrollment packet and available upon request from the Enrollment and Compliance Director.



ARRIVAL/ABSENCE/ DEPARTURE POLICY

Families are required to notify the center director/designee by 8:30 AM if the enrolled child will be absent or tardy that day. If a child arrives after 8:30 AM and the center was not notified in advance, HELC may not be able to accommodate your child that day. The decision as to whether or not we can accommodate the child is based on several factors, including staff schedules, programming requirements, etc. Families of children absent without notice will be contacted.

No child may ever be left unsupervised. Children may not be unaccompanied in the building and should never be sent inside the building or down the hallway alone. Children must be accompanied by an adult when they are outside the building, on the sidewalk, or in parked cars. Children may not be left unattended in a car.

The person bringing a child to HELC must bring the child to the staff member who is responsible for the child's care and ensure that the assigned staff member is aware of the child's presence before departing.

Security: All families and visitors must enter through the secured, front entrance of the building.

Departure: People under the age of 18 are not permitted to receive a child from HELC. No child may ever be left unsupervised. Children must be accompanied by an adult when they are inside and outside the building, on the sidewalk, or in parked cars. Children may not be left unattended in a car. The person who picks up a child from HELC must alert staff and ensure that staff is fully aware of the child's departure.

Authorization for Child Pick Up: The only people who may pick up a child from HELC are those listed on the Authorized Release Form. Staff will ask to see photo identification of anyone who they do not recognize. **Changes to a child's Authorized Release Form must be made in person and in writing by the child's legal parent or guardian. No changes will be made over the telephone, via text, etc.**

Under the Influence of a Substance: HELC is mandated to report any form of neglect to child protective services and/or the police. Picking up a child while under the influence of any substance that may affect one's ability to properly supervise that child is considered to be neglect. HELC will contact child protective services and/or emergency services if an adult who appears to be intoxicated attempts to pick up a child.

Late Pick-up Fees: Children must be picked up promptly before the center closes. **A mandatory late pick-up fee of \$2.00 per minute will be charged to the family when a child remains at the center after the closing time.** A centralized payment box with envelopes is located at the front welcome desk. Cash is accepted. Continued failure to pick-up your child within our stated operation hours or non-payment of late pick-up fees may result in your child's enrollment being terminated.



CUSTODY AGREEMENTS

It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that HELC staff is aware of any and all custodial agreements at the time of the child's enrollment or immediately upon any change. HELC requires that

copies of current parental custody agreements, kinship care contracts, foster care contracts, and any other court-ordered instructions about the custody of a child be on file in order for the affected child to attend the center.

If at any time a question arises regarding enrollment, medical issues, etc., HELC will operate under the guidance of the custody papers provided. HELC will communicate with the custodial parent. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to communicate with the non-custodial parent regarding issues affecting the enrolled child. HELC will not share a child's information with anyone other than the named custodial parent/guardian of the enrolled child unless written consent is on file by the courts or the child's legal custodial parent or guardian. Under a Shared Parenting Agreement, HELC will communicate with both parents regarding the child's progress, development, health, nutrition, or safety concerns. HELC does not get involved in the matters related to custody. Per the State of Ohio any parent who is listed on a child's Birth Certificate is permitted to have access to a child and can pick up and drop off the child. HELC cannot deny a parent who is listed on the child's Birth Certificate access to the child unless there are court-specified documents that indicate otherwise.



PROHIBITED

- Please do not use your cell phones in our building. It is very important to take the time to wish your child well at drop-off and check in with our teachers when you are here.
- No firearms, ammunition, knives, or weapons of any kind are permitted on HELC property.
- HELC is a drug-, alcohol-, and smoke-free campus. Please refrain from possessing or using any of these substances on or around our grounds and when participating in any of our family events.



TOILET TRAINING GUIDELINES

A child must be toilet trained before attending the Hilltop Early Learning Center. Toilet trained children no longer wear diapers or disposable underwear (pull-ups); can tell an adult when they need to go to the bathroom; and can attend to their own hygiene care. Please note, this policy does not apply to children with documented special needs or disabilities.

Accidents can and do happen, so we ask you to send a change of clothes for your child to school. Accidents, by definition, are unusual incidents and should only happen infrequently. If toilet accidents frequently occur at school, the staff will consult with the family to create an individualized plan to address the toilet training concern.



ELIGIBILITY & ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

HELC does not discriminate in the enrollment of children on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability or family composition. A child is considered to be enrolled at HELC only after the Enrollment and Compliance Director confirms the availability of space, all enrollment paperwork is received, and an enrollment meeting is completed. HELC does not charge any application or enrollment fees.

HELC's Enrollment and Compliance Director will assist families in the enrollment process and is available to answer questions about enrollment. You may reach the Enrollment and Compliance Director at 614-253-5525, ext. 225. Hilltop Early Learning Center uses an online enrollment system. Families will be provided with links to complete the application process. In addition, families must provide a completed Child Medical Statement for Child Care (JFS 1305) and a copy of children's immunization records, birth certificates, and custody papers upon enrollment. Certain funding sources may require other documents, including proof of income. Enrollment is not considered to be complete until all of the paperwork is completed, and all necessary documents are submitted.

HELC requires parents/guardians to grant permission for emergency transportation on the ODJFS Enrollment and Health Information form. HELC does not enroll children who are not current on their immunization schedules unless the Medical Statement includes a written letter from a certified health care provider stating that the child's health would be jeopardized by a specific vaccination. If a child is following the Catch-Up Immunization schedule, the family must provide HELC with a copy of the child's immunization schedule provided by a certified health care provider, and it is the family's responsibility to give the Enrollment and Compliance Director a copy of the child's immunization records each time the child receives a new vaccination.



CHILD MEDICAL STATEMENT FOR CHILD CARE & IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

The State of Ohio requires that each child enrolled in a child care center be examined by a medical professional and deemed suitable for participation in group care. Parents are responsible for obtaining this verification prior to the child's enrollment at HELC and 13 months later if the child remains enrolled in the pre-k program. Children who do not have the required Child Medical Statement for Child Care (JFS 1305) on file as mandated by ODJFS licensing rules will not be permitted to attend the center.

Medical professionals must review the child's immunization records and attach a copy of these records to the medical statement. Children must be immunized against the following diseases: Chicken Pox, Mumps, Diphtheria, Pertussis, HIB, Pneumococcal Disease, Hepatitis A, Polio, Hepatitis B, Rotavirus, Influenza, Rubella, Measles, and Tetanus.

Important Note Regarding Immunizations: For the health and well-being of all enrolled children, HELC only enrolls children who are current on the state recommended immunization schedule. If a certified medical practitioner has made the decision that immunization against a certain disease poses a significant health risk to a child, the parent/guardian must provide written documentation from the medical practitioner stating that the child has not been immunized against a particular disease due to health reasons.

MEDICATION POLICY

HELC will only receive and administer medication to children when the medication is needed to treat a life-threatening condition. Parents or Guardians are solely responsible for administering any and all non-emergency medications, topical products, and food supplements. HELC staff will not accept any medication, topical product, or food supplement into the center unless a licensed medical professional has documented on the Request for Administration of Medication for Child Care (JFS 1217) before medication will be accepted. All medication must be in its original container with the label containing exact dosage information, child's name, current date, and the means of administration. ***Please refer to your child's classroom Family Guide/Handbook for all details i.e. additional mandatory paperwork JFS***

1236 Children with Health Concerns, storage of medication, and training of staff before the administering of any medication.

HELC is responsible for following all state guidelines for licensed child care centers; including staff education and training mandates, health and safety guidelines, and child development guidelines. Our staff is trained in Child Abuse Recognition, First Aid, CPR, and Communicable Disease Recognition.

ILLNESS & COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

HELC will not admit children with the following symptoms and requires that children who develop these symptoms be picked up within one hour:

- Temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher or 100.0 degrees when combined with another symptom
- Diarrhea (2 or more)
- Symptoms of Conjunctivitis (Redness of the eye, matted eye lashes, discharge, etc.)
- Difficulty in breathing
- Symptoms of Jaundice (Yellowing of eyes/skin)
- Unidentified rash
- Vomiting (1)
- Problems with urination
- Stiff neck
- Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or other parasites
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Excessive coughing
- Other _____
- One of the symptoms listed above when they are enrolled in a classroom with a reported case of COVID-19 or a Communicable Disease.

Additionally, symptoms of COVID-19 that exclude a child from care are:

- Chills
- New uncontrolled cough (for children with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Muscle or body aches
- New onset severe headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face
- Exposure to someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 10 days

When a parent notifies HELC that a child has been diagnosed by a physician with a communicable disease, an exposure notice will be posted. Families are urged to consult their own physician for advice about precautions to take with their child.

COVID-19

HELC is mandated to report any diagnosis of COVID-19 among enrolled children or employees to the local health department. We will follow all directives from this agency regarding contact tracing, disinfecting the classroom or center, and center closure/quarantine period.

This information will be shared with affected families via the Remind system, email, written notices, or phone calls.

Affected families should stay home and monitor their child and other family members for symptoms as specified by the local health department.

If an enrolled child or family member shows symptoms of illness, the family should contact their health care professional for advice and to schedule a COVID-19 test.

If an enrolled child or a member of the child's household is diagnosed with COVID-19, the family needs to contact the Center Director so that HELC can ensure that we are following the local health department's directions. If a case is reported in your child's classroom and your child returns to their classroom and begins to have symptoms within 3 days from the exposure date, they will be required to stay home regardless of the test result or a doctor's note for 5 days.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Hilltop Early Learning Center may need to close for emergency situations or inclement weather. HELC will be closed when Columbus City Schools close for inclement weather. If HELC closes for other reasons, it will notify parents using the automated REMIND APP messaging system and/or posting the closing on Channel 10 WBNS news. We also ask parents who are unsure of the weather conditions to call the center to make sure it is open before venturing out in bad weather.

The Emergency Plan for medical, dental, and general emergencies is located inside all classrooms and licensed spaces. HELC has procedures to follow in the event that an emergency would occur during operating hours. Written instructions are posted in each classroom, describing emergency evacuation routes and the procedures to follow. In order to prepare children for the unlikely need to evacuate, HELC conducts monthly fire drills and periodic tornado and lock-down drills.

In the unlikely event we would need to evacuate for a period of time due to a fire, weather conditions, or the loss of power, heat or water, our off-site Evacuation Assembly Points are:

- **Primary location:** J. Ashburn Boys & Girls Club 85 Clarendon Avenue Columbus, Ohio
- **Secondary location:** Educational Academy for Boys & Girls 35 Midland Avenue Columbus, Ohio
(special note: primary location for gas leaks)

Loss of Power, Water, or Heat at Center

If children do not have access to running water for more than one hour and are not able to wash hands or flush toilets, parents will be notified and required to pick up child within one hour. Children will have emergency drinking water available during their time at the center. If there is a loss of power at the center, but the temperature does not fall below 65-degrees Fahrenheit or exceed 85-degrees

Fahrenheit, HELC will remain open and arrange for alternative meals/snacks to be brought in to ensure that children do not go longer than four hours without eating. If there is a loss of power or heat at HELC that results in the indoor temperature falling outside ODJFS minimum/maximum guidelines, an Administrator/Designee will notify parents via telephone or cellphone of the situation and required them to pick up children from the center within one hour.

Unless it poses a safety risk, a sign will be posted on the front door of the school indicating that we have evacuated and noting the location where you can pick up your child. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible via the REMIND messaging system.

It is very important that families notify Hilltop Early Learning Center immediately of any new phone numbers, address changes, or changes to a child's Authorized Release paperwork. In the event of an emergency, we need to have the correct contact information. Please see the front receptionist to make changes. He/she will forward the information to the enrollment coordinator to update your child's file and to copy the classroom. Please check your cell phones to be sure the voice mailbox is not full so that we can leave messages if needed.

CURRICULUM

Hilltop Early Learning Center (HELC) implements a written, research-based curriculum called *Pre-K On My Way*, that is comprehensive and aligns with Ohio's Early Learning Content Standards. These standards are set by the Ohio Department of Education, and focus on the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development areas.

In addition, health screenings and ongoing assessments are conducted by staff and community partners. HELC believes that assessment is an ongoing process and should be used as a "snapshot" of where your child is within each area of childhood development. Assessing the progress of children occurs throughout the school year.

Developmental assessments tools may include:

- Pre-K On My Way Curriculum Assessment
- Ohio Early Learning Assessment (ELA)
- Brigance Screening Tool and/or Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Informal Teacher Assessments i.e. observations, anecdotal records, checklists
- Developmental screenings may include: Health, Vision, Speech & Hearing, Dental, Autism and Lead

DAILY SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

All children are actively supervised at all times by qualified and trained preschool staff members. Children are marked in attendance upon arrival and an attendance roster accompanies each classroom group as it moves throughout the building, outside, or on field trips. Staff completes face-to-name attendance checks before leaving any area to move to another (i.e. from classroom to activity room, gross motor areas, cafeteria, multi-purpose room, etc.)

STAFF/CHILD RATIOS AND MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE

HELC will not exceed the following child care licensing regulations required ratios:

Age of Children	Staff/Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Young Preschool (36-48 months)	1:12	24
Older Preschool (48 months-Kindergarten)	1:14	28

Staff/Child Ratios may be doubled for up to 2 hours during nap/rest time.

MEALS/SNACKS

HELC participates in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which assists child care sponsors in serving nutritious meals by providing funds to supplement food costs. Families help CELC receive these benefits by completing an income eligibility application every year.

Each meal served at HELC meets or exceeds the standards defined by the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The meals and snacks provided are listed below.

Breakfast

- Served at 8:30 AM
- If your child arrives to the program after 8:30 am, please provide him with breakfast before bringing him to the center.
- Includes 3 foods from the USDA Food Groups (Grain, Fruit OR Vegetable, and Liquid Milk)

Lunch

- Served from 12:00 pm
- Includes 5 foods from the USDA Food Groups (Grain, Protein, Fruit & Vegetable, Liquid Milk)

P.M. Snack

- Served at 3:30 pm
- Includes 2 foods from the USDA Food Groups

Special Mealtime Considerations

- All HELC classrooms are nut-free. No nuts, food containing nuts, and/or nut butters are served. This includes nut beverages, such as almond or cashew milk.
- Meals and snacks provided by HELC’s kitchen are pork-free.
- Religious and dietary restrictions are respected and CELC will make substitutions when possible. If HELC cannot provide a substitution; it is the responsibility of the family to do so. Families must provide substitutions only from the USDA food groups.
- Vegan/Vegetarian Families will be required to provide a meat-replacement/protein, dairy substitute, and/or grain substitute for all meals to include Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks.
- The elimination of an entire food group (for example: dairy products) requires written documentation from the child’s physician.

OUTDOOR PLAY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Research has shown that children stay healthier and learn more when they have daily outdoor play. Based on this information, outdoor play will be included in our program on a daily basis for all toddlers and preschool children. Children will go outside to play in all kinds of weather. If the situation requires, we will adjust outdoor time due to rain, snow, ice, threatening weather, etc. When the temperature (wind chill and heat index factored in) drops below 25 degrees Fahrenheit or rises above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, we will stay inside. If there are severe weather alerts, heat or wind chill advisories, or air quality alerts, we will stay inside.

Please send your children with the proper clothing so that they may be comfortable and safe whenever we are outside. This includes hats, coats, mittens and boots in the winter and sunhats and clothing that protects against damaging ultraviolet light in the summer. Please do not send your child to school with flip-flops or sandals that have no heel strap, as they are a fall hazard.

When we must stay inside, children will engage in large muscle play in the indoor playground. It is our goal that each child has at least 60 minutes of active play while in our care.

Water Play

Children may be provided with outside water play opportunities during the summer months. CELC does not engage in swimming activities. Water play is limited to the use of sprinklers and water tables. Parents will be asked to sign written permission slips prior to children engaging in water play. Please remember to send bathing suits, water shoes, towels and a lightweight T-shirt to protect your child from sunburn.

Routine Walks

Routine walks on the grounds surrounding the centers are permitted with written permission. Permission must be renewed annually.

NAP TIME: Children will be provided a nap/rest time of two hours each afternoon.

INCIDENTS OR INJURIES

Through appropriate supervision and low child-to-staff ratios, our staff is able to prevent many serious incidents, accidents and injuries from occurring. If an incident, accident or injury does occur, the following steps are taken:

- Staff members trained in First Aid will respond to the child's immediate action.
- An Incident/Injury Report (JFS 1299) is completed for any injury or illness that requires First Aid.
- Bumps/Blows to the head and/or injuries to the mouth/lips/teeth requires a staff member to contact the child's parent or guardian within 60 minutes via Remind, email, or a phone call.
- For all other incidents when the child is picked up at the end of the day, parents or authorized adults will be asked to sign a copy of the Incident/Injury Report. Originals will be kept in the child's file.
- 911 or emergency services are called for an injury or illness needing immediate medical intervention. HELC does not enroll families who do not give the center consent to contact emergency services.
- In the rare circumstance that 911 or Child Protective Services is contacted for a child, the family will be contacted within 60 minutes (or as soon as it is feasible) after the emergency call is placed and emergency personnel or the parents will determine further treatment. If it is

believed that a call to a parent/guardian will present imminent danger to a child/family member the parent/guardian may not be contacted.

- If transportation to a hospital is needed, emergency personnel or the child's parents will provide transportation to the hospital or emergency facility.
- If the parents are not available, a HELC staff member who knows the child well will accompany and stay with the child until a family member or authorized adult can take responsibility for the child.
- The cost of all medical care is the responsibility of the family.
- Should a serious incident occur, such as a child being exposed to a threatening person or being left unattended, parents will be notified and an Incident/Injury Report for Child Care Centers will be completed and a copy of the report will be given to the child's parent or authorized adult.
- Serious incidents must also be reported to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services by an administrator.

CHILD GUIDANCE

Hilltop Early Learning Center strives to provide a secure, nurturing and stimulating environment that enhances young children's:

- Recognition of themselves as people who have value
- Understanding of individuals who are different from themselves
- Respect for themselves and others
- Development of self-regulation

To:

- Promote pro-social behavior
- Use appropriate language to communicate needs
- Emphasize problem-solving

The following child guidance strategies are used at HELC:

- **Involve the Family** in developing positive strategies and solutions.
- **Provide Predictability and Consistency** in teachers, daily schedule, transitions, and rules.
- **Problem-Solve** in teaching children how to manage own emotions and behavior, while listening to and expressing thoughts and feeling to others.
- **Provide Choices** while providing guidance on teaching child on how to make positive and logical choices.
- **Ensure Safety** by calming child, and providing guidance to children on what are harmful and non-harmful behavior to self and others.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANS

Sometimes a child demonstrates a pattern of challenging behavior that is not being successfully guided using typical strategies. Challenging behavior is any behavior that interferes with a child development, learning or success at play; is harmful to the child, other children or adults; and/or puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure.

Please refer to your child's assigned classroom family handbook/guide to learn the steps taken by staff in working collaboratively with parents and/or guardians to create a Positive Behavior Support Plan. *Families must be actively engaged in this process, attending meetings and complying with the Positive Behavior Support Plan.* If at any time a child's behavior places a child, other children, or adults at

consistent or extraordinary risk of harm, it may be necessary to place the child on a modified schedule, temporary suspension or to expel the child.

PROHIBITED DISCIPLINE

All HELC staff, volunteers, contractors, and/or visitors are PROHIBITED from using any of the following child guidance techniques:

- Any action that abuses, endangers, or neglects a child
- Using a harsh tone of voice, yelling at, or berating a child
- Saying anything that might humiliate, threaten, or frighten a child
- Using profane or derogatory language in the presence of children
- Any form of corporal punishment
- Any harsh physical touch such as, but not limited to, grabbing a child by the arm, holding the child's face or head to force him to look at you, sitting a child harshly into a chair, pinching, etc.
- Confinement of any kind as a punishment
- Restraint by any means other than a "protective hug" for a short period of time to help a child regain calm
- Allow a child to determine the consequence of another child's behavior
- Withholding food, drink, play time, recess, etc.
- Use of "time-out" or isolating a child from the group without teacher guidance and support
- Preventing a child from engaging in routines, play, or group activities
- Rewarding children with food or candy
- Punishing children in any way for failure to eat or sleep or for toileting accidents

PARTNERSHIP & COMMUNICATION

HELC Statement about Professional Relationships

Hilltop Early Learning Center is committed to nurturing positive, professional relationships with families and caregivers, community stakeholders, teaching staff, employees, volunteers, and visitors. We expect all HELC representatives to use the language of respect and encouragement in all of their interactions with families, community members, volunteers, and children. We expect that families, community members, volunteers and visitors treat HELC representatives with the same respect and courtesy.

If you as a parent or caregiver of a child enrolled in a HELC classroom experience a situation in which you do not feel you were treated respectfully and professionally by any HELC representative, please contact the Partnership Director at 614-253-5525. We value your feedback and will act to ensure that your experience with HELC is a positive one.

If a family member, visitor, volunteer, or community member ever engages in any of the following activities, that individual will be asked to leave the premises and cease the disruptive activity immediately.

- Threaten violence against any HELC employee, HELC representative, enrolled child, or a family member of an enrolled child
- Use profanity or derogatory terms when speaking to any HELC employee, HELC representative, enrolled child, or a family member of an enrolled child
- Encourage any HELC employees or enrolled families to end their professional relationship with HELC

- Make disparaging remarks either verbally or through electronic media about HELC as an agency, any HELC employee, HELC representative, enrolled child, or a family member of an enrolled child
- Escalate a situation in a manner that disrupts classroom activity or normal HELC business operations.

If the behavior continues *or* is severe, the family member, visitor, volunteer, or community member will be asked not to return to HELC property. This means that any enrolled children connected to that person will be immediately disenrolled from HELC and any outstanding balance for child care services provided by HELC are due immediately.

COMMUNICATION & PARTICIPATION

Families are encouraged to participate whenever possible in the activities of the center. Parents and guardians have access to all areas of the building used for child care during hours of operation. Noncustodial parents have the same rights of access unless limited by official court documentation. Visiting parents or guardians are required to notify the office and classroom staff of their presence and need to be escorted through the building for security purposes. For individual needs/conferences, parents are encouraged to arrange a separate time to meet with staff when students are not present.

Families should plan to visit the center before their child's first day and again after their child is enrolled. Visiting will help both you and your child feel more comfortable. Plan to come as many times and stay as long as you and your child need.

HELCL respectfully asks parents and family members to refrain from giving gifts to HELCL staff members.

The Remind App

HELCL uses the Remind Mobile Application as a tool to effectively communicate daily with families and in case of emergencies. Families are required to participate in this free alert system upon enrollment and provide the Enrollment and Compliance Director with a working email address and/or cell phone number so that CELC can contact families in emergency situations. Families will receive a text or email asking them to accept membership in one of the HELCL Partnership Classrooms. Families are required to accept this invitation prior to enrollment, as this is HELCL's only mode of communication with families in the case of site or center-wide emergencies. Family members must keep the Enrollment and Compliance Director updated with any changes to their email or phone numbers so the center is able to contact families in case of emergencies.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

We respect the right to privacy of the children and the families in our care. HELCL staff will refrain from disclosure of private or confidential information, including information about other children in the classroom. Incident reports will not list names of other children involved in an incident. If it is deemed appropriate to share information about a situation for the positive development of the classroom community, all involved families will be requested to give permission prior to the implementation of any plan of action.

The information contained in children's files is confidential. The information may be compiled and viewed by administrative staff and classroom staff for the purpose of healthy, safe, and appropriate care and to ensure compliance with regulatory agencies.

Disclosure of children's records beyond parents/guardians, program staff and authorized consultants require parental consent, except as follows below:

Mandated Reporters

As child care workers in the state of Ohio, all Hilltop Early Learning Center employees are legally mandated to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the local child protective agency. If we have reason to believe that a child's welfare may be at risk, we may share confidential information with agencies or individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest.

MEDIA & RESEARCH

In order to support our community partners and our public relations efforts, photos and/or videos of children and staff at HELC may be used. In your enrollment packet you have been asked to sign a general release to use videos/pictures of your child. This release is required for enrollment in the program unless the child is in foster care or protective custody.

At times HELC children and staff have been involved in research projects that add to the body of knowledge about early care and education. Your specific written permission will be obtained in order for your child to be part of any research project.

Social Media Policy

While participating in HELC activities and/or special events, we understand that you may want to take pictures of your child with your personal cell phone, camera, or recording device. HELC asks that you refrain from taking pictures of other children in the classroom or center. If you do have pictures of other children engaged in an activity, we ask that you respect the privacy of that child and his family and NOT post any pictures of another child on your social media pages such as Facebook or Instagram.