



## Country Home Learning Center Operational Policies

**Mission Statement:** Our mission is to fill the childhood years with boundless opportunities for academic, physical, and social growth in an environment that supports students and their families. Our students will experience a rich variety of hands-on activities that encourage them to explore, discover solutions, and engage in countless projects that challenge and excite young minds. Through all of our varied learning activities, we emphasize our most important vision: to provide our students with many opportunities to succeed every day. Frequent successes in young children promote both self-confidence and a higher self-esteem, which are vital to the learning process. We continuously strive to partner with our families to help build a strong foundation for our students.

**Hours of Operation:** Country Home is open from 6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, twelve months a year.

Country Home is closed for the following holidays and Staff Development Days each year:

New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day	Martin Luther King Day (Staff Development Day)
Memorial Day	Friday following Thanksgiving	Good Friday (Staff Development Day)
Independence Day	Christmas Eve	Columbus Day (Staff Development Day)
Labor Day	Christmas Day	

If a holiday occurs on a weekend, closure will follow the local business practice. We establish our fees on an annual basis, therefore there is no reduction in tuition for any holidays.

We observe all closures declared by the surrounding school district due to inclement weather, but encourage you to contact the Center during the day in the event the Center opens later. There will be no reduction or credit in tuition due to school closings for inclement weather.

**Enrollment:** Parents are required to complete (and update at least annually) the enrollment package including (but not limited to) general contact information, personal information sheet, and release and waiver, and a signed receipt for Operational Policies. Current immunization records and a physician's statement allowing the child to participate in day care are also required. Parents are welcome to update their contact information at the front desk any time as needed.

At the time of enrollment, a non-refundable registration fee is required in order to reserve a space for your child. Tuition is due every two weeks in advance. Partial weeks at the beginning or end of enrollment will be charged at daily drop-in rates. Please deposit all checks in our tuition box at the Front Desk by Tuesday of each tuition week. Please write your child's name in the memo portion of your check to ensure proper credit. A late fee will be assessed on any unpaid accounts thereafter. The tuition rate is based on the classroom in which the child is enrolled, and not on the child's actual birth date. A calendar noting tuition due dates and school holidays is available for your convenience at the Front Desk.

A registration/supply fee is due two times per year. Please refer to our tuition supplement for a complete list of our fees and tuitions. Please Note: **All Registration Fees, Activity Fees, Supply Fees, and Tuition are Non-Refundable.**

Because we recognize that time together as a family is invaluable, two weeks vacation credit per year will be given after your child has been enrolled on a *continuous* twelve-month (one year) basis. Two weeks prior notice is required regarding the dates your child will be absent. Vacation credits may be taken as a full-week (five consecutive days) unit only. Vacation credit may only be applied if your child is absent from the Center during the designated vacation period.

Adjustments cannot be given for occasional days off. Unfortunately, our salaries and overhead expenses are not reduced when a child is absent. Therefore, tuition must be paid regardless of attendance in order to support the enrollment space reserved for your child. We hope that you understand our need for financial stability and we greatly appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

**Medical Requirements:** Parents of enrolled children must provide proof that they meet applicable immunization requirements as specified by the Texas Department of Health. Children's shot records must be updated as immunizations are received. See: [www.tdh.state.tx.us/immunize](http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/immunize) for current state requirements.

Currently the Texas Department of Health does not require TB testing for students in Bexar or Travis counties.

First-time enrollees who are four years of age or older, and all children enrolled who are four years of age by September 1 of each year must have documentation of hearing and vision screening prior to the end of the first semester of enrollment.

Parents of children with a known food allergy, as well as those with other severe allergies such as bee stings, must have their child's physician complete the **Allergy Emergency Plan** form in the enrollment packet. Both the child's physician and parent must sign and date the plan. The completed form must include the following:

1. A form for each food or allergen the child is allergic to;
2. Possible symptoms if exposed to an allergen; and
3. Steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction.

**Personal Belongings:** Please avoid sending toys or treasured items with your child to school. We have found that some are not safe or age-appropriate and are often misplaced or broken. We cannot be responsible for lost or damaged personal items. We encourage parents to dress children comfortably with safe footwear and in regard to current weather conditions.

**Drop-off and Pick-up:** Drop-off and pick-up times for your child must be recorded through the electronic system using the parent's assigned PIN. In the event the system is inoperable, the time and parent's initials are required on the sign-in and sign-out log that is located at the front desk. Parents must accompany their children to and from the assigned classrooms when arriving at and leaving the Center.

**Release of Children:** We will only release your child to you or to a person whom you have authorized in writing. For your child's safety, we cannot accept verbal authorizations. Please remind any person you authorize to pick up your child to bring their driver's license so we may confirm their identity and document the pickup.

**Wellness Check:** The Center performs well checks on the children each day when they enter the child care program. Well checks include observing the child's general mood or changes in behavior, checking for fever, rashes, unusual spots, swelling or bruises, any complaints of pain or not feeling well, any signs or symptoms of disease, or any reported illness in the child's family members.

**Toilet Learning:** We introduce toilet learning to students who are developmentally ready, according to the parent's wishes.

**Meals:** We offer nutritious morning and afternoon snacks, as well as a home-cooked lunch, prepared at the Center and served family style in each classroom. All of our meals are well balanced and planned to include a variety of foods with different colors and textures, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables and less processed foods. Our menus are posted monthly, and copies are available from the Director.

In the event of a food allergy or dislike of a particular item, parents are welcome to supplement their child's meal according to the child's needs. For those parents choosing to provide their child's lunch and/or snack, milk, fresh fruit and vegetables are available for children who bring lunches from home.

To ensure the safety of food brought from home, including refrigeration or other means to maintain appropriate temperatures, please give your child's meal and/or snack from home to the center's Cook in the kitchen. All food brought in from outside of the center must be labeled with the child's first and last name, their class name and the date.

A breakfast program is available for a nominal fee. This program is intended for those children who eat breakfast at the Center on a regular, daily basis.

Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care. Should you wish to breastfeed, please contact the Front Office Staff regarding a comfortable place with a seat in the center to do so. Upon request, a compilation of breastfeeding education and support resources in the community is provided to parents.

**Physical Activities:** We believe it is important to encourage young people to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and that offer variety. Our program provides opportunities for 120 minutes (2 hours) or more of physical activity daily.

We modify our outdoor activities during inclement weather, if the temperatures are below 40 degrees or above 98 degrees, taking into consideration wind chill and heat index, the children will be offered alternative inside, physical activities.

**Screen Time:** Our 3 year old and older children are offered “screen time” (computer, iPad, white board, TV/videos) as part of planned activities, which are age-appropriate, and do not exceed two hours per day.

**Discipline and Guidance:** We work to prevent behavior problems by establishing consistent, understandable limits and by providing an environment with minimal frustrations. If inappropriate behavior does occur, our teachers respond with sensitivity and skill to help the child understand why the behavior is unacceptable and how to modify it. We do not administer physical punishment at any time.

Our Staff works closely with parents to understand each child and to determine which methods work best for him or her. We provide resources to parents and collaborate with them when a child repeats a challenging behavior to help work towards a positive outcome. When necessary we will develop a Behavior Management Plan with Teachers and Parents to help guide a positive outcome.

If necessary, we will provide a brief, supervised, separation from the group. Repeated discipline problems may subject the child to dismissal from school.

Discipline must be:

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

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

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

**Illness:** Your child should be free from all communicable diseases and free from fever (100.4) before attendance. If your child becomes ill while attending school, we will provide a quiet, calm place for your child to rest. You will be called to come for your child. Your child will need to be picked up as soon as possible. Your child may return to school when free of all contagious conditions including fever (100.4) without the use of medication, an episode of diarrhea, or vomiting for 24 hours.

**Medication:** The Center can only administer medication to your child when the original, unexpired medicine bottle contains a prescription label bearing your child's full name and prescribed dosage or when the Center has received written instructions from your child's doctor stating dosage times and amounts. By licensing requirements, the initial dose of the medication must be administered by someone other than Country Home, such as the physician or the parent. Instructions must be consistent with labeling on the medication or doctor's note. All medicines are stored in a locked container and are inaccessible to children. In every instance, a parent's signature on the medication log will be required for us to administer medication. Medications are administered at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. each day. Medication is administered only by designated staff trained in administration of medication. The medication log is located at the Front Desk.

Medications delivered by a device may be given only by staff trained in use of the device. Written instructions must be provided on indications for use that include signs and symptoms that the medication is needed. Parents must demonstrate use of the device and any special care after use to all staff who will be administering the medication. Documentation of the demonstration must be made including the date and staff in attendance. Training on use and care of the device must be provided annually or as needed with staffing or device changes.

**Medical Emergencies:** Parents will be notified immediately if a child requires professional medical attention or becomes ill requiring exclusion from the center. Parents will be notified at the time of pickup for less serious injuries such as minor cuts, scratches, or bites resulting in first aid treatment. The contraction of any communicable disease that is *reportable* to the Texas Department of Health will be posted within 48 hours as a notice on or near the front door of the facility or the classroom. A notice of outbreaks of head lice or other infestation will be posted within 48 hours in the classroom where the infestation occurred.

In the event of a medical emergency, the appropriate First Aid will be administered. Country Home requires all staff to be certified in First Aid and CPR. In the event of a life-threatening medical emergency, 911 will always be called first, followed by the parent and the child’s physician of record.

**Water Activities:** The Country Home Waterpark is available for three-year-old classes and older, weather permitting. The Country Home Splash Deck may be available at certain locations for our Toddler classes and older, weather permitting. Classes must be accompanied at all times by their Teacher as well as the Waterpark Supervisor when using the Waterpark.

Water shoes are required when visiting the Waterpark or Splash Deck areas, as well as when attending field trips at Adventure Quest. Children are required to adhere to all posted rules regarding the Waterpark and Splash Deck. Splash days (water play) are available for younger children, and field trips to neighborhood pools are included in our Summer Camp program for elementary school children.

**Animals:** From time to time a special event may include animals, such as ponies. A written notice will be posted on or near the front door of the facility prior to such an event.

**Field trips:** Four-year-old classes and older enjoy field trips to educational and fun venues throughout the local area. A parent signature is required on the field trip notice for each field trip, giving permission for their child to attend. Field trip notices are posted in each classroom.

**Transportation:** Country Home provides transportation from nearby public elementary schools. If we regularly pick up your child from school, please be sure to notify us in advance if your child will not need transportation on any given day.

Transportation is also provided for various field trips. For any students requiring or requesting the use of a child passenger safety seat system (car seat or booster seat), the equipment must be provided and installed by the child's parent. All 3 year old children in any vehicle (large bus, mini-bus, or personal car) and children 4 years old, who weigh less than 40 pounds in a mini-bus, will require a forward-facing child safety seat.

**Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect:** Country Home requires all employees to receive annual training in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Information may be obtained from the Director regarding the prevention and recognition of child abuse or neglect, or can be accessed at [www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/preventingcan.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/preventingcan.cfm) and [www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm). Country Home will stay current on methods for increasing employee and parent awareness on issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including: factors indicating a child is at risk of abuse or neglect and warning signs indicating a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect. These methods will include increasing employee and parent awareness on prevention techniques for child abuse and neglect. Country Home will also have resources for coordination with appropriate community organizations that have training programs available to Country Home employees, parents and children that are knowledgeable in preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children and include actions that the parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should take to obtain assistance and intervention. Texas Family Code 261.101 requires all child care personnel to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation directly to DFPS. Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person should immediately make a report to the child abuse hotline: 800-252-5400.

**Gang-Free Zone:** Under Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

**Emergency Preparedness Plan:** In the event of an emergency, the children's safety is our first priority. Each class has a Designated Safe Area depending on the situation. If a class is not in their assigned room at the time of an emergency, they will seek the closest safe area appropriate for the event.

Fire drills are conducted every month to ensure a calm, timely evacuation of the building. A diagram is posted in each classroom for fire emergencies, displaying a pre-planned evacuation route in red.

Severe weather drills are conducted at least four times in a calendar year; to ensure classes successfully relocate to their Severe Weather Designated Safe Area. A diagram is posted in each classroom for severe weather emergencies, displaying a pre-planned relocation route in blue. Severe Weather Designated Areas are also identified throughout the center by signs noting the assigned group for that specific area.

Lockdown Drills are conducted at least four times in a calendar year for a volatile or endangering person on the premises or in the area. This drill, much like fire and severe weather drills, is designed to protect the safety of our children and staff by preparing them to respond calmly and effectively in the case of a real emergency.

In the event an emergency requires the relocation of all children to an Alternate Shelter (off-site location), Country Home will notify local media of the event. The pre-determined designated relocation address is posted in each classroom, and

may also be obtained by contacting any Country Home Learning Center. Parents who have supplied a valid email address will also receive an email as soon as possible regarding the situation, including the relocation address.

When an emergency occurs, Teachers are instructed to do a Name-to-Face Roll Call and count the children prior to leaving their current location, and again do a Name-to-Face Roll Call and count the children once they have reached their Designated Safe Area. Front office and kitchen personnel also assist the younger classes in transitioning the students to the safe area.

Infants and non-mobile children will be placed in a mobile crib, stroller, etc. and will be moved to the Designated Safe Area as indicated on the Evacuation Diagram. Toddlers, children with limited mobility, and special needs children will be assigned extra staff to provide assistance and move the children to the Designated Safe Area as indicated on the Evacuation Diagram.

In the event emergency services are required, including the fire department, the Director (or designated Director) will call 911. Families of students will be notified by phone (and local media, if applicable) under the Director's supervision. The Director will also notify the Licensing representative within two days after any occurrence that renders all or part of the program unsafe or unsanitary for a child.

**Licensing contacts:** Should the need arise, the Center's state licensing entity in San Antonio can be reached at (210) 337-3399, and in Austin at (512) 834-3195. The child abuse hotline is 800-252-5400 and the licensing entity's website for Texas is ([www.tdfps.state.tx.us/](http://www.tdfps.state.tx.us/)).

**Parental Notification:** Written notices applicable to the entire center will be posted in a conspicuous place near the front door entrance. Additional copies of the notice may also be placed on the Front Desk as well as in children's individual cubbies. Notices pertaining to a specific classroom will be posted in that particular room.

**Policy Changes:** Should any item in the Operational Policies change, you will be notified in writing of the change prior to the effective date.

**Parental Involvement:** We encourage our parents to:

- (1) Come by and observe our classes at any time. Our interior windows provide easy visibility into our classrooms. Prior approval is not required;
- (2) Participate in special events and activities occurring throughout the year (notices will be posted);
- (3) Contact the Director should you desire to review the Center's copy of the state Minimum Standards as well as the Center's most recent Licensing inspection report.

**Conferences:** If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to speak with your child's Teacher or the Director. Country Home schedules parent/teacher conferences at least twice a year, however, additional conferences can be scheduled at your request. In addition, written student evaluations are completed by our staff and provided to parents three times per year.

Should you have any questions or concerns about any Country Home policies or procedures, please contact the Director or Assistant Director by phone or in person any time during regular business hours. Thank you for choosing Country Home. We hope you will feel secure in the knowledge that your child is safe and actively participating in the most positive educational environment available! Rest assured, we strive for continued excellence in all that we provide for our children at Country Home. We look forward to working with you and your child.

Country Home Learning Center