



Childcare & Preschool FAMILY HANDBOOK

School Year 2022 - 2023

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Matthews, NC 28105
(704) 845-4673

www.COSKidsMatthews.org

<https://www.facebook.com/COSKids>

(Public FB page)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/COSKids>

(Group page for COS families only)

WELCOME!

Dear Families,

Welcome to the C.O.S.Kids family! We are delighted to have you and thank you for entrusting us with the care of your precious children.

We support families to improve childhood health, education and development and ensure all children are prepared to be successful in school and beyond.

What began 26 years ago as a ministry to single mothers, Christ Our Shepherd Ministries grew to become the present-day C.O.S.Kids which focuses on a two-generational approach for developing entire families. We are proud to serve a full diversity of families with a special outreach to single parents who may need financial assistance to provide high quality care for their child.

We encourage you to study both this handbook and our website to become familiar with our programs. Please always feel welcome to ask any questions you may have about your child's classroom or development.

I hope you will also become familiar with our Matthews Christian Library. It is a public Library with only a \$35 annual membership and is a valuable resource to both our classrooms and to the community.

Thank you for choosing COSKids. We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment.

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COVID changes & Updates

With the start of this new school year, we are still following recommended best practices of the Health Dept. to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and its variants. We want to provide a safe and consistent environment for everyone on our campus. So, until further notice, we will continue with the following COVID policies, which will differ from the normal handbook policies which follow:

Tours/Open House – We are not currently conducting drop-in tours, but families will be offered opportunities to attend an Open House so they can see their child’s classrooms and meet staff. Please feel free to reach out to the Director of Programs, with questions or to arrange a meeting with a classroom teacher.

Arrival – We ask that you make every effort to arrive prior to 8:30 a.m. Breakfast and programming begin each day at 8:30. If your child has a pre-scheduled doctor appointment or other commitment that will make you late, let the Admin Team know the day prior.

Sickness – If you or your child is sick, has a temperature of 100.4 or higher, is coughing, vomiting, has diarrhea, sore throat, or chills, we ask that you stay home.

COVID-19 Exposure – If you, your child, or someone in your home has been exposed to a person who tested positive for COVID-19, we ask that you immediately notify a member of the Administrative Team.

COVID-19 Positive – If you suspect that you or your child or someone in your home has COVID-19, with or without a test, we ask that you immediately notify us. Further, if you or your child or anyone in your home tests positive for COVID 19, we ask that you immediately notify us.

ABOUT US

Philosophy: C.O.S.Kids is a Christian-based non-profit child care organization serving a full diversity of families with a special outreach to single parent families. The educational focus is on the complete child: developing their emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. C.O.S.Kids encourages play-based learning. Teachers help children learn by encouraging experimentation, cooperation, and higher level thinking. Staff and teachers understand the importance of social emotional learning, healthy minds, and work to build resilience and increase self-esteem.

Mission: To nurture families by providing educational, financial, and spiritual support.

Vision: To strengthen our community by shepherding local families.

Programs Offered:

- Childcare (Infants, Toddlers, Twos)
- Preschool (Threes, Fours, and TK)
- School Age (Grades K-5)
 - After School
 - Camp Days
 - Summer Camp

Hours of Operation:

- The Childcare and Preschool Programs hours are from 6:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. for children 6 weeks to 5 years old.
- The School Age Program hours are from 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. for grades K-5. Camp Days and Summer Camp hours are from 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Summer Camp is for grades K - 4.

Certification: C.O.S.Kids Child Development Campus is licensed by the state of North Carolina with a “5 Star” rating.

Definition of Family: In this handbook, C.O.S.Kids refers to family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child.

Holidays: The campus will be closed on the following holidays:

Labor Day
Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday)
Christmas (2 days)
New Year’s (1 day)
Good Friday
Memorial Day
Independence Day

*The campus will also be closed for 2 days (to be announced) Staff Development Days. Staff development days are required by the state of NC to maintain our license.

ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT

C.O.S.Kids Childcare & Preschool Programs offer full-time classroom experiences for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. Children are grouped according to age. Infants-toddlers will be transitioned to the older classes when they are developmentally ready and as spots become available. Once children are in a two-year-old class, they stay in the same classroom for the entire school year. Move-Up Day is the Tuesday after Labor Day (1st week of September). Children must be 3 or 4 years old by August 31st of the upcoming school year to be considered for enrollment in the 3’s and 4’s classes.

To enroll your child at C.O.S.Kids:

Turn in the \$85 non-refundable registration fee for the first child and \$50 non-refundable registration fee for each additional child. Approximately one month before your enrollment date, pick up a registration packet and complete all of the included paperwork:

- 1- Childcare Application
- 2- Children's Medical Report (must be signed by Physician)
- 3- Medical Action Plan, if necessary
- 4- Immunization History
- 5- Acknowledgement of the North Carolina Child Care Law and Rules
- 6- Walking Permission Form
- 7- Photo Permission Form
- 8- Discipline Policy
- 9- Child Care Parent Handbook (sign and return the last page)
- 10- Electronic Payment Sign-Up
- 11- Abusive Head Trauma Policy Acknowledgement
- 12- Infant Feed Schedule (children 15 months and under)
- 13- Infant/Toddler Safe Sleep Policy (children 7 months and under)

Families should send pictures of their children (head and shoulders) to the Business Administrator for emergency records at RHavican@coskidsmatthews.org. Be sure to include the child's first and last name in the email.

Inclusion: C.O.S.Kids believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in both childcare and preschool classrooms. Staff and teachers will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our programs based on their individual capabilities and needs.

Families with children who have identified special needs should provide the written goals from their IEP, and those goals should be included into the daily program. Information will be shared with the teachers so that they can best support the needs of the child.

Non-Discrimination: At C.O.S.Kids, equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Partnering Together: C.O.S.Kids recognizes that families are children's first teachers. Staff and teachers partner with families in the growth and development of children and encourage parents and other family members to be involved in all aspects of the programs at C.O.S.Kids.

Confidentiality: Unless C.O.S.Kids administrative staff receives written consent, information regarding children will not be released with the exception of that required by the regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning enrolled children are confidential.

Staff Qualifications: Staff and teachers are hired in compliance with state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. All staff participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

C.O.S.Kids strongly discourages families from entering into employment arrangements with teachers (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and staff members outside the services offered on campus is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by C.O.S.Kids.

Child to Staff Ratios: C.O.S.Kids Child Development Campus is licensed by the state of North Carolina with a “5 Star License” and operates under the guidelines set forth by the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education. Under these guidelines, our teacher-child ratios must not exceed those listed below at any time:

Age	# of children per adult
6 weeks-12 months	5
12-24 months	6
2 years	9
3 years	10
4 years	13
5 years	15

Under the “5 Star” License, lead teachers must be highly qualified with education and training in Early Childhood Education. In addition, staff and teachers are required to receive in-service training on an annual basis.

COMMUNICATION & FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Communication: C.O.S.Kids staff and teachers work diligently to communicate with families with campus information. Teachers update families on a regular basis about classroom activities and experiences through Procure, a communication application. The app is set up prior to a child’s first day of attendance through email and can be viewed either through a smartphone, tablet or computer. Families have the ability to adjust how often they receive notices of teacher’s entries.

In infant classrooms, the app will be updated throughout the day with real-time notifications for diaper changes and feedings. In toddler, twos, and preschool classrooms, teachers update the app during rest time with additional updates or as time allows during the day.

Families should ensure that the administrative staff and classroom teachers have an updated email address in order to send regular updates and newsletters. Staff and teachers welcome discussions with families. However, since days are devoted to caring for children, families should not expect to have long discussions with staff or teachers during regular program hours but are asked to schedule an appointment.

C.O.S.Kids provides a monthly calendar to acquaint families with the unit studies, Bible stories and verses, special activities, and other information relating to the specific class. Families should take time to talk to children about their school day and class activities. Families are encouraged to reach out to the classroom teachers with questions or concerns at any time throughout the school year.

Change in Contact Information: Please notify the office in writing of any changes to physical address, email address, telephone numbers, emergency contacts, and authorized pick-up list.

Bulletin Boards: Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events & important dates, and special announcements.

Newsletters: Newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters will be emailed to families on a regular basis.

Email: Families should provide an updated email address that is used regularly in order to receive announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

Conferences: Family and teacher conferences occur once a year, typically in March or April. During these conferences, teachers will discuss the academic, social, and emotional progress of children. Teachers work together with families to set goals for children's growth and development. Families may request additional conferences with teachers at any time throughout the school year.

Publicity: Occasionally, photos will be taken of the children at C.O.S.Kids for use on the website, Procure, closed Facebook page (for C.O.S.Kids Parents only), or for promotions. Children's photos will only be used with permission of families. Please see the photo permission form that is in the family information packet.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Learning Environment: C.O.S.Kids provides a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific age levels with the belief that learning happens through play. Classrooms provide opportunities for children to explore through hands-on experiences and in the free choice and interest centers. The childcare and preschool program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and cooperation with one another.

Curriculum: Teachers follow both licensing guidelines and age-appropriate curriculum in their classrooms. Lesson plans are carefully developed to meet the needs of children in the class with enriching themes for each week and experiential learning opportunities. These themes and overall curriculum information is sent home to families at the beginning of the school year.

There are also weekly enrichment opportunities scheduled for children, depending on their age level. These opportunities include library, chapel and music, physical education, and science. Specific information about the enrichment schedule is sent to families throughout the school year.

Assessment: Teachers use assessment tools throughout the school year to gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress. This allows teachers the ability to modify and adjust what they are doing in the classroom to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. Classroom teachers communicate with families during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

Developmental Screening: As teachers monitor each child's achievement of developmental milestones, they may share observations with families in order to provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. The developmental screening process involves the family and the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. If families request a screening by a therapist, written consent from families is required.

Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it teaches respect and celebrates all people, as well as the places and cultures they represent. Classroom teachers utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities to teach children respect for the world and the people who live in it.

TRANSITIONS

Children's transitions into childcare and/or preschool classes should be both a positive and exciting learning experience. Staff and classroom teachers will work with all children to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to center: Prior to a child's first day, families will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, ask questions, and discuss any anticipated concerns. Please see page 6 for "Covid Changes and Updates."

Transition to new classrooms: Children are transitioned to the next classroom based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and/or space availability. During this transition, the new teachers will meet with families as they prepare to welcome children into the classroom. Please see page 6 for "Covid Changes and Updates."

Transition to the School Age Program: Children who are in Grades K-5 have the opportunity to transition to the School Age Program at C.O.S.Kids if they attend one of the elementary schools where we provide transportation. The School Age Program registration forms must be completed and returned before children are eligible for this program. Please see the School Age Program Handbook for more information about the program.

DAILY ROUTINES

Electronic Media: C.O.S.Kids normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computers but from time-to-time, a television show without advertisements may be used as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator. All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. The focus is to provide children with a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic Media will be offered only as a free choice used to meet a developmental goal and will be limited.

Celebrations: C.O.S.Kids encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community. These may include holidays celebrated in different countries and cultures. Review monthly calendars for updates.

Rest Time: Rest time is an essential part of the daily schedule for both childcare and preschool classrooms.

- **Infant Classrooms:** Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 15 minutes.
- **Toddlers, Two's and Preschool Classrooms:** After lunch, children in childcare and preschool classrooms, participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities.

Toilet Training: The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. Children must be toilet trained before entering the preschool program (3's & 4's classrooms).

GUIDANCE

General Procedure: C.O.S.Kids is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Administrative staff and classroom teachers work to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear guidelines and involving children in problem-solving help children develop their ability to become self-regulated and successful in the classroom.

Discipline Policy: C.O.S.Kids has adopted a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of positive guidance with children. Staff and teachers understand that discipline is a process that requires consistent modeling, training, and working with children to help them be successful in the classroom community.

A copy of the discipline policy is included in the enrollment package for families to review and sign.

Children at C.O.S.Kids have a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place.
- Be treated with respect.
- Receive the help and support of caring adults.

When children become verbally or physically aggressive, staff and/or teachers intervene immediately to protect all children. Staff and teachers show children with challenging behaviors how to solve problems using appropriate interactions, including (when age-appropriate) expressing their feelings, using breathing techniques, giving themselves space, and asking a teacher for help.

C.O.S.Kids maintains a zero tolerance to bullying.

Physical Restraint: Physical restraint is not used or permitted when disciplining children at C.O.S.Kids. However, there may be rare instances when staff or teachers need to ensure the safety of children or that of others around them. In this case, staff or teachers may restrain children by gently holding them only for as long as is necessary to gain control of the situation.

Behavior Challenges: If a child's behavior becomes a concern, teachers will communicate directly with the family as a first step. Administrative staff and teachers will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of the classroom and program.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for childcare or preschool. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to themselves or others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on resources and finances for the child's accommodations in order for success and participation.

TUITION & FEES

- Weekly tuition has been determined by a yearly calendar and is a set amount for each week. There will be no adjustment made for days missed. Days missed can include but is not limited to absences due to illness, vacation*, holidays, inclement weather or other closings.
- Current tuition rates are available in the Main Office or on the website under the Resources tab.
- Each tuition payment is due by Friday for the following week. Please see the payment sheet for the current rates.
- C.O.S Kids asks that families sign up for automatic credit or debit payments through Tuition Express, the electronic payment service. Payments will be withdrawn directly from a family's credit card, savings or checking account.
 - *Payments will be electronically paid on Friday for the following week.
 - *Authorization form is due upon enrollment.
 - *First payment will be withdrawn the Friday before the child's first week of care.

- If families are not able to set up an automatic debit payment, they may set up an automatic credit card payment, pay online at Tuition Express, or pay in the office with a check, cash, or credit card.
- Make all checks payable to C.O.S.Kids. Please put the child's name and program in the memo part of the check and turn it into the administrative team.
- If families are paying with cash, they must see an administrator for a receipt.
- A \$5 late fee will be added to your account on Monday at 6 pm if your account is not paid in full for the current week of service.
- A \$25 insufficient fund fee will be added to tuition for each returned check through both Tuition Express and through regular check processing.
- Families who are enrolled on a part-time basis must identify specific days that they will attend. Days cannot be "traded" due to holidays, vacation, weather, etc. If families desire to permanently change days they must contact the Main Office to check for availability.

Leave of Absence: Families who experience unemployment due to unforeseen circumstances, who have a life change or are educators can request from 3-10 weeks of leave each year if: they have been a C.O.S.Kids family for at least 6 months, they have a tuition balance of zero, they have not used a vacation week in the same calendar year, and they pay an \$85 holding fee to hold their place. Leaves generally happen during the summer months. An agreement for the leave must be signed with the Business Manager at least two weeks prior to the leave of absence. For full details, please contact the Business Manager.

Scholarships for Single Parents: As a non-profit organization, C.O.S.Kids offers scholarships and support to single parents who qualify. Eligible single parents receive scholarship assistance, emotional, spiritual, parenting and budgeting support, and help navigating and accessing community resources. Families may see opportunities for outreach to the community to raise donations and conduct fundraisers. For more information about our Single Parent Program, contact the Director of Family Services or call 704-845-4673.

Subsidy: C.O.S.Kids accept payments from Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI) through the North Carolina Child Care Subsidy Program. For more information about receiving financial assistance in Mecklenburg County from CCRI, visit www.childcareresourcesinc.org. In Union County, contact Child Care Subsidy Services at 704-296-6131.

Tuition Deposit: A tuition deposit is required at the time registration is confirmed. Families should turn in the \$85 non-refundable registration fee for the first child and \$50 non-refundable registration fee for each additional child.

Late Pick-up Fees: C.O.S.Kids closes at 6:00 pm. There is a late charge of \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 pm. If a child is not picked up by 6:30 pm, administrative staff will call an authorized person on the child's registration form. Staff is required to call the Department of Social Services if a child remains at C.O.S.Kids after 7:00 pm., and staff cannot reach the child's family or an authorized individual. Families should call the office if they know they will be late. Families who are late on a consistent basis may be subject to dismissal from C.O.S.Kids.

Credits & No Credits: Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as completed on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether or not a child attends. This enables C.O.S.Kids to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year.

No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather, infectious disease (except as noted below), or weather-related or environmental issues.

Credits may be given for Serious Illness/Injury. In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as their child is hospitalized, absent due to a serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit.

ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL

Absence: Families should communicate with the main office and the classroom teachers if their child is going to be absent or will arrive after 8:15 am. Families can use the Procure app, call the main office to leave a message (704-845-4673), or email the Director of Programs or Director of Operations.

If families know that their child will be out, they should let the office and teachers know at least one day in advance in order to adjust meal counts and staff accordingly.

Withdrawal: If families need to withdraw their child from enrollment, C.O.S.Kids requires a minimum of two weeks' notice; otherwise, two more weeks of tuition will be charged to their account.

Transfer of Records: Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, the child's records will be transferred internally.

If a child is transitioning to a new school, a written request with instructions about the transfer (school name and address) is required.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather: In the event of inclement weather, C.O.S.Kids will communicate any closings or delayed opening of the campus through text messages and emails to parents as well as recording a message on the center voicemail (704-845-4673) and posting an announcement on the Facebook pages. Generally speaking, if CMS chooses to close due to poor road conditions, the center will also close. However, on subsequent days, the administrative team will monitor conditions so that the center can reopen as soon as safely possible.

If CMS has a delayed opening, C.O.S.Kids will have a delayed opening at 9:00 am since many of the teachers have children in public schools.

To sign up for text message alerts, send a text to 81010 @coskids.

DROP-OFF & PICKUP

General Procedure: C.O.S.Kids opens at 6:30 am. Children must not be dropped off before the center opens. Parents are asked to park and walk their children to their classroom. We ask that children be dropped off prior to 8:30 in order for them to eat breakfast and begin the day.

C.O.S.Kids closes at 6:00 pm. Children must be picked up by this time each day. Parents can come into the center and pick their child up from their classroom.

Specific drop off and pick up instructions will be sent to families when procedures are updated during the school year.

Cell Phone Usage: Families should not use their cell phones at any time while on the C.O.S.Kids campus. Instead, the expectation is that families use this time on campus to greet and interact with their children, as well as staff and teachers.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up: Children will only be released to families or those people listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If families want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick up their children, they must notify the office in advance, in writing. Children will not be released without prior written authorization. This person will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify the pick-up person of this policy.

In order to safeguard children, C.O.S.Kids will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, staff and teachers are not able to prevent the release of your children to their parents.

Right to Refuse Child Release: Administrative staff may refuse to release children if there is reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol

or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect children, staff may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child, or they may call the police to prevent potential harm to the child. Recurring situations may result in the release of a child from the program.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring:

- **Infants:** Enough clean bottles for a day's use, at least 6 diapers per day, and at least 2 changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Toddlers:** Enough clean bottles for a day's use (if applicable), six diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Older Toddlers:** At least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program.
- **Preschoolers:** At least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.

Please label all items brought from home with the child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. C.O.S.Kids is not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and should be returned to the center.

Cubbies: Upon enrollment, children will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with the child's name. Families should check cubbies on a daily basis to collect personal items and belongings.

Lost & Found: Lost and found items are placed in the front office. C.O.S.Kids is not responsible for lost personal property.

Toys from Home: Children should leave personal items at home unless specifically requested by the teacher. Additionally, teachers are not responsible for personal toys and do not want to risk a special toy getting broken.

- Families should limit sending items from home (for children over 12 months) to only their special sleep item (blanket and 'lovey'). These items should be appropriately sized to fit snugly into the child's cubby. Families should label the items with their child's name or initials.
- Teachers welcome "found" treasures like rocks and pinecones for our science tables, but children should understand that the item is for classroom use and not a personal item.
- Teachers will notify families of any "show and share" days. Families should label items that will return home with the child's name or initials. Families should not send in breakable items.
- Live animals or pets are not allowed to be brought to school.

NUTRITION

Foods Brought from Home:

Food brought from home is permitted under the following conditions:

- C.O.S.Kids is a peanut-free facility.
- Perishable food to be shared with other children must be store-bought and in its original package.
- Children will not be allowed to share store-bought food provided by the family unless the food is intended for sharing with all the children.

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- Leftover food will be discarded except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or come in a commercially wrapped package that was never opened.
 - Families should notify teachers before sending in food to be shared with the entire class.

Foods for individual children should be labeled with their name, date, and type of food.

Food Prepared on Campus:

- Infants up to 15 months of age will follow the individual feeding schedule provided by the family. Once children are over 15 months old, breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack are provided for all children in attendance at serving time.
- For children younger than 15 months who have been introduced to table food, parents may choose items from the weekly menu that they would like served to their child. However, once children are comfortable eating solid foods, they are given the opportunity to eat all food provided on the menu each day.
- Breakfast is typically served between 8:30-9:00 am, lunch is served between 11:30am-12:00pm, and snack is served between 2:30-3:00pm. Unfortunately, teachers cannot save food for a child after these designated times.
- The food service meets the NCDCEE for the appropriate number of servings of fruits/vegetables, grains, proteins and fats. It is the goal of C.O.S.Kids to provide children with healthy, nutritious food that meets the needs of their growing bodies.
- Both meals and snacks are carefully planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp> and the state requirements for food service.

Food Allergies:

Special diets due to food allergies, intolerances, or preferences: At times families will need to adjust their child's diet due to allergies, intolerances or preferences. Staff and teachers will do their best to meet the needs of these families.

If a child requires a special diet due to a **FOOD ALLERGY**, immediately notify the Main Office and the classroom teacher of the concern. Food allergies, diagnosed by a physician, require specific paperwork and attention. The severity of the reaction must be taken into consideration, and additional training may be required for the staff and teachers. Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

- Epi-Pens for severe food allergies are stored in the child's classroom and will travel with the child on campus.
- The child's allergy will be posted in the classroom as well as the kitchen.
- C.O.S.Kids is a peanut-free facility, so exposure is not anticipated.
- Allergies to fruits are dealt with in-house by substitution.
- Allergies to large groups of foods, such as wheat, soy, eggs, are most easily dealt with by having the family bring in a substitution, such as Gluten-Free Pasta on spaghetti day. More information on substituting foods is in the following section.
- Families can choose to "Opt Out" of food from C.O.S.Kids. More information on Opting Out is on the following page.

If a child requires a special diet due to a **PREFERENCE**, notify the Main Office of the preference.

- Preferences will be posted in both the classroom and the kitchen.
- Preferences such as Vegetarian, Vegan or Milk are dealt with by having the family bring in a substitution, such as Almond Milk, to replace traditional milk. More information on substituting foods follows.
- Families can choose to “Opt Out” of food from C.O.S.Kids. More information on “Opting Out” will be found below.

Food Substitutions:

- C.O.S.Kids is required to serve the following plan:
 - Breakfast Snack: Choose 2 Components from Fruit/Vegetable, Protein, Grain, Milk
 - Lunch: Protein, Grain, Fruit, Vegetable, Milk
 - Snack: 2 Components-choose from Milk, Fruit/Vegetable, Grain, Protein
- Food substitutions must be brought to the C.O.S.Kids kitchen on the morning that the food is to be substituted. If a family chooses to make a food substitution, it must be a fruit for a fruit, a vegetable for a vegetable, grain for grain, milk for milk, protein for protein.
- All food must be labeled with the child’s first and last name and the date it is dropped off (date it is to be served). Food can only be served on the date it is labeled/dropped off.
- Milk substitutions can be brought to the kitchen on Monday, labeled with the child’s first and last name in addition to Monday’s date. Half-gallon containers are recommended. Milk must be picked up on Friday each week, or it will be discarded. The only allowable substitutions for milk, according to the USDA guidelines, are lactose free milk, almond, and soy milk. A full list of requirements for milk substitutions is available upon request in the office.
- If families do not provide an appropriate substitution due to a preference, children will be served from the menu. For example, if families would like their child to be served Soy Milk but they do not bring in a new carton on Monday, then their child will receive regular milk.
- Families should send a message through Procure to the classroom teachers to make them aware of the substitution coming from the kitchen on the given day.

Opting out of C.O.S.Kids Food:

- If a family chooses to opt out of C.O.S.Kids food, they must provide all meals and snacks, including snacks for special events.
- Teachers will not serve children any food items from the center kitchen.
- Children are only offered water to drink beyond what the child brings with them.
- Food must be prepared at home. Staff is able to warm food if needed, but they will be unable to cook any additional food.
- Food must be brought to the C.O.S.Kids kitchen on the morning that the food is to be served.
- All food must be labeled with the child’s first and last name in addition to the date it is dropped off (date it is to be served).
- All food must be labeled for breakfast, lunch or snack.
- Drinks can be brought to the kitchen on Monday, labeled with the child’s first and last name and Monday’s date. Half-gallon containers are recommended.
- Drinks must be picked up on Friday of each week, or it will be discarded.
- Drinks should be labeled for breakfast, lunch, and snack.

Infant Feedings:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold their own bottles. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed “on cue” to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent teacher.

- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula will be returned to the child's home or discarded at the end of each day. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to days.
- Breast milk and formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
- Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family.

Children 24 Months and Older:

- Children will not go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, and hard candy.

Birthday Treats and Special Snacks:

- Families should contact classroom teachers if they would like to send in birthday treats or special snacks.
- All food items must be commercially prepared as required by the Health Department (home baked items not allowed). Additionally, families should remember that C.O.S.Kids is a peanut-free facility.
- Many families like to celebrate their child's birthday at school. Families may bring a special, store-bought snack for their child to share with classmates during snack time.
- C.O.S.Kids is not permitted to have balloons on campus as required by the Health Department. Children should not bring in toys or prizes to hand out at school.
- Birthday invitations or special snacks can only be given out at school if the whole class is included.
- There will also be opportunities for special snacks throughout the year. Families who would like to help in this area should contact their child's teacher.

HEALTH

Immunizations: Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Annually, C.O.S.Kids checks with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. The state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Physicals: Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Families should send in their child's physical before but must be received no later than 30 days after the child begins the program. Families are responsible for **ensuring** that their child's physical is kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

Illness: C.O.S.Kids understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, families may not bring a sick child to the center. Families should keep their children at home if full participation is not possible. Teachers are not able to keep children inside when the class is outdoors or limit their activities within the classroom due to staffing/ratio requirements. In addition, the center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. Families will be called and asked to retrieve their children if they exhibit any of the following symptoms: (This is not an all-inclusive list.)

- Illness that prevents children from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than teachers can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Congestion, sore throat, upset stomach or ear pain.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that the child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 36 hours. (For example, if the child has their last fever on Monday at 10:00 am., they must be fever-free until Tuesday at 10:00 pm. At that time, the child may return to school on Wednesday).
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They can participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious.
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Allergy Prevention: Families are expected to notify the office and the classroom teachers regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and kitchen. Staff and teachers are trained to be familiar with and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Medications:

- **Prescription Medications:** Epi-Pens and breathing treatments are the only prescription medications staff can administer to children with a doctor's written permission.
- **Over-the-counter topical ointments/creams/lotions** such as teething cream, diaper cream and sunscreen can be administered with a written permission only. Ointments/creams/lotions that indicate they should not be used with children under the age of 2-years must be accompanied by a physician's written directive for use in infant/toddler classrooms.

Permission Slips: Families can obtain a permission slip from the child's teacher or from the front office. Signed permission forms are only applicable for six months (prescription) or for one year (over-the-counter meds) and must be completed in full.

All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. The staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

Communicable Diseases: When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is the legal responsibility of C.O.S.Kids to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. Administrative staff will notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus Influenzae (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Ringworm
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis
- Whooping Cough

Health Goals:

- C.O.S.Kids offers increased opportunities for physical activity among children, in the hope of inspiring an early love of sports and fitness that will serve as the foundation for a healthy way of life. Families are encouraged to support what children learn on campus so that health promotion becomes a natural way of life for everyone. Furthermore, through this commitment to health promotion and prevention, C.O.S.Kids provides the framework to help children build positive relationships, self-confidence, independence and the ability to deal with adversity.
- Another goal is to make health and fitness fun! C.O.S.Kids wants to inspire families to lead a healthy, active life and hope that through their children's early exposure to fitness, they develop a love for fitness that translates into healthy choices as they grow.

Cleaning Policies:

- In order for C.O.S.Kids to provide the best possible environment for the healthy development of children, cleaning policies are followed that meet the standards set by the Mecklenburg County Health Department and by the NC Department of Early Education.
- Staff and teachers are responsible for daily cleaning of classrooms including, but not limited to, sanitizing toys, shelves, tables, sinks and counters; disinfecting toilets, changing table and bathroom sinks; sweeping and removing garbage. On a weekly basis staff will wipe down shelving, wash sheets and soft toys, clean windows, baseboards, etc.
- Kitchen staff is responsible for daily cleaning of the kitchen including washing dishes, cleaning counters and appliances, sweeping the floor and other regular maintenance items.
- A contracted cleaning company vacuums and mops floors each evening. Additionally, they clean restrooms, remove any remaining garbage from the facility and wash all windows.

SAFETY

Clothing: Children should wear practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Children will be involved in a variety of activities including painting, outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Playgrounds are used as an extension of the classroom, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

Children's clothing may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Teachers encourage children to be self-sufficient. Families should send children in clothes that allow for children to say, "I can do it!"

Children should wear rubber-soled shoes or sneakers to allow for a greater margin of safety on the outdoor equipment. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for children to participate in some activities. Licensing guidelines require that shoes be worn at all times, even during nap times.

Attire for Infants:

- Due to dangers related to SIDS, it is very important that infants up to 12 months of age have their hands and arms accessible during sleep and that they are not overdressed, which would cause overheating.
- Infants cannot have any items, beyond a pacifier, in their crib. Blankets and/or swaddling items are not allowed. Infant sleeping bags such as the one pictured to the right are *allowed*.
- When infants begin crawling, make sure their knees are covered to help limit the irritation on their delicate skin.
- Infants go on walks and spend time outside on a regular basis. Families should provide weather appropriate attire such as coats and hats in the winter months and light layers in the spring and summer.
- Amber necklaces or other types of teething necklaces are not allowed for infants. Infants and toddlers should not wear any type of necklace that will present a hazard in the child care environment.



Communal Water-Play: Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious diseases.

Injuries: Safety is a major concern in child care and preschool environments. Daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be

administered by trained staff and teachers if children sustain minor injuries (e.g., bumps, scrapes, or bruises). Families receive incident report forms as well as direct messages outlining the incident. All classrooms are equipped with first aid kits that meet the state regulations.

- For injuries that involve blood exposure between two or more individuals, special procedures, as outlined by Mecklenburg County Health Department, must be followed. Please see information below for a detailed explanation.
- For serious injuries, seizures, trouble breathing, or other life-threatening conditions, teachers will tend to the injured child immediately, while another staff member alerts the Administrative team members for assistance. If necessary, 911 will be called immediately. The Administrative team is responsible for choosing the appropriate action to obtain proper medical care. If they need to consult a medical professional, the physician-as specified on the child's emergency card-will be contacted. If the injured child is to be taken to the hospital, they will be taken by an emergency vehicle with an accompanying administrative staff member. Staff members will not transport the injured child.
- Unless another hospital is listed on the injured child's emergency card, the injured child will be taken to Novant Matthews located at 1500 Matthews-Township Parkway. The phone number for Novant is 704-384-6500. The family will be notified about the incident as soon as appropriate measures for the immediate care have been taken, and the family will be directed to meet their child and the accompanying staff member at the hospital.

Procedure for Incidents involving *Blood Exposure:

*A "blood exposure" is defined as contact with blood or bodily fluids to which universal precautions apply, such as:

- An injury to the skin (e.g. cut with a sharp object).
- Contact with mucous membranes.
- Skin that is chapped, abraded, or otherwise affected so that an effective skin barrier is not present.
- A bite or injury, which results in blood exposure.

Biting: Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, the teachers' response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Teachers will send notes to the family of the child who was bitten as well as to the biter's family. Teachers will work together with families to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change in the behavior.

Transportation Safety: Families should be very cautious when driving on campus, and should not park in the driveway next to the main entrance. Parking spaces are available on Charles Street, Ames Street, and in the gravel lot on Freemont Drive. Families should never leave their car motors running.

- Adults must always accompany children when walking through the parking lots on campus. Children, of any age, should not be sent back into the building by themselves. Families must not leave children unattended in their cars. This is very dangerous and is considered child neglect.
- Children under eight years of age or less than 80 lbs. in weight must be properly secured in a weight-appropriate child restraint system. Motor vehicle accidents are the number one killer of children in our nation according to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). The NTSB also reports that 8 out of 10 child-safety seats are not properly installed, putting children at increased risk of serious injury or even death. The Matthews Police and Fire Departments, as well as many local car dealers, offer safety checks for proper safety seat installation free to the public. Families should contact these agencies if they need help.

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- Families should not leave personal items, such as purses, laptops, or cell phones unattended in their vehicles.

Emergency and Evacuation: Each month C.O.S.Kids conducts a fire or emergency drill (lock down, shelter in place, etc.). Drills happen at various times of the day so that staff can prepare for every eventuality. All staff members receive yearly training on emergency planning and procedures. Families who would like to review the campus emergency plan should contact the Administrative Team.

Security: Upon enrollment, families will receive two security cards. These cards are specific for the enrolled family. Each of the outside doors for both buildings along with the hallway doors has a security card reader. Families must not allow anyone to enter the building with them. Families should direct strangers to the Main Office or Atrium Desk, or direct them to contact the office by phone at 704-845-4673. Families should notify the office immediately if they lose their cards so access can be turned off. Extra or replacement cards are \$5 each.

Respectful Behavior: All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, the same behavior is asked of all families at C.O.S.Kids. If there is a concern, please contact the Executive Director or Director of Programs, so concerns can be heard, discussed and addressed. Hostile or aggressive behavior is never appropriate and will not be tolerated. If this occurs, the Administrative team reserves the right to ask families to control their behavior or to remove their children from the center.

Smoking: The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies. Therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are always non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the entire campus.

Prohibited Substances: The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the entire campus. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons: Dangerous weapons include guns, knives, razors, or any other objects, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted on the campus.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on campus, the police will be called, and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the campus. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Child Custody: Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. C.O.S.Kids is legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. C.O.S.Kids will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse: Staff and teachers are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if there is reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. C.O.S.Kids will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

If a staff member suspects that abuse and/or neglect has occurred, they will immediately make a report to Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services at 980-314-3577 or Child Protective Services in Union County at 704-296-6124.

Additionally, if a staff member suspects that a parent/guardian/custodian or other representative is not fit to transport and/or care for a child when they arrive on campus for dismissal due to alcohol, drugs or any other reason, staff will first ask the individual to find someone else to pick up the child. If necessary, the staff member will involve Matthews' Police Department to make a decision on whether the person is fit to transport the child. This policy is in place to protect the children that attend C.O.S. Kids.

Addressing Concerns Related to Program and Staff: Families with concerns or questions about the program or staff should immediately contact the Administrative Team by phone or email. The administrative team will do a full investigation into the concern and report back to the family. Depending upon the type of concern, families may be asked to meet with the Administrative Team, staff member and Executive Director.

If the family feels that a concern warrants an investigation on a higher level they may contact the NC Department of Early Education. For more information visit their website at <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/>

EMERGENCIES

As an organization focused on creating an atmosphere for children to grow mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, safety of those children is the number one priority.

The C.O.S.Kids staff have passed local, state, and federal background checks, which are re-administered every three years. Each staff member is additionally responsible to uphold several levels of training.

The C.O.S.Kids campus is secured through magnetic security cards and safety glass, and the facilities and playgrounds are regularly inspected for any safety issues.

Staff and teachers regularly review the emergency preparedness plan for all emergency situations. All teachers practice fire drills with the children every month and have quarterly shelter-in-place and lockdown drills

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Thank you for acknowledging the policies and procedures that have been established for the safety and welfare of all children at C.O.S.Kids. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it prior to enrollment.

*This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

I have received the C.O.S.Kids Family Handbook. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask the Administrative Team for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the C.O.S.Kids Family Handbook that I do not understand.

Recipient Signature

Date

Director Signature

Date