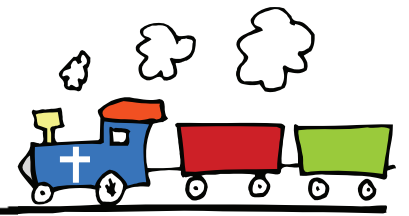


Celina Christian Preschool



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Train up a child in the way he should go . . .

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CHILD CARE FROM THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Dear Parent: *When you choose a licensed school, you and your family join your child in new experiences and relationships. You, the school principal, school staff, and other people in the school have a responsibility to protect the health, safety, and well-being of your child. The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, Licensing Division, is part of this partnership, too.*

Minimum standards require your preschool and private school provider to give you a copy of this pamphlet. You need to sign the receipt form attached to verify that you have received it and have discussed any questions concerning the material with facility staff.

WHAT IS SCHOOL LICENSING?

- The Licensing Division was established by law to regulate child-care facilities to help protect the health, safety, and well-being of children in care.
- With the assistance of child-care providers and experts in areas such as child development, early childhood education, fire safety, health, and sanitation, the Licensing Division develops minimum standards.
- Licensing staff inspect day-care centers, private kindergartens and nursery schools, some unaccredited private schools, group day-care homes, and drop-in care centers to be sure that minimum standards are met. The staff also investigate complaints about violations of the minimum standards and the child-care licensing law.

Your school facility is responsible for meeting minimum standards. Many programs exceed these requirements. Licensing does not regulate fees, collection policies, or the kind of learning program your school offers. Each facility has its own special personality and approach to educating and caring for children. Parents can choose the kind of program that best meets the needs of their child and family.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- Choose your child's school facility carefully.
- When you visit a facility, ask to see the license. The license means that the facility has met the minimum licensing standards the last time it was inspected. Inspection includes such things as fire, sanitation, safety, the number of child-care staff required, staff qualifications, and requirements for special services.

A copy of the minimum standards is available for you to review at your facility, you can go to the website: www.tdprs.state.tx.us, or request a copy from your local licensing office.

ESTABLISH A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOL FACILITY

- Tour the facility before you enroll your child. Ask questions about the program and observe the activities. Make sure the facility has all the information needed about your child and family to provide good care.
- Work with the staff of the facility you choose. Parent involvement is an important part of a successful experience with a school.
- Read all the material the school gives you. In addition to material required by licensing standards, each facility has its own policies and requirements. It's important that you understand these requirements before you enroll your child. It's equally important, once your child is in care, to read the notices, special requests, notes, and other materials the school sends home.
- Drop in occasionally during the day to observe how your child interacts with staff and other children, and get a good picture of the day-to-day activities at the school. Be careful not to disrupt activities.
- Keep your side of the bargain. Drop off and pick up your child on time.

- Discuss concerns with the principal. Be aware that the teacher's main responsibility is working with the children. Don't be offended if the teacher can't spend much time talking with you when you drop off or pick up your child. If you need more time to talk about your child, set up a conference.
- It's important to let the school know about things at home that may affect how your child is doing during the day.

WHEN YOUR CHILD STARTS PRESCHOOL

- Remember that it's normal for a child to have some fears and misgivings about starting preschool. Children need time to get used to new situations. Prepare your children for the change as far in advance as possible. Discuss their concerns. If you're enthusiastic, chances are they soon will be, too.
- Depending on their ages, some children will temporarily "act out" their feelings by clinging to you and refusing to let go, forgetting their toilet training, having bad dreams, sucking their thumbs, or other such behavior.

Work with the preschool principal and your child's teacher on this.

TALK THINGS OVER WITH YOUR CHILD

- Make an opportunity each day to gently ask questions when your children are quiet and feeling secure and protected. Share their excitement about new friends, new skills, and new abilities; listen to their concerns; and give them a chance to boast about their achievements.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The school must get certain information and records from parents to ensure the child's health and safety, handle emergencies, and meet minimum standards. If you do not provide this material, the school will not be in compliance with the minimum standards.

- Complete an enrollment form that includes basic information about your child; telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day; authorization for emergency care for your child; and written permission for swimming, other water activities, and transportation services.
- Tell the school about any special concerns or needs, including allergies, medical history, and current medications.
- Give the school a copy of your child's immunization record showing immunizations against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, and Haemophilus influenza Type B. In some parts of Texas, a tuberculosis test report is also required.
- Provide a doctor's statement that your child is physically able to participate in the school's activities.
- Inform the school in writing about who is permitted to take your child from the facility.

The school may only release your child to you or to an adult you designate.

- Make sure that school staff know the child has arrived. Make sure that staff are aware when you come to pick up your child. Don't leave your child at the front door, and never leave your child at the facility before opening or after closing.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR CHILD IS ILL OR INJURED?

- The school is not allowed to admit a child who seems to be sick unless a doctor or nurse gives approval in writing. This may cause problems for parents, but it is necessary to prevent a sick child from infecting other children.
- If your child has been absent because of a contagious illness, the school must follow guidelines concerning when the child can return to school.
- If your child appears seriously sick or injured while at school, the school will call you immediately. It is important that you pick up your child as soon as possible.
- If your child needs immediate medical attention, the school must call your child's physician, take the child to the nearest emergency room or minor emergency clinic, or call for an ambulance. This is why the school must have your authorization for emergency medical care.

LIABILITY INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

- Ask the principal whether or not the facility carries liability insurance. Texas law requires preschool facilities to carry liability coverage in the amount of \$300,000 per occurrence to cover a child when the child is in care of the facility.
- Liability insurance coverage is not required if the insurance cannot be secured due to financial reasons; if the licensee is unable to locate an underwriter willing to issue a policy; or if the current policy limits have been extended. You are to be notified, in writing, that the coverage is not available.

TAKE A GOOD LOOK

As you become more familiar with your child's school program, you will see many strong points. Almost all school facilities strive to provide a warm, loving, safe, and healthy environment for children. Look for these characteristics, but also be aware of warning signals that tell you something is wrong.

FEEL SECURE WHEN YOU SEE THAT:

- The school welcomes you to visit any time, and you are invited to observe the class or participate in activities.
- Staff are alert and involved with the children.
- Staff seem warm and interested in the children.
- There is spontaneous laughter, hugging, and eye-to-eye contact.
- Staff are gentle, but firm when necessary.
- The facility is clean and attractive.
- Your child is relaxed and happy after the initial adjustment period.
- Your child seems physically well cared for. Staff informs you of minor accidents and tell you when your child doesn't feel well.
- Children seem involved with constructive activities, and they get individual attention.

BE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED WHEN YOU SEE THAT:

- Parents are not encouraged to visit the facility.
- Children are left without direct adult supervision.
- Adults spend much time scolding, ordering, and yelling at children.
- Adults are physically rough with children or allow rough play.
- The building is dirty, or you see unsafe conditions.
- Your child is unhappy about being left at the facility, and this doesn't improve with time.
- A child comes home bruised or injured, and the school can't explain what happened. (The child may not remember minor bruises and scrapes received when playing, however.)
- Children seem aimless, bored, angry, or frustrated, or there are too many children to supervise.

WHEN THINGS AREN'T GOING WELL

You may find yourself displeased about something that has happened at the facility. Talk about these things with facility staff. There may be a misunderstanding that can easily be resolved. If the situation isn't resolved and you believe minimum standards are not being met, call the local licensing office. They will handle your call discreetly. A licensing representative will investigate your complaint. The licensing representative may need to interview you and your child and may also interview other children at the facility. If the licensing representative finds that a standard has been violated, the facility will be notified and a time set for the facility to correct it. Licensing staff may revoke a license if a facility doesn't meet minimum standards. The department does not take action to revoke a license unless children are in immediate danger or the licensee refuses to comply with standards.

IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE

Most facilities, like most parents, take good care of children. Child abuse is rare, and it is very unlikely that anything like this will happen to your child. If you do suspect that your child has been abused or sexually molested, report the situation immediately. Use the toll-free Child Abuse Hotline number (1-800-252-5400), available 24 hours a day. If you think the abuse occurred in a preschool facility, call your local licensing office. That office would be in Plano, Texas: 972-633-6618. The situation will be investigated immediately, and you will be given referrals or recommendations for help for your child and family.

Should agency staff interview or examine your child during an abuse investigation, a reasonable effort will be made to notify you within 24 hours after the interview or examination.

Parents who suspect or believe that their child has been abused in a school environment sometimes remove their child from school, but don't report the problem. This leaves other children in danger. State law requires you to report suspected child abuse.

Should testimony in court be needed, you may be able to testify on behalf of your child if you were the first person to hear your child's story.

When people make a report of suspected child abuse in good faith, they are immune from any liability. If a complaint is made with malicious intent or for revenge, there is no liability protection.

When the department investigates a complaint, the identity of the complainant is not revealed. Everyone, including school staff, are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately.