

Abeona House Family Guidelines



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About Our Policies and This Guide

This parent guide of our policies and procedures is issued each fall and to new families served by the center. Policies may change at any time, and parents will be made aware of such changes through the monthly newsletter. Comments and suggestions about school policies should be brought to the attention of the administrative staff (executive director) or executive board members (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer).

About Us

Origins

Named after the Roman goddess of children leaving home for the first time, Abeona House Child Discovery Center is a nonprofit organization based in New Orleans that began as a direct response to the impact of the hurricanes on the region. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, many childcare centers did not reopen, including the Gris Gris House, a Reggio Emilia–inspired center. The former families served by this unique program looked elsewhere for their childcare needs but were ultimately dissatisfied and decided to create Abeona House. The school was opened in September of 2006, to continue to provide a Reggio Emilia inspired education in New Orleans. Parents continue to volunteer time and talents to ensure the continuation and success of this vital community resource.

Governance

The organization is governed by the Board of Directors that is comprised a mix of parents and community members. The board officiates such matters that are relevant to the long-term sustainability of the organization and oversees the efficacy of the Executive Director. The bylaws are available at the school for your review.

Questions and comments regarding teachers, children, and their care should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director. Complaints regarding the Executive Director should be brought to the attention of any board member.

Licensing

Abeona House is licensed by the Department of Education. Parents or staff may call or write the Louisiana Department of Education, Licensing Division at any time should they have significant, unresolved licensing complaints.

The Louisiana Department of Education Division of Licensing can be contacted at:

Email: LDELicensing@la.gov

Phone: (225) 342-9905, toll-free at 1-877-453-2721

Mission Statement

Abeona House Child Discovery Center provides exceptional childcare and early childhood education to children ages six weeks to five years. A non-profit childcare center inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, we serve families in the Greater New Orleans area from diverse backgrounds with joy, equity, and love.

Values

As an organization, Abeona House values:

- Community** connecting with our neighborhoods, and supporting local businesses and New Orleans' recovery
- Lifelong learning** for children, parents, and teachers
- Reciprocal relationships** and collaboration between children, families, teachers, and community
- Environment as the third teacher** filled with beauty, simplicity, nature, the warmth of home, and documentation of children's learning
- Socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic diversity** celebrating each family's uniqueness
- Individuality of children** including diversity in ability
- Balancing livable wages and affordable tuition** as part of our mission to respect children, families, and teachers
- Joi de Vivre** and a loyalty to our New Orleans heritage
 - Healthy, fresh, local food: nourishes us and energizes our interactions
-

Reggio Emilia Philosophy

The Abeona House curriculum is inspired and influenced by the early childhood teaching in Reggio Emilia, Italy. In this model, several key points converge.

Namely,

- Respect for all individuals, each child, parent, and staff member
- Open communication between parents, teachers, and children in the discovery/learning process
- Sparking of curiosity and development of critical thinking in children
- An extended-family atmosphere so that parents feel welcome and children feel comfortable
- Recording, reviewing, and reflection of the learning process through documentation
- Freedom of expression through a multitude of media and representations, also known as "The Hundred Languages of Children"

There are several terms specific to Reggio Inspired Programs. Here is a list of terms you should know: Provocare: To provoke. To challenge or stimulate. Often used when materials are arranged to invite children to experience them.

Intent:

Ambiente: The environment of the classroom. This includes all aspects from materials to temperature, smells to physical arrangement.

POLICIES

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

As a mandated reporters, all staff and owners shall report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Louisiana Child Protection Statewide Helpline (855) 4LAKIDS. Our center shall not delay the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect. Staff are asked but not required to report suspected abuse to the center prior to reporting to Child Protection.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Abeona House admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin and does not discriminate for any cause, including choice to breastfeed or sexual orientation.

Disclosure of Information Policy

Abeona House is licensed by the Department of Education, Licensing Division. The Department of Education's website has available for parents licensing surveys/inspections, regulation, and information regarding early learning centers.

Complaint Policy

Parents or staff may call or write the Louisiana Department of Education, Licensing Division at any time should they have significant, unresolved licensing complaints.

The Louisiana Department of Education Division of Licensing can be contacted at:

Email: LDELicensing@la.gov

Phone: (225) 342-9905, toll-free at 1-877-453-2721

Parental Access Policy

Parents are allowed to visit the center anytime during its regular hours of operation and when children are present.

Parental Involvement Policy

Families are encouraged to participate in special events that allow them to learn more about our work with children and their peer relationships and to meet other families. Details about some of our special events are contained later in this guide.

Behavior Management Policy

See "Safety and Discipline"

Electronic Devices Policy

All activities involving electronic devices, including but not limited to television, movies, games, videos, computers and hand held electronic devices, shall adhere to the following limitations:

1. Abeona students do not use electronic devices at school except for the occasional screening of non-fiction footage related to the curriculum and not exceeding 2 minutes in length or in the event of an extended emergency situation such as a tornado warning, and
2. Electronic device activities for children under age two are prohibited, and

3. Time allowed for electronic device activates for children ages two and above shall not exceed two hours per day

Computer Practices Policy

Students do not have access to computers on campus.

Programs, Movies and Video Games Policy

Programs, movies, and video are not show at Abeona House except as provided for in our Electronic Devices Policy. Programs, movies, and video games with violent or adult content, including but not limited to soap operas, television news, and sports programs aimed at audiences other than children, are not permitted in the presence of children. All television, video, DVD, or other programming shall be suitable for the youngest child present. "PG" programming or its television equivalent and any programming with a rating that is more restrictive than "PG" are not shown at Abeona House. Video games are not permitted to students at Abeona House.

ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT POLICY

Waiting List/Sibling Priority

Because we want children to be placed in developmentally appropriate contexts, factors such as the month of birth help determine which waitlist registrant would be the best fit for the vacancy. Within children of the best-fit age-range, we contact families in the order their Waitlist Form was received.

Preference is given to siblings of already enrolled children or returning families, provided that a developmentally appropriate spot is available. We do have an admissions calendar, with children being enrolled August to August. If a sibling family wishes to enroll later than this timeframe (for example, starting in November), they will have to pay tuition for holding the spot until the family uses the placement.

Each fall, prospective families are asked to re-enroll on the waitlist for the coming year. Families who do not re-enroll are removed from the list.

Admissions Policy and Process

Abeona House invites admission (space allowing) to any family of a child (ages 6 weeks to 5 years) who believes they might benefit from our program.

Abeona House admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin and does not discriminate for any cause, including choice to breastfeed or sexual orientation.

New families enrolling are required to deposit one month's tuition and fees. This amount is non-refundable, unless indicated to the family with a specific date by which they must inform the school.

Families interested in financial aid go through the full enrollment process. If the award amount is not sufficient for the family to enroll for the year, the family can indicate this on their award letter by the required deadline, and their deposit will be returned in full.

Inclusion

Abeona House believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation

to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their individual capabilities and needs. We encourage an open dialogue between administration and families to determine the suitability of our program in meeting your child's needs.

Enrollment Requirements

Prior to admission, the following steps must be documented:

- Consultation between parents and director agreeing that the Abeona House and Reggio Emilia philosophy suits the family/child's needs
- Tour of the facility
- A signed contract outlining the details of the financial agreement between the center and family
- Discussion with Parent or Guardian shall include:
 - Provision of written statement of center's policies and procedures
 - Securing necessary information on child (master card)
 - Signed forms and permissions, including parent-center contract; giving child permission to receive care; for staff to administer emergency medication; to release child to appropriate adults; for child to be videotaped, photographed, and quoted in projects and promotional materials; and for the child to participate in walking trips
 - Immunization record updated annually
 - (State law requires that children enrolled in school have age-appropriate immunizations in accordance with a schedule approved by the State of Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospitals. Parents not choosing to immunize their child should bring a note from a doctor showing that the child is under doctor's supervision.)
 - A complete Physical Health Examination Form filed annually

Re-enrollment/Non-reenrolling Students

Each spring, families wishing to return for the following August–August school year are required to complete a re-enrollment form and submit a Letter of Intent. Families not submitting their forms and fees forfeit their spot for the coming year.

Families matriculating to other programs are asked to give an end date for the contract on their re-enrollment form. These families may stay at Abeona House until the last Friday before August professional development week. Once we return after professional development week, we begin our "new school year."

Annual Fees & Monthly Tuition

One-time registration fee, \$150, monthly activity fee, \$25, Key fee, \$15 for two.

Infants- \$1020/month

Ones- \$980/month

Twos, Threes- \$960/ month

Preschool- \$910/month

Automatic Draft for Tuition Payments & Late Tuition Fees

Tuition is due on the first of each month. If the first of the month occurs over a weekend or holiday, tuition is due the last business day before the first.

Each participating family is required to have a checking account and supply the school with the routing and account numbers on a voided check. We use software to automatically draft funds from the bank account provided.

No refunds or “make up” days are given for illness, family vacations, school closures, or emergency weather closing. Abeona House does not prorate tuition.

Financial Aid

Financial aid is available to families based on need, as determined by the Scholarship Committee. Interested families apply for aid in the spring, and awards run from August to August.

Insufficient Funds

There is a \$35 penalty for incomplete transactions due to insufficient funds. If a family has repeated issues with NSF transactions, other payment arrangements will be made.

Withdrawal from the Program

Any family choosing to terminate their relationship with the center is required to inform the director one month prior to the end of the month. Otherwise, that family is obligated to pay for the next month of childcare, regardless of whether or not they use our services.

Dismissal Policy

The goal at the Abeona House is to secure a long-lasting relationship between our center and its families. We believe all children to be a positive influence for our dynamic program.

Dismissal from our center would be considered under these circumstances:

- Non-payment of tuition (see payment policy for guidelines)
- Indecent or inappropriate behavior on the part of the parent, family members, or associated guests
- The family and school cannot reach an understanding about the best interests of the child
- Continuing to serve the family would cause harm to the children served by the center, or the staff
- Disregard of policies, including chronic tardiness at drop off and evening pick-up
- Any reason that is determined to be disruptive to the school culture and the well-being of the students as identified by the Director and Board of Trustees
- The Director and Board of Directors reserve the right to immediately dismiss a child under circumstances that pose an exigent threat to the staff or students
- Further, although it is developmentally appropriate for preschool aged children to compare and contrast differences among people, when noted differences are used for the purpose of demeaning, teasing or devaluing a certain group of people (hereinafter referred to as "demeaning behavior"), including but not limited to, those historically discriminated against (on the basis of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender expression, family structure, religion, physical ability, mental ability, or socio-economic status) the following protocol will be enacted:

Following first instance of demeaning behavior: Separate meetings between (1) the Executive Director and any other school personnel the Executive Director deems appropriate; and (2) the family of the child who exhibited demeaning behavior and the child who was the subject of the demeaning behavior. The purpose of these meetings will be to (1) collaboratively formulate a written

individual action plan to prevent any further demeaning behavior; (2) disseminate pertinent resources; (3) communicate expectations, and (4) relay consequences should the demeaning behavior happen a 2nd or 3rd time.

Following second instance of demeaning behavior (within same calendar school year as first instance of demeaning behavior): Child who exhibited demeaning behavior sent home for the remainder of the school day and the following school day.

Following third instance of demeaning behavior (within same calendar school year as first instance of demeaning behavior): Child who exhibited demeaning behavior permanently dismissed from school.

The Director and/or Board of Directors has the discretion to depart from the above policy regarding demeaning behavior at any time with the written agreement between the Director and the families and staff involved.

Daily Operations

Hours of Operation

We open at 7:30 A.M. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children, wash their hands, and sign them in.

We close at 5:30 P.M. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. If you arrive past our 5:30 closure, you will be charged a late fee costing \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes or part thereof and \$5.00 a minute after that. This amount will be added to your tuition fee for the following month.

Our annual calendar of events and closures is given 12 months or more in advance and is listed on our website.

Absence

If your child is going to be absent, on vacation, or arrive after 9:30 A.M., please send a message to your child's teachers on Brightwheel. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you. If your child is out due to health reasons, we appreciate as much information as you can provide.

Drop Off

Parents are required to sign their child in when dropping off using their individual code.

The well-being and comfort of the children in our care relies heavily on the routines of the day. We respectfully request that parents drop off all children by 9:30 A.M. This allows the children to fully participate in the experiences created by their teachers.

In the case of special circumstances (doctor's appointments, for example) parents may drop off children up until 11 A.M. Children will not be admitted after 11 A.M.

Outside Extracurricular Classes & Appointments

Children participating in outside afternoon classes or appointments (lessons of any kind) may not be removed and brought back to the center on the same day. Parents are asked to schedule lessons and doctor's appointments at the beginning and end of the day. Special exceptions will be made for regular therapy on a case-by-case basis.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-Up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. You may further authorize additional individuals via Brightwheel message or email in unplanned situations and follow it with a written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy. If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after 1 hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have 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 your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Child Custody

In the event there is a court ordered custody agreement, the custodial parent is responsible for providing a copy of this agreement to the director. We will not be responsible for enforcing court-directed custody mandates if the official papers are not on file.

Late Pick-Up

Parents who are late to pick up their child will be assessed a fee of \$5 for the first 5 minutes or part thereof and \$5 per minute thereafter. Parents who are chronically late will meet with administration to determine if we are able to meet the family's needs. In the event of an emergency, please contact the school so that we may call your emergency contacts.

Holidays, Events & Closures

Please see calendar on the school website.

Emergency Notifications

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, loss of power, loss of water, etc.) prevent us from opening on time or at all, an automated notification to the families will be made by the phone number listed on the family's Master Card, and email. In the case of evacuation, or re-opening, if you return this phone call, there may not be anyone to return your call. Please then check your email, as we will use both methods to reach you. If we do need to evacuate the school premises, the staff and children will relocate to St. Margaret's at Mercy nursing home, (3525 Bienville St, New Orleans, LA 70119; 504-279-6414) and parents will be contacted to pick up their child.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange. Children not picked up within an hour may be moved elsewhere and the parent notified to ensure their safety and the safety of our staff.

Children's Birthdays

It is customary to celebrate the birthdays of our children. The parents of the birthday child may bring a special treat for the class or school to share. The treat you bring for your child is up to your discretion.

Abeona House Birthday

Every September, we celebrate the day we opened our doors to our founding families with cake and ice cream. This event also kicks off our fundraising efforts for the fall.

Fall Fest

Every year, close to Halloween, we celebrate the changing season with our annual Fall Fest event, which includes a petting zoo and outdoor activities.

The Krewe of Abeona

The Friday before Mardi Gras, our parade of decorated wagons and strollers led by our Kings and Queens, returning home to a Mardi Gras Ball. Coveted throws include the Golden Nunu.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Negotiated Learning & Emergent Curriculum

In keeping with the Reggio Emilia philosophy, the teachers at the Abeona House develop an Intention which will be explored through projects and experiences in the classrooms in that year. In planning, the teacher attempts to anticipate the directions the children will take the idea. The curriculum is seen as a loose garment that takes the shape of the students' interests as they pursue new pathways that inevitably change each project. There is no strict timetable for project completion, and often, the work is revisited, restructured, and reconsidered.

Our Work with Young Children

The Reggio Emilia approach is built upon the foundation of "respect for the child". At Abeona House, we interpret respect for the child in the following ways:

- **Our curriculum is built on relationships.** Positive relationships with teachers, parents, and children in this environment are critical for learning to take place, and they enable us to discuss, plan, and do our work. Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is key to our work.
- **Children are curious and full of wonder, and they have the right to explore a wide variety of materials.** As their teachers, it is our work to respond and support their interests and explorations. Materials come in a wide variety of forms. The process by which young children explore media and ideas has great value and is worthy of our attention.
- **The learning experiences we share have a relevant context.** Discrete skills and topics are not explored in isolation. Our emergent curriculum is a response to the children's ideas and play, the environment, experiences in our lives and in their families, and seasonal themes and celebrations. How children learn is as important as what they learn: Process and content go hand in hand.
- **Our work is reciprocal.** Both children and teachers have ideas and input that are valuable contributions. This shared ownership guides projects and activities.

- **Play is an essential, powerful component of childhood.** It is how we learn to care for others, negotiate situations, and problem solve. Ample time is given to provide free-play, facilitate relationships through play, and direct future projects through children's interests initiated during play time.
- **"Adults at school, working together, is as important as the child's individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community."** (Loris Malaguzzi) We model collaboration, partnership, and mutual respect in our daily interactions and work together as stakeholders in children's lives.
- **Our work with children reflects diversity of ability, culture, heritage, and language.**

DAILY SCHEDULES

The children's activities are based on the natural rhythms of our time together. Students are given time and space to freely explore, without being hurried from one concept to the next. Daily schedules are posted in each classroom.

Naptime

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Children ages 1 and older have a midday nap and rest for a minimum of 1 hour. Children are not required to sleep and may be given a quiet activity. Parents are required to purchase a nap mat roll and may send additional blankets if they desire. Linens are sent home every Friday to be washed and must be returned on Monday morning.

Infant-Toddler Schedules (6 weeks to 24 months)

We consider the terms *care* and *educate* to be synonymous in our infant classroom, and trust the children to communicate their needs and interests. We view infants and toddlers as competent individuals worthy of our respect.

Infants create their own schedules and are put to sleep on their backs in a crib free from blankets or positioners. Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center and nurse during the day. In the interest of not disturbing the class, only one nursing parent in the classroom is allowed at a time. Mothers are also welcome to nurse in the soft seating area outside of the infant room.

As children grow from infancy to mobility, there is greater emphasis on developing predictable routines of eating, learning, resting, and playing. Our 1-year-olds take a 2-hour nap after lunch and eat the same meal plan as the older children.

For infants and toddlers, activities include outside time, mirror play, songs/music, tummy time and floor play, and playing with words and speech through the use of board books, puppets, and close conversation with caregivers. All children will be assisted in learning gross and fine motor skills through play and encouragement.

Choice is a key element in all classrooms. Daily activities include teacher-planned sensory, creative, and play experiences, as well as the spontaneous play ideas and interests that arise from the children themselves during the day. Small children will be given opportunities to work with others in a group. We consider this an innovation that allows our children to grow and learn from each other, and develop the social skills necessary for working in a close community with peers and teachers.

The acquisition of vocabulary is strongly emphasized with our 12-24 month olds, as they discover that objects, people, places, and movements all have names. Communicating language verbally and through Baby Signs helps children understand their world and develop a capacity to communicate their ideas and needs. Our curriculum, projects, routines, and centers are designed to introduce, challenge, and measure children's learning of the 2014-2015 Early Learning Guidelines as identified by the Louisiana Department of Education.

Two-Year-Olds (24 to 36 months)

At this age, children's exploration of their senses and awareness of their bodies is emphasized. As the 2-year-olds discover the many textures, sounds, and movements that define their world, we offer opportunities to communicate their intensity. Through artistic expression, physical movement, and play, the children are active participants in co-creating the daily experiences in the classroom.

As children move from parallel play to interactive play with peers, social skills through self-awareness become more important. Two-year-olds are strongly encouraged to verbally express their ideas and needs to their teachers and peers. Our curriculum, projects, routines, and centers are designed to introduce, challenge, and measure children's learning of the 2014-2015 Early Learning Guidelines as identified by the Louisiana Department of Education.

There is also greater emphasis on social responsibility at this age, as the expectation for children to assist in their own care increases (cleaning up, removing their own diaper, and picking up their nap mats). Children in this room are given the opportunity, when interested, to potty twice daily. Once they have figured much of this out, they may use the bathroom as needed.

3 Year Old Room

Both of our Preschool Classrooms focus on community. A major component of the daily schedule is the morning meeting. This is an opportunity to bring up ideas with the teachers and lays a foundation for group identity, as children discuss who is absent, on vacation, taking another class. The teacher's role as facilitator is key in creating an atmosphere of learning and mutual concern. Through this morning ritual, children are made aware of their jobs in helping keep the community running smoothly. Time is then given for project work during which the class often splits into two groups.

Literacy, math, science, geography, and culture are fully integrated through project work and routines. Our curriculum, projects, routines, and centers are designed to introduce, challenge, and measure children's learning of the Early Learning Guidelines as identified by the Louisiana Department of Education.

TRANSITIONING

From Home to the Center

The child's response depends on many factors: age, development, previous experiences. Teachers and families work closely to help the child acclimate and the parents return to work after parental leave.

Moving Up to the Next Room!

Part of the Abeona House philosophy focuses on the idea of community and the relationship between teachers, parents, and students. Because of this we keep our children together for a full year. After our

professional development week, we move children up into their new classroom as well as welcoming in new students at this time.

Over the summer months the teachers work with the children to prepare them to move up to the next room. They spend time visiting in small groups and engaging with teachers around their own visions and desires for their new classrooms (when age appropriate). Occasionally one or more of the child's teachers may loop up with them to the next classroom.

From Preschool to Kindergarten

Information about preschool and kindergarten programs, both public and private will be passed onto parents as they work through decisions about their child's schooling. This may come in the form of guest speakers, brochures, and flyers. Parents in need of documentation (letters of recommendation, school records, etc.) may request these from the director with a week's notice.

TEACHERS

Teachers Are Professionals

Our view of the child as worthy of respect is mirrored in our view of the teacher. We believe that teachers are observers, collaborators, and partners in the learning process. We rely on their responses to ensure safety, proper care of children, and a stimulating and exciting curriculum. Full-time teachers work with the children for most of the day, every day. Our part-time staff helps shape the curriculum and communicate ideas and observations to the full-time teachers. All our teachers are viewed as collaborators with the administration and board of trustees.

Parent-Teacher Partnerships

Abeona House's unique origins demand an open, ongoing partnership with parents. Abeona House invites parents to visit, volunteer, and help their child transition to the school as long as their child is currently enrolled. We are proud of our open door policy.

Our work is to create a partnership between parents and teachers to ensure a happy childhood. We are not a service model of childcare. Two components are critical to high quality interactions with parents:

1. Teachers recognize that parents' knowledge, input and expectations of their child has great value;
2. Parents recognize that teachers have unique knowledge of their child in a group setting in a childcare environment.

Both components require mutual respect.

We encourage parents' input, support, and collaboration about their child, our program, and emergent curriculum.

Hiring Criteria

Our teachers have a wide range of experiences working with children, both formal and informal. All teachers must have experience managing multiple children and must love and feel inspired by children.

Hirees must undergo an interview with the administration and board, complete a 30 minutes observation interview, submit multiple references, have a clean criminal background check, and work with an experienced teacher for 20 hours as a trainee. All of our teachers are trained in first aid and CPR. Substitute teachers are trained in each classroom they will work in.

Professional Development

All of our teachers must commit to a certain level of professional development for their employment at Abeona House. Each teacher meets with administration to set a path to develop as an early childhood educator and as a Reggio-inspired educator. Support comes in the form of identifying resources and scholarships, time to read and dialogue, and funds for books.

All staff participates in our annual Professional Development Week in August as well as fall and spring professional development days. We are closed on these days so that teachers may meet to train, discuss curriculum, and receive some of the 20 hours of required coursework for childcare center employees.

Teacher Appreciation Week

Every May, we observe our teachers' hard work with a week of surprises, treats, and warm gestures. Parent-volunteers substitute for staff during nap time for the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon held off-campus.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Participation

Abeona House invites parents to visit, volunteer, and help their child transition to the school as long as their child is currently enrolled. We are proud of our open door policy. To maintain our strong culture of participation, we ask that parents contribute 10-15 hours per year to our continued operation.

Opportunities to Serve

- Board Member** (described in Governance, p.1)
- Families as Partners** (below)
- Committee participation or chair** spearheads any of the events during the year
- Work Days & Handy Help** opportunities to beautify the school through landscaping, painting, and repairs
- Classroom volunteers**

Families as Partners & Room Parents

Our Mission: The mission of Families as Partners is to engage the child's parents, family members, and caregivers with our school community of teachers, children, and other families to create a collaborative spirit of learning, wonder, and growth.

Room parents assist with this mission by guiding school-community events that enhance these relationships within their child's classroom.

Activities include:

- Coordinating school birthdays for teachers and students
- Planning and organizing occasional play dates to encourage the Abeona House sense of community
- Connecting with all new families in your room, extending the warmth of the Abeona family
- Facilitating teacher wish lists for fundraising purposes and for annual family work days

- Organizing special events like the Abeona House Birthday and Krewe of Abeona parade

Please speak with the director if you are interested!

Ongoing Communication

Communication with parents is supported through the daily report, daily parent-teacher communications, and our parent information boards in each classroom. Parents are encouraged to develop relationships and support with their other families. Additionally, families are welcome to share ideas on new projects for students to pursue or other ways that our program and school community can grow and improve.

We ask that (outside of personal matters such as babysitting) you do not use teacher's cell phone numbers. If you have a message or need to speak with your child's teacher, you may send a Brightwheel message, send an email to the teachers or the director, or, for immediate assistance, call the school phone at (504) 486-0510. Teachers check their emails at naptime only.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Once in the fall and once in the spring, teachers will compile their observations of your children using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The ASQ is used to track children's growth and development by their parents and caregivers and covers 5 key developmental areas: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social. We ask that at least one parent attend both the fall and spring conference. Conferences are made by appointment.

Family Night & Other Family Events

Families are encouraged to participate in special events that allow them to learn more about our work with children and their peer relationships and to meet other families.

Parent Classroom Volunteering

Parents volunteering in the classroom are required to participate in a one-day training and a criminal background check.

Private Babysitting

As teachers develop relationships with Abeona families, they may be asked to babysit in the family home. Abeona House is not liable for any incidents resulting from these interactions. Rate will be negotiated between the teacher and family.

Parents Observing

Occasionally, parents ask to observe their child in the social setting of the school. We ask that when parents do this, they do not interfere in the work of teachers and that they bring any concerns to the director and teacher outside of teaching time.

Emergency Drop-In Care

When alumni families have a child care emergency on a day they do not normally send their child, if there is sufficient space in a classroom, they may call to see if there is room to accommodate their child. There is a \$60 drop-in fee.

The Abeona House Food Program

Our guidelines for snacks and lunch comes from the recommendations for child care food issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Food Program

All children in the ones, twos, and preschool classrooms participate in the food program. All children, including infants, enrolled at Abeona House are required to have a USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program form on file. New forms are sent out every October.

Our food is fresh and local when possible and low in sugar and salt. We emphasize flavor and work to incorporate lots of tasty veggies into our meals. We are a nut-aware school and reserve the right to restrict nuts and nut products on campus.

Our meals are mostly vegetarian and comply with the USDA food program guidelines.

Children are served a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack. A weekly menu is posted in the hallway and on the website.

Infants (6 weeks to 1 year)

Infant parents supply the school with the breastmilk, formula, cereal, and baby food necessary for the child's health and nutrition. We ask parents to prepare all bottles that are brought to the center. A supply of nonperishable dry food (cereal, soft foods) may be kept at the school. Once children begin finger-feeding, they may choose to participate in our food program or continue to have food supplied from home. We request that parents communicate explicitly in writing with the infant teachers exactly how they would like to proceed regarding introduction to the food program prior to one year of age. At one-year-old, children are placed on the food program. Exceptions require a doctor's note.

All bottles, caps, and rings must be labeled with the child's name. This can be done with a sharpie marker, or pre-bought name tags work well.

If sending breastmilk, please label with the child's name and amount of milk. Also send a sterilized bottle for each of the child's feedings. Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to nurse their babies at any time if they so choose. Otherwise, we follow the most current research on storage, warming, and use of breastmilk.

Food Program Snack Guidelines

Each of these snacks will consist of two of the following three components:

*A serving of meat or meat alternative; a serving of vegetables or fruit (not fruit juice); a serving of whole-grain or enriched bread or an equivalent serving of cornbread, biscuits, rolls, muffins, crackers, or a serving of cooked whole-grain or enriched pasta or noodle products; or cereal grains such as rice, bulgur, or corn grits.

Birthday Cupcakes, Popsicles, & Snowballs

Parents may send cupcakes to acknowledge the child's birthday. The children love singing to their friends! During summer months and on field trips, your child may be offered a popsicle or snowball. If

you have any preferences (e.g., sugar-free), please indicate this in writing so that we may add it to your child's file.

DAILY LIFE WITH CHILDREN

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Growth and Change

Because young children are in a period of rapid growth, sometimes their new skills and abilities can overwhelm parents and caregivers. Regular communication between families and center staff will ensure that each child is appropriately challenged and interested.

Signing In/Out

Please sign your child in and out each day with their teacher and at the portal.

Daily Communication

We encourage you to check in with your child's teacher briefly at pick-up and drop-off times. Your child's teachers have a unique opportunity to observe your child all day in a group setting. These conversations are the cornerstone of our partnership with parents.

Daily reports that give a snapshot of what happened in the classroom are sent to parents' email addresses Monday through Thursday. If you aren't receiving these, please let the director know.

Daily sheets are sent from the infant room that include information about the child's food intake, eliminations, activity level, naps, and general mood as well as information about new word acquisition, reinforced vocabulary, and activities.

T-Shirts

Play is the work of children. Children are encouraged to wear play clothes and tennis shoes. Other closed-toed shoes are encouraged for safety and comfort. Daily activities include active and messy play, and the children should feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves. We will do our best to keep your child from getting too messy. During the year we frequently have sensory activities on our playground that include water experiences. This means you may be picking up a wet, sandy child! If you have somewhere to be directly after school on a given day, please inform your child's teacher in the morning.

During summer months, there will be water activities, so parents should supply swimwear, swim diapers (if needed), swim shoes, and a towel.

Supplies

Please send the following on his/her first day clearly labeled with your child's first name and last initial; notices are sent home as the supply dwindles:

	Diapers	Wipes	Other
Infants	Large box	5 packs	Diaper cream, extra clothes, blanket, a cap for every bottle feeding
Ones	Large box	5 packs	Nap mat, diaper cream if used, season-appropriate extra clothes
Twos	Large box of diapers; pull-ups with recloseable sides if potty training	5 packs	Nap mat, diaper cream if used, season-appropriate extra clothes
Threes and Fours	Pull-ups with recloseable sides if still potty training	1 pack in the cubby	Nap mat, season-appropriate extra clothes

Potty Training

We believe that potty training is an integral part of learning about our bodies. We help children with this step by teaching them to listen to and respect their bodies.

Once in the twos classroom, we offer opportunities and support for children expressing an interest in potty training. Often, the positive peer experience means our twos express this interest at school first! We do not force or mandate children to use the potty, believing that what comes into and out of the body is a basic form of control that only the child can dictate. At potty time, we will ask the child if he/she would like to use the potty. It is his/her choice always.

If your child is working on potty training, we are happy to support these efforts.

- Please send extra clothes and shoes for accidents.
- Please consider switching from diapers to pull-ups; send only those with recloseable sides.
- Please do not send your child in “onesies.”
- Elastic-waisted pants (versus ones with buttons and/or hooks) and dresses help a great deal.

We ask that all parents speak with your child’s teacher prior to sending your child in underwear. Having a plan in order before the process begins helps both families and teachers support the child.

In order to start wearing underwear to school your child must have dry pull-ups consistently (naptime not included) for an entire school week. This ensures that the child is ready for the transition.

To begin the process please send the following items:

2 clean complete outfits (including socks)

1 extra pair of shoes

At least 1 pack of pull-ups

Please also check your child’s cubby for dirty clothes. This will let you know what you will need to send to school and also avoid the mess of dirty clothes left over night.

Our rules for potty training are as follows:

After the **second** urine accident or the **first** BM accident a child will be required to wear a pull up for the rest of the day. The soiled clothes will be bagged and placed in the cubbie as is. It is up to the discretion of the parent whether to save the soiled underwear or have the teacher throw them out. The child will be allowed (and encouraged) to try wearing underwear again the next day. If a child resists underwear or specifically asks for a pull-up they will be allowed to wear them.

Teacher support:

As teachers, we value the potty training process. To help support each child we will ask them individually if they need to use the bathroom before any transitions, outside time, and nap. We also read body awareness and potty training books to encourage children along this journey.

Sunscreen and Mosquito Repellant

If you would like your child to wear sunscreen and mosquito repellant, please apply this before school. However, in cases of prolonged exposure to the elements, we request permission to apply these to your child (see release form). We will supply a basic, child-friendly sunscreen and repellant. The yard is sprayed for mosquitoes regularly.

Toys & Attachment Objects

Children may bring objects from home to the center to share with other children. However, if the child is unable to share, the object must be placed in the child's bag and cubby. Additionally, in transitioning the child in going home, we ask that parents not bring the property of Abeona House from the school.

Walking Trips

Part of the release you sign at the beginning of the year does allow for children to freely walk around First Grace United Methodist Church. These can include visits to the kitchen, walks around the block, explorations and adventures, and relationship building with our neighbors.

Documentation Release

Part of the Reggio Emilia philosophy is valuing the many languages children use to express themselves. The children's words are documented in journals and on audio and videotapes; students' images are captured in photo and videotape. Each parent is asked to sign a release authorizing the school's use of their child's words and images.

Confidentiality Policy

Records kept on the children and families of the Abeona House are kept in a secure area, maintained and viewed only by the administrative team. Emergency "master" cards are available to all the teachers, as well as additional information necessary to the well-being of a student.

All information and records are confidential. Employees of the center shall not disclose or knowingly permit the disclosure of any information concerning a child or his/her family, directly, or indirectly, to any unauthorized person.

SAFETY & DISCIPLINE

Our Approach- Behavior Management Policy

We encourage children to communicate the vast circle of feelings that might surround actions and to redirect those feelings in a wholly positive manner. Processing challenging moments and struggles

through communication allows the child to understand his/her feelings and role and to make good choices. This is a significant part of our work: teaching the child to have a healthy self-image while respecting the ideas, feelings, and bodies of others. With younger children (12-24 months), we typically work to redirect their attention. With all children, teachers work side-by-side with the child to process their feelings in some manner.

When this is not effective and especially when the safety of others is at risk, children might lose the option to choose an appropriate behavior related to the situation. At that time, removal from the group for a cool-down period (for one minute for each year of age) can be employed by the teacher. A child whose behavior inhibits the group may be moved to the office of the director until he or she has calmed down and expresses a willingness to cooperate with the rules of the classroom and his/her peers. It is **not** our policy to isolate a child, shame him/her, or assign labels based on behaviors the child is struggling to control. When children are working through a challenging but age-appropriate phase of hitting, biting, or throwing tantrums, we will ask parents to work with us to develop a common response to these undesirable behaviors.

When children struggle with self-control, it is our goal to provide consistency and love in a way that does not disrupt a safe and healthy environment for the other children. We do not send children home because of challenging behaviors. However, if a child is having a particularly difficult time, a parent may be called and asked to pick him/her up early for the benefit of everyone involved.

When a child is harmed by another, his/her physical and emotional well-being are of equal import to us as caregivers. If it is developmentally appropriate, facilitating dialogue between the children allows them to learn about empathy, consequences, and alternative behaviors.

Discipline

These types of discipline are **prohibited**:

- No child shall ever be subject to physical punishment, corporal punishment, verbal abuse, or threats.
- Cruel, severe, or unusual punishments shall not be inflicted upon children.
- Derogatory remarks shall not be made in the presence of children about family members of children in care or the children themselves. No child or group of children should be allowed to discipline another child.
- When a child is removed from the group for disciplinary reasons, he/she shall never be out of sight of a staff member.
- No child shall be deprived of meals or snacks or any part thereof for disciplinary reasons.
- Any form of punishment that violates the spirit of this standard of discipline, even though it may not be specifically mentioned as forbidden, is prohibited.

Hitting & Pulling

Hitting is not tolerated at Abeona House. That means that we do not ignore “rough housing,” or play hitting. When a child hits another, we remind them that “hands are not for hitting,” and also emphasize that these actions hurt the other person. Developing empathy by focusing on the person who is hit helps show that these actions have consequences.

Biting

When a child is bitten, we comfort both children involved. Each child needs reassurance they are both loved and valued. The bitten child will receive first aid, with the bitten area being cleaned and treated.

If children are going through a phase of biting, teachers working closely with the child work to anticipate certain triggers for this behavior. After multiple biting incidents (including attempts that did not actually cause injury) we will ask for a meeting with the child's parents so that we can work together on a plan to assist the child.

We work to pay attention to cues, anticipate problem areas, and be proactive. Children need our love and support as they learn self-control, and students who do not bite need to be assured that their safety and well-being can be assured.

"Aggressive" Play

Children learn through play and sometimes become fascinated with sword play, guns, and other play that involves pretending to fight. We ask that parents not send guns as toys, and we do not have these kinds of toys available to the children. However, our creative little ones can make toys even using their own fingers. We generally tell children that this play can only be engaged in with others who want to play that game, and pointing pretend guns and swords or chasing children who do not enjoy that play is not allowed. Quite simply, we tell children that we don't hurt our friends, or pretend to.

Children have a variety of materials available to them so that they may work through their intensity. This includes clay and keys, egg cartons, and play hammers, hole punchers, etc.

Abuse & Neglect Policy

As mandated reporters, the Abeona House staff shall continuously be aware of possible suspected abuse and/or neglect and report all documentation to the local Child Protection Agency.

Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) Orleans Parish

1450 Poydras St., 17th and 18th Floors

New Orleans, LA 70112

Phone: (504) 680-9100

Toll Free: 1-855-4LA-KIDS (1-855-452-5437)

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Handwashing Policy

Handwashing is our greatest defense against illness and disease. Parents are asked to wash their child's hands upon arriving at school each day. We wash the children's hands, toys, and belongings throughout the day and request this support in keeping us all healthy.

Health Information & Immunization Records

Each child is required to have on file a health statement, which includes a record of up-to-date immunizations and the signature of the child's source of medical care. Each year, health information immunization forms must be updated by the deadline given. Families who choose not to immunize are required to have on file a statement that the child is under ongoing medical supervision.

Exclusion of Non-Immunized Children

In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease (such as the flu, chicken pox, rotavirus, measles, etc.), Abeona House reserves the right to exclude non-immunized children from school until the risk of transmission has subsided.

Allergies

Children with environmental or food allergies are required to have an allergy plan from their allergist/pediatrician on file with the school. We occasionally serve children with severe nut allergies and remind families that we are a nut-aware center.

Health-Related Exclusion/Picking Up Your Child

In the interest of the health and well-being of all children and staff of Abeona House, we reserve the right to have a parent pick up a child because of what appears to be an infectious disease. When the parent of a child is called, you are expected to pick up your child within the hour. If we are unable to make contact, or there is some issue hindering this, we will call your emergency contacts.

The following symptoms could be an indication of serious illness in your child. Consider seeking medical care when you notice these symptoms in your child. Abeona House will request that a child be picked up from school within 1 hour if one or more of the following conditions exists:

- Illness which prevents the child from participation in activities
- Illness that results in a greater need for care than the child care staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children
- Lethargy
- The child has any of the following conditions:
 - Fever of 101 degrees (or 100 axillary)
 - Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness not cleared by a medical professional. These include: lethargy that is more than explained/expected tiredness; uncontrolled coughing; inexplicable irritability or persistent crying; labored or difficult breathing; wheezing; or other signs that the child is acting or feeling very unusual
- Diarrhea (an increase in watery stools not associated with changes in diet that is not contained by the child's diaper or ability to use the toilet)
 - Children with chronic loose stools who otherwise seem well, will not be excluded once stool cultures are proven to be negative.
 - Children with diarrhea caused by bacterial infection (e.g. E. coli, Salmonella) or enteric disease (e.g.: HAV infection) may be subject to special guidelines (see appropriate standards in full guide)
- Blood in stools not explained by dietary change, medication, or hard stools
- Vomiting illness (two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines that the cause is non-contagious and the child is not in danger of dehydration
- Persistent abdominal pain (continues more than 2 hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms
- Mouth sores with drooling, unless determined to be noninfectious
- Rash with fever or behavior change, until a health provider determines the cause do not indicate communicable disease

When Your Child Can Return to Our Care

Parents will be notified in the event a child exhibits symptoms consistent with these conditions, and we ask that parents comply with the following terms for seeking professional care and/or treatment.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for a few common illnesses are as follows (please see the full guide for a list of all diseases/conditions):

Illness/Symptom	Exclude Until
Diarrhea (two or more loose stools, or over and above what is normal for that child)	Diarrhea resolved
Fever of unknown origin (100° F oral or 101° F rectal or higher) and some behavioral signs of illness	Fever resolved or cleared by child's physician/health department or fever free for 24 hours NOT on fever-reducing medication
Undiagnosed generalized rash/diaper rash	No draining or oozing sores or lesions or on antibiotics for 24 hours
Varicella-zoster (Chicken Pox)	Children who develop chickenpox should remain home until all sores have dried and crusted (usually 6 days).
Vomiting	Last emesis 24 hours
Difficulty breathing/wheezing	When criteria for exclusion are resolved
Purulent conjunctivitis ("pink eye" that includes white or yellow eye discharge)	24 hours after antibiotic treatment initiated for bacterial, or cleared by doctor
Ear infection	No exclusion once fever has resolved for 24 hours
Pediculosis ("head lice")	Children will be sent home and may return after the first treatment
Ringworm	Children receiving medical treatment for ringworm on the scalp or body will not be excluded from school.
Strep throat or other streptococcal infection	Children should remain home until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever.
Viral illness (common cough, cold, rash)	Child is well, able to participate, and has no fever

Emergencies

In the case of a medical emergency during the school session, the staff will administer first aid. The parent will be notified as quickly as possible. If medical attention is required, the staff will call the local ambulance service, which will transport the child to the local hospital. If it is more prudent to remove the child via a staff person's car, the staff member in charge will decide to do so. Every effort will be made to contact the child's own physician.

Medication Administration

No medication, either over-the-counter or prescription, shall be given to a child without written authorization from the parent or guardian. All prescription medication must be accompanied by the "Prescription Medications at School" form on the website. All topicals (sunscreen, mosquito repellent,

diaper creams, powder, etc.) are considered medication and will be locked at school. Please inform us of any medication or topicals that are sent to school.

Forms with necessary information are available from the staff. All information must be presented in order for staff to give medication. All medications administered at school should be accompanied by an oral syringe to ensure proper dosages. Any questions regarding a medication will be made directly to the physician listed on the medication or the child's master card. Medication is only given by designated staff members who have been trained in medication administration.

Prescription Medication

It is Abeona House policy to administer prescription medication only if it is given three times a day. Parents must give the first and last dose to the child, and the staff will administer the mid-day dose. Any prescription given twice a day can be attended to at home, before and after school, and will not be administered by school staff. However, parents are asked to inform the school of the administration, as well as explain any side effects that may be evident. Additionally, parents dispensing medication to a child while in the center must be supervised doing so, and this administration must be documented.

Drug information sheets (available at pharmacies) should be sent to school with details about the medication. This will be kept on file.

All medication sent to the center shall be in its original container and clearly labeled (pharmaceutical label) with the child's name and complete directions for giving the medication. The center shall follow instructions on the container pertaining to with/without food, drink, etc. Do not mix medication with formula or food. Please send it to school in its original container. We will not accept medication that is mixed with other substances.

First Time Administration of Medication & Changes in Dosage

Medications that have not been given to a child before will not be administered by school staff. Parents are asked to administer any new medications or changes in dosage to their child at least 24 hours before sending the child to school to observe side effects and reactions.

Allergies & Other Medical Conditions

The school is to be made aware of all allergies, and parents of children having active medical conditions are to create an emergency plan with their pediatrician and supply this to the childcare center.

Tobacco, Alcohol, Illegal Substances, & Fire Arm Policy

This center prohibits the use of tobacco and alcohol as well as the possession or use of an illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances, firearms, pellet or BB guns (loaded or unloaded) in the center, on the playground, or on a center-sponsored field trip.

Resources for Abeona Families

Website: www.abeonahouse.org

Phone Number: 504-486-0510

Executive Director: jaim@abeonahouse.org

Resources for Families with Young Children

Early Steps: An Early Intervention Resource for infants and toddlers with developmental delays/disabilities and their families

1-800-922-3425 or www.laeikids.com

La CHIP: No cost or low-cost health insurance for children

1-877-252-2447 or www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=119

Louisiana Medicaid: Medical coverage for needy Louisiana residents who qualify

1-888-342-6207 or <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=92>

Food Stamps Program: Provides food assistance for needy Louisiana residents who qualify

1-888-524-3578 or http://dss.state.la.us/departments/ofs/Food_Stamp_Program.html

Families Helping Families: A family support resource for families of children ages 0-18 with disabilities

943-0343 or www.fhfla.org

The Parenting Center at Children's Hospital: Offers parenting resources, advice, classes, and play groups for families

899-9511 or chnola.org/content/ParentingCenter.htm

Parent Source: Parent enrichment resources and individual consulting for families by child psychologist, Pat Blackwell

433-2428 or www.WeeWonders.com

Shots for Tots: A network of public and private entities working cooperatively to update and educate parents and providers about immunizations

<http://www.shotsfortots.com>

Zero to Three: Supports the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and their families

<http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer>