

Family Handbook



Orcas Island Children's House

Program overview

Center History and Mission

In 1969, island parents came together to create a playgroup for children to play and learn. This grassroots effort was a way to bring together children and give them the best start in life. This group evolved over the years to become what it is today - Orcas Island Children's House: an early learning and care center for children birth through age six.

Licensed by the State of Washington, we offer low child to teacher ratios to ensure our students receive the best learning experience. Supervision and care for ratios are:

- Infants – (1 month-11 months) one teacher for three infant (maximum group size 3)
- Toddlers – (12 months- 30 months) one teacher for four toddlers (maximum group size 7)
- Young Preschoolers – (2.5 years- 3.5 years) one teacher for five young preschoolers (maximum group size 7)
- Pre-kindergarteners – (3 years- kindergarten entry) one teacher for six preK children (maximum group size 16)

Children's House is a 501c3 nonprofit organization composed of staff, parents, and volunteers from the greater community. Board meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month, and interested parents are welcome to attend.

Mission - to provide a dynamic play-based curriculum that prepares children for kindergarten and life.

Values. - We value inclusion, participation and equity. We value diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and the rights of children, families and educators to have an amiable school and place of prominence in our community.

Enrollment Policies and Procedures

Registration, Waiting List and Drop-Ins

While Children's House is open year-round, registration paperwork is required in August (for the school-year session), May (for summer session) and for all new students regardless of the enrollment date.

Parents/Guardians of new students may fill out a registration form on our website to join the waitlist or roster. A Children's House representative will contact you once you submit the online form to discuss possible start dates. When space becomes available, families will be notified based on the date the form was received.

A drop-in is any time other than that designated in your contract and requires scheduling in advance. Please email or call the office to confirm space is available. Drop-ins for Children's House families are billed separately at \$14 per hour (two hour minimum).

On occasion, Children's House also accepts prearranged drop-ins for families whose children are not enrolled in our program. These drop-ins must be scheduled in advance and are billed at \$14 per hour (two hour minimum).

Tuition Policy

When you enroll, a space is reserved for your child for the entire school year or the entire summer session. Tuition is billed in nine even payments from September to May for the school year and three even payments from June to August for the summer session. Monthly tuition is paid in advance and collected on the 1st of the month with a grace period to pay tuition until the 5th of the month.

Children's House does not offer credits or make-up days related to regular absences or illness.

Tuitions are set by the Board of Directors and take into consideration annual budget and fundraising efforts. Current tuition rates can be found on our website: orcaschildrenshouse.org.

Public Health Emergency Tuition Policy

For any closure related to a public health emergency lasting beyond the calendar month, tuition will freeze and resume once Children's House re-opens for in-person learning. A credit in the amount of scheduled school days your child was not able to attend during the month of the closure will be applied to your next invoice following the closure. To redeem this credit, families must resume attendance or regular tuition payments to hold their space within 30 days of the school re-opening.

School Calendar and Classroom Hours

Children's House aligns with the Orcas Island School District calendar for most breaks and holidays. Refer to the calendar posted on the website for most up-to-date schedules. Classroom hours:

Monday-Thursday, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm. Friday, 8:30 am - 12:00 pm.

Meals and snacks

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service.

Food Allergies

If any child has a food allergy, families must notify Children's House in writing so that appropriate substitutions can be made. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

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.

Children's House serves a morning and afternoon snack. We serve breakfast at approximately 9:45 am and an afternoon snack at 2:30 pm. Menus for these meals are posted in each classroom weekly. If your child attends Children's House more than 3 hours any day, he/she will need to bring a nutritious lunch from home. **Please label each child's food or drink containers with their names.**

Schedule Changes

Schedule changes are defined as *contract* changes in the days or sessions currently enrolled. We will attempt to accommodate monthly schedule changes on a space-available basis. If your schedule change results in a rate change, the tuition cost will be indicated on the form. Children's House requires 30 days notice for a schedule change that results in the reduction of hours attended.

Brightwheel

Children's House uses Brightwheel childcare software to manage registration information, attendance, billing, and other communication with families. Families are encouraged to download the Brightwheel app to stay connected and informed about all that is happening in the classroom each day.

Arrival/Departure

Our teachers work hard to prepare their classrooms before and after each session. We ask that all families be respectful of our drop-off and pick-up times. We don't accept children before their scheduled arrival time. We do understand that schedules sometimes get interrupted. Please call the office 376-4744 to let them know if a schedule mishap has delayed you. Children's House charges a late fee of \$1 per minute per child.

Sign in/Sign out

Each child must be accompanied to and from school by an adult and signed in and out with an approved adult signature. This is a Washington State Licensing requirement. Children will only be released to those adults whose names are provided in the child's initial enrollment papers. Families can include additional names of people authorized to pick children up by notifying the office in writing and with a signature.

Absences and School Closures

We plan for each child to attend every day that he/she is scheduled so please let us know if they are going to be absent by messaging through Brightwheel, emailing info@oich.org, or calling our office at 376-4744 by 8 AM. **There is no credit for absences.** When your child is absent due to an illness, vacation or family outing, we are not able to fill those hours with other students.

Children's House reserves the right to close at any time due to severe weather conditions, or for other emergencies or natural disasters.

Weather closures: We use Orcas Island School District (OISD) as a guide. In the event of a delayed opening or full closure, a message will be sent out via Brightwheel and/or email, as well as posted on our Facebook page. Please remember that some of our teachers live outside of Eastsound and we must consider coverage and safety issues when making the decision to open or close in major weather events. **No refunds or credits are given for closures due to weather.**

Holiday closures: A calendar of closures will be distributed to families each fall, covering the period of September through August. Signs will be posted reminding families of closures. **No refunds or credits are given for holiday closures.**

In-service closures: Children's House closes three days each year for classroom preparation and for teacher professional /organizational development. These days will be listed in advance on the annual calendar and posted on our Website calendar. **No refunds or credits are given for in- service closures.**

Withdrawal

Children's House requires a minimum of 30 days for notice if you plan to withdraw from the program. This allows Children's House time to fill the vacant space. This also allows children time to process the change, say goodbye to friends and teachers, and sets them up for a successful transition.

Notice to withdraw at the end of the month is due on the 1st of the month. If notice to withdraw is received on the 1st of the month, tuition for that month is due no later than the 5th. A child's last day and goodbye celebration will be their regular scheduled day closest to the 30th of the month. If notice to withdraw is received any time after the 1st of the month, you are responsible for the full planned tuition payment for the current month and the next calendar month.

Likewise, Children's House requires 30 days of notice for requests of either a schedule change or a reduction in scheduled days.

General Center Policies

Discrimination Policy

Children's House does not discriminate in employment practices or client services based on race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, religion, or disability.

Inclusion

Children's House believes that children of all abilities 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.

Non-Discrimination

At Children's House 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.

Communication and Family Partnership

Daily Communications. Teachers and staff provide center news, classroom updates, upcoming events, holiday closing dates, and announcements through Brightwheel.

Newsletters. Newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc and are emailed from your teacher weekly.

Email. We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

Family Visits. Family participation is encouraged. However, due to Covid, visiting and volunteering in our classrooms, and eating a meal with children, has been restricted until further notice.

Family Events. Family events are scheduled throughout the year. These events include snacks, drinks and fun filled age-appropriate activities for families. Family Events allow families and children time to share, learn, and have fun. Families have an opportunity to be a part of their child's learning experience and connect with other families.

Conferences. Family & teacher conferences occur twice a year. During these conferences, we will discuss each child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns .

Guidance Policy

Children's House is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination and violence. Our center works 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 ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Challenging Behavior

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. When a child becomes verbally or physically unsafe, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions.

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

Health & Safety Policies

Immunizations

State law requires a health history and record of immunizations for each child prior to admission. Each child's current Immunization Record or a Certificate of Exemption is required before enrollment begins. If a child is not immunized against a particular disease and there is an outbreak of that disease, you may be asked to keep them at home until the period determined by the health department has passed.

Medication

In order for staff to administer any medication to a child, we must have written authorization from the child's parent/guardian. Please pick up a "Parent/Guardian Permission for Medications" form from the office, fill it out, and return it to a teacher or staff member.

The following types of non-prescription medications may be administered by Children's House staff with written parent/guardian permission: *antihistamines, non-aspirin analgesics, non-narcotic cough suppressants, anti-itch ointments or lotions, chapstick, diaper ointment, and sunscreen.*

Medications must be provided by the parent/guardian and be in the original container labeled with the child's FULL name. We can only administer medications according to the dosage and age recommendations on the packaging. Any exceptions must be accompanied by a signed note from the child's physician.

All prescription drugs must be in the original container with the original prescription label on the container, including the child's first and last names, date the prescription was filled, medication's expiration date and legible instructions for use. Children's House cannot administer sample medications, medications prescribed for a sibling, or medications packaged in any container other than the original .

Illness

San Juan County Public Health issues the following guidelines on keeping children home.

If a child should display signs of illness while at Children's House, families will be notified to come and pick up the child as soon as possible. To prevent the illness from spreading, the child will be isolated in the office until a parent/guardian arrives.

If a child is diagnosed as having a communicable disease such as Covid-19, chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, hepatitis, herpes, infectious diarrhea, or any other disease or parasite, please notify Children's House as soon as possible so that we may notify other families.

Keep your child home if he or she:

- Has vomited, two or more times in 24 hours.
- Has a rash, lice, or nits.
- Has had diarrhea, 3 or more watery stools in 24 hours.
- Has an eye infection, thick mucus or pus draining from the eye.
- Has a sore throat, with fever or swollen glands.
- Unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, or cranky: or
- Has a fever, of 100° (F) or more (taken under the arm) and sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, or just

Doctors recommend that children who have had a fever stay home one **full** day after the fever subsides AND have a negative Covid test result.

Please use the Department of Health's updated decision tree to determine when a child needs to stay home from school with symptoms of or exposure to COVID-19. Please take a moment to review or bookmark [this link](#) for future reference.

Prevention

We work to prevent the spread of communicable diseases by practicing careful sanitation. Children and staff wash hands before and after toileting and before meals, toys are washed regularly, and bedding is laundered once a week. We also ask that when children arrive at Children's House each day, they wash hands, as a

means to prevent the spread of infections.

On occasion, when soap & water are not available, hand-sanitizer may be used.

To further prevent the spread of communicable diseases, each child uses only his or her own mat and bedding when resting.

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. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Animals

Children's House has a classroom bunny that receives veterinary checkups annually. There may be other animals on site for short or long periods of time (e.g., caterpillars, geckos, ducklings, chicks, goats, donkeys, lambs). Please inform Children's House of any allergies and/or concerns that would prohibit a child's exposure to any animals.

Injuries

If a child is injured while in our care, an accident form will be filled out, noting the time of the injury, what happened, how the injury was treated and by whom. We are limited to standard first aid procedures and we will not apply anything other than soap and water to a cut and ice to a bump or bruise. If you do not find an explanation for an injury, do not hesitate to ask the staff. If an injury requires treatment beyond what can be provided at the Center, you will be contacted. In the event that a parent or approved guardian cannot be contacted, we will call the person that you have listed as an alternate in case of emergency, and if we are unable to reach this person we will call your physician. If medical attention by a physician is required and we have been unable to contact any of the people you have listed, we will call 911.

Abuse or neglect

All staff members are mandated reporters, which mean they are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to Children's Protective Services.

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 a 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.