



CHOICE IN
Learning
Montessori

Preschool Parent Handbook

“Help me to do it myself”

Maria Montessori

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Welcome to *Choice in Learning Montessori*. We are honored that you have entrusted your family to us. We are here to provide high quality care and extensive learning opportunities for your child/ren. Our center offers curriculum provided through the Montessori philosophy, ensuring an environment that encourages learning through experience, exploration and at each child's own pace. We are proud of our program and our staff's decades of dedication to the journey of youth-centered learning and care.

This Parent Handbook is designed to acquaint you with our program's policies and procedures. For the purpose of this handbook, "parent" is defined as the person who has legal responsibility for the care and welfare of the child. Please read this handbook in its entirety and use it as an ongoing resource.

We will make every effort to inform you of your child's activities and development at *Choice in Learning Montessori*. We look forward to your involvement in supporting your child's development while at our center.

We are a fully inclusive preschool welcoming all families and celebrating diversity and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, religion or religious creed, disability or handicap, sex or gender, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law.

Choice in Learning Montessori is a program of Choice in Aging, a nonprofit organization founded in 1949, with a strong history and commitment to our community.

We look forward to being a part of your early childhood learning experience.

Mission Statement

The mission of *Choice in Learning Montessori* is to provide children the highest quality care and learning opportunities in a supportive Montessori philosophy of instruction.

Philosophy

The staff at *Choice in Learning Montessori* is dedicated to working with parents to support the personal growth and development of each child. By employing the Montessori philosophy in our teaching and care, we ensure each child is able to explore and learn at his or her own pace, fostering deep and meaningful learning.

We employ the goals of the Montessori philosophy for children ages 2 - 6.

Program Goals

Children

- Promote social development through clear and respectful communication
- Foster the growth of functional independence, completion of tasks and self-directed regulation
- Provide a variety of materials for the development of refined sensory perception and the development of literacy and mathematical understanding
- Curate opportunities for imaginative exploration leading to confident, creative self-expression

Staff

- Support children emotionally and socially by ensuring staff has the appropriate training and supervision so they can be responsive to each individual child while encouraging self-care, independence and self-regulation
- Encourage children intellectually through extensive opportunities for interactive exploration of a variety of tasks and topics
- Promote physical development of each child through providing healthy snacks and offering a diverse and interactive outdoor space for physical activity and exploration

Families

- Families support their child/children's learning and development
- Families share in decisions about their child's care and education

Admission Policy

Choice in Learning Montessori is dedicated to providing high quality early education and care for children ages 2 - 6 years. Eligible children and families are served without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, religion or religious creed, disability or handicap, sex or gender, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law.

Parent Engagement

Choice in Learning Montessori encourages parents to partner with our staff to ensure the greatest success in learning and care objectives. Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with staff when picking up and dropping off children as well as via email.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer, when able, for Choice in Learning celebrations such as holiday parties, birthday parties, the Halloween costume parade and educational experience celebrations such as summer solstice. Parents must complete a Livescan background check, flu shot and have a clear TB screening prior to volunteer activities.

Parent Meetings

There are several voluntary parent meetings throughout the semester. Topics may cover a variety of areas including activities that enrich your child's learning experiences, cooking together, outings that create family learning opportunities and more. We welcome your ideas.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled each semester. If you wish to have a conference with your child's teacher in addition to the regularly scheduled conference, simply email the Site Director and a mutually agreed upon time will be arranged. Gina Velez, Site Director - gvelez@cilmontessori.org

Annual Registration

Annual registration happens the first week of March for returning families. Open enrollment begins in April. There is no guarantee of re-enrollment if your child has not been registered in a timely manner. All registration fees are non-refundable.

Enrollment Process

Choice in Learning Montessori maintains a waiting list of families once our licensed capacity is reached. We encourage parents to visit and fill out a wait list form after which they will be placed on the wait list. Once space is available, families will be contacted for an Enrollment Meeting with the Site Director. During the Enrollment Meeting, parents will get an orientation on our policies and procedures, complete enrollment forms and have an opportunity to share information regarding their child and family.

After the Enrollment Meeting, a time will be scheduled for the child and parent to come and visit their classroom. During this visit, parents will have an opportunity to see the classroom environment during operating hours. Parents will have a chance to meet the teachers, share pertinent information regarding their child and have an opportunity to get oriented with the classroom. They will be able to observe how the teachers interact with their child, the other children in the room and the adults in the room. Parents will stay with their child during this visit.

Tours can be scheduled with the Site Director.

All required enrollment forms need to be submitted to the office before the child can attend their program. Tuition begins on the first day of attendance. This process of a gradual transition to *Choice in*

Learning Montessori is designed for a smooth transition into the program. Please be aware that it is natural for children to take a while to adjust. For this reason, it is important for you to stay in close communication with your child's teacher. Good communication with school staff helps you and your child succeed in adjusting to the new environment. Most children will make the adjustment to preschool in four to six weeks, but each child is different. Taking time during the transition process to help your child adjust will benefit both of you.

Enrollment Forms

The California Department of Social Services' licensing regulations stipulate that all children entering *Choice in Learning Montessori* must have the following forms **completed and signed before attendance:**

- Physician's Reports - Child Care Centers (LIC 701)
- Child's Preadmission Health History - Parent's Report (LIC 702)
- Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment (LIC 627)
- Parent's Rights (LIC 995)
- Personal Rights (LIC 613A)
- Identification and Emergency Information (LIC 700)

In addition to the forms above, *Choice in Learning Montessori* requires the following information and/or forms **completed and signed before attendance:**

- Copy of the child's current immunizations
- Admission Agreement (last Page of Parent Handbook)
- Emergency Form
- Application
- Copy of Parent's driver's license or identification card
- Birth Certificate for verification of child's birth date
- Documentation of negative TB results for child within one year of entrance
- Photo release
- Consent for family distribution list

It is important that *Choice in Learning Montessori* maintain current and accurate records on each child so that parents can be contacted in case of an emergency. The above listed forms **must** be kept current at all times. This information includes address, home, work and cell phone numbers, work location and names of at least two authorized persons to pick up your child. Your child's current immunization record must be received prior to or at the time of enrollment and must be kept current at all times. **It is your responsibility to notify the Site Director of any changes.** Failure to do so may result in termination of services.

In signing the enrollment form, the enrolling parent or legal guardian is also certifying that they have legal authority for the child. California law is clear that parents who have joint legal custody have equal access to all information regarding the child including enrolling the child and making changes to the enrollment information. Court orders are required to prevent a parent or legal guardian from certain activities such as picking up the child or visiting the child at our school. We reserve the right, however, to prohibit individuals from being at the preschool if the health and safety of any child or staff is threatened or compromised.

Our policies do not allow staff to make copies of forms and other documents or provide testimony, verbally, or in writing, about any child. If subpoenaed by court order, the Site Director will review the subpoena and contact the attorney. It is not in the best interest of any child for staff to act with partiality to one parent or the other.

If you should have any questions, please speak with the Site Director.

Tuition

The tuition schedule varies based on the selected times and hours of instruction provided to your child. The current Tuition Rate Schedule is used to determine your rate. Please consult with the Site Director should you need assistance.

Payment of tuition should be timely so we can ensure your child gets the best care and education at an affordable rate. Please pay by check or money order on the first of each month or the Monday following the first of the month should it fall on a weekend. There is a five day grace period for payment and a \$25.00 late fee attaches following the grace period.

Returned checks will be assessed a \$25 fee and then you must provide a money order to cover your regular tuition and the returned check fee. Following any returned check, all payment must be made by money order.

Rates are subject to change with 30 days written notice.

There is no reduction in payment in the tuition amount if your child is sick or on vacation. Payment of your tuition assures that your child's place in our program is maintained during his or her absence.

The Site Director must be notified when an absence occurs. The child may be withdrawn from the preschool program after 5 consecutive days of absence if the Site Director is not notified. Excused absences include:

- Illness of a child
- Family emergency

On the first day the child returns, the parent/guardian must note the reason for absence on the sign in sheet. Excessive unexcused absences of 10 or more days may result in termination from the program. The fees do not change if your child does not attend due to illness.

Late Policy and Fee

Please call as soon as you realize that you are going to be late. If your child is not picked up by 6:00 p.m. a late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged.

While we close at 6:00 p.m. parents should arrive by 5:50 p.m. in order to check in with staff, gather children's belongings and say goodbye. All parents are responsible to pay late fees upon receipt of invoice.

Choice in Learning Montessori reserves the right to discontinue services if the tuition and any late fees are not paid in a timely manner.

Refund Conditions

Four weeks written notice is required to discontinue your child's enrollment. **There are no refunds for advance tuition payments or registration fees.**

Hours of Operation and Holidays/Days Closed

Choice in Learning is open 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. We are closed the following days:

- ♪ Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- ♪ President's Day
- ♪ Memorial Day
- ♪ Independence Day: 4th of July or the day before or after if it falls on a weekend
- ♪ Labor Day
- ♪ Veterans Day
- ♪ Thanksgiving week
- ♪ Winter Break (2 weeks - date changes each year - see current year calendar for dates)
- ♪ Spring Break (1 week- date changes each year - see current year calendar for dates)
- ♪ 3 Staff In-Service Days (3 days before school opens) (to be announced, a 4 week notice will be given to parents)

Prep Program/Preschool Program

Choice in Learning Montessori provides an educational program designed to meet the needs of each individual child. Through the Montessori philosophy, we recognize each stage of development presents

challenges and opportunities to teach children the beginning practices which foster independence and creative lifelong learning.

The Prep Program is for children ages 2 - 3 ½ years and the Preschool Program is for children ages 3 - 6 years. The teachers work together to meet the needs of the children through designing the environment for optimal curiosity and learning opportunities. The teacher will plan and implement activities based on the expressed curiosities.

Our Prep Program curriculum provides learning opportunities in several areas:

- Language Development
- Self-Care Task Development
- Creating Order in their Environment
- Guiding in Self-Sufficiency and Independence through Accessibility
- Reality-Based Book Learning

Our Preschool Program curriculum provides learning opportunities in several areas:

- Practical Life
- Language Arts
- Science
- Grace / Courtesy
- Fine Arts
- Motor Skills
- History/Geography
- Math
- Sensorial
- Spanish/Italian
- Music

The Montessori-based curriculum will be employed as well as the use of community resources to enhance learning. Local groups such as the police, fire department, musicians, and artists will be invited to visit. If you have a special interest, hobby or talent you would like to share with the children, please let your child's teacher know.

Sample Daily Schedule/Flow of the Day

At *Choice in Learning Montessori*, children spend time in mixed age groups. The benefits of mixed age groups include developing skills in helping, teaching, sharing, and sensitivity to others. In mixed age groups, children often develop or try a new role which leads to a sense of positive self regard. In mixed age groups, children's language and understanding of social rules develops and they gain important life skills. Small groups allow children to learn with their peer group and a curriculum relevant to their development.

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The following is a sample of our daily schedule. This changes throughout the year based on daylight savings and weather conditions:

8:50 a.m.: drop off/car line begins

9:00 a.m.: 9:15 a.m.: morning greeting/circle time

9:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.: work time - during which snack is served to younger children/Preschool is self-serve

11:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.: outside time

11:45 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.: closing circle/departure for 9:00a.m.-12:00 p.m. children

11:55 a.m.: car line

Remainder of day for 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.: lunch/outside time

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.: classroom time (short circle and work time)

3:00 p.m.: dismissal to parent or child care

Staff Qualifications

Choice in Learning Montessori staff is composed of professionals trained in Early Childhood Education, with an emphasis in Montessori pedagogy. All lead teachers and aides meet qualifications as required by California Community Care Licensing. We encourage teachers to continue their training at the college level and also provide additional in-service training. Qualified substitute teachers may be provided if needed. Regularly scheduled staff meetings and professional development activities encourage staff members to continually increase their knowledge of developmentally appropriate teacher practices so that they may better serve young children.

Ratios at *Choice in Learning Montessori* meet California Community Care Licensing statutes. State requirements are as follows: Preschool 1:12. Ratios at *Choice in Learning* during Activity Time are as follows: Prep Program ages two to three and a half (2 - 3 ½) will have a minimum of two (2) teachers for 16 children a 1:8 ratio. The Preschool Program ages three to six (3 - 6) will have a minimum of 2 teachers for 24 children a 1:12 ratio. *Choice in Learning Montessori* has additional teachers on staff to assist with breaks and assisting with bathroom trips.

All staff is fingerprinted for submission to California's Department of Justice (DOJ) who then completes a criminal background check. Prospective staff is not allowed to work with children until we have received clearance from the DOJ. Parents who require more information regarding the Caregiver background check can request it at the time of the enrollment interview.

Choice in Learning Montessori is licensed to operate by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division and California Department of Education, Child Developmental Division.

Communication

Communication is vital to your child's successful experience. We have an open door policy. Parents are welcome visitors at any time. We welcome your comments, suggestions and concerns. Several communication channels are established and we encourage you to take advantage of these.

Parent Bulletin Board

Each environment has a bulletin board or information area that are used for information such as daily schedules and general announcements. Additionally, this information can be found on our website.

Center Updates and Classroom Calendars

The center staff publishes Center Updates and Classroom Calendars monthly. They contain important information such as general classroom news, announcements, special events, and/or meetings.

The Remind App (through the App Store) is used to communicate with families in real time.

Face-to-Face Conversations

It is always helpful for teachers to know when major changes happen in a child's life. We are here to support your child on her or his journey and we do this best by knowing about anything which may impact their emotional state. Please always feel free to talk to your child's teacher or the Site Director about any new or anticipated changes in your child's life so we can best offer support.

Health and Safety

Children are expected to be in good health and able to participate in the planned activities. *Choice in Learning Montessori* has several policies and procedures that are strictly followed for the health and well being of each child in the program. Please read these carefully and talk to the Site Director if you have any questions.

The center does not offer off-site field trips or transportation. However, we will provide one or two in-house field trips per year. The children are given the opportunity to interact with the participants of Choice in Aging through supervised monthly events.

Health Information Required

Current immunization, TB records, and a physical examination are required to be on file for each child.

Daily Health Check

Your child's health status will be checked each day. This health check may be informal however, if your child appears to be showing signs of illness, s/he may not be admitted into the program. Daily health inspections allow staff an opportunity to check each child for any potential illness. It also allows time for

communication between parents and staff to discuss how the child has been feeling and whether there has been an exposure to any contagious disease. When doing the daily health check, we are looking for signs of illness such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Unusual behavior (Examples are crankiness, pain, discomfort, very sleepy, the child may not “look or act themselves,” or doesn’t appear well enough to participate in routine school activities)
- Fever over 99.5 degrees
- Skin that is flushed, pale or unusually warm to the touch
- Sores on any part of the body that are open, have fluid in them or appear infected
- Unexplained skin rash, especially when accompanied by fever or behavior changes
- Red eyes with white or yellow discharge and/or crusty eyes
- Sore throat with fever and swollen glands or mouth sores with drooling
- Head lice or nits
- Runny nose - A child with a runny nose (green, yellow, or clear) should only be excluded if they also appear ill, are too sick to participate and/or have any other symptoms that they need to be excluded for

Once at the center, if a child develops the following symptoms, the parent or other authorized persons will be called and may be required to pick up the child within a reasonable amount of time:

- Fever - over 99.5 degrees
- Flu symptoms
- Cough - severe uncontrolled coughing, wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea - runny or watery stools or blood in stool
- Vomiting
- Stomach ache - pain lasting more than one hour
- Ear ache or foreign body/injury in the ear that causes pain or bleeding
- Head Injury - if the child has associated symptoms
- Lacerations - a wound that will probably require sutures
- Unexplained skin rashes - especially accompanied by fever and/or behavior changes
- Unusual behavior

Please remember that staff is making “assessments” regarding potential illnesses and they are not medical personnel. They look at each child’s case individually and are sensitive to the fact that family members need to go to work and school. Exclusion from the center is to protect your child as well as others at *Choice in Learning Montessori*. If there is a disagreement between the parent and staff member regarding exclusion, please talk to the Site Director.

Be prepared:

Parents must ensure emergency phone numbers are current. We must be able to reach you if your child becomes ill. Once contacted the parent has 90 minutes to either pick-up the child or send an **authorized contact** to *Choice in Learning Montessori*.

Please make plans for who will care for your child if they are too sick to attend *Choice in Learning Montessori* or need to go home unexpectedly.

When your child is sick, please be sure to promptly notify the office staff of their diagnosis and treatment. Also notify them if your child has a contagious disease or has been exposed to one. Such reports are treated with confidentiality. When necessary, staff will need to notify families of a potential exposure to a contagious disease.

Guidelines for Returning to School

Before returning to school, children should be symptom free for 24 hours. Children may not return to school if any of the above symptoms are still present. Children who are prescribed antibiotics, in any form, are required to be on the medication for a period of 24 hours before returning to school. Physician permission to return to school is required for:

- Pink eye or conjunctivitis
- Contagious looking rashes e.g., scabies, impetigo, scarlet fever
- Strep throat or mouth sores with drooling
- Hepatitis in family
- Meningitis in family
- Any child that has been sick and doesn't seem to be improving
- Any time a child is hospitalized or has a procedure done

We have the right to request a permission to return to school notification at any time it is in the best interest of *Choice in Learning Montessori*. We also reserve the right to exclude a child with signs of illness even if a permission to return to school has been obtained. If you felt it was serious enough to seek medical assistance, please remember to ask for a "Permission to Return to School Note" while still at the physician's office.

Injuries

We work hard to keep children safe and well, however, occasionally typical childhood accidents, such as bumps, scrapes and falls, occur while in our care. Staff will address minor injuries that can be adequately tended to by using soap, water, antiseptic solution, ice and bandages. Staff will complete an injury report to inform you of the type of injury, location on the child's body, how the injury occurred, where the injury occurred, treatment and child's reaction to the injury. Parents will be notified of accidents requiring more extensive intervention.

If your child becomes injured while at *Choice in Learning Montessori*, these steps will be followed:

- The seriousness of the injury will be assessed and if necessary, parents will be contacted.
- First-aid will be administered where necessary. If necessary, emergency personal will be contacted.
- If we are unable to contact you, people listed on your emergency form will be contacted. It is essential that you notify the staff if you are not going to be available via your usual contact method and leave an alternate phone number.
- Arrangements will be made to have the child taken to the emergency room if necessary.
- You or the person you designate must be on an emergency form authorizing them to pick up. It is imperative that you pick up your child as soon as possible if you are called.
- After a medical evaluation and/or treatment are administered, please contact the preschool to inform us of your child's status.

Choice in Learning Montessori is not responsible for the payment of fees such as medical or ambulance fees that may be associated with an injury that occurs on the premises.

Medications

It is encouraged for parents to give medications to their children at home. However, if it is necessary for your child to receive medication while at *Choice in Learning Montessori*, the following will apply:

Prescription Medication

- Medication must be in the original container
- Medication must have the original pharmacy label listing the child's name, physician's name, name of medicine, issue date, dosage, expiration date, and directions for administration and storage
- Medication must be in a child resistant container and remain on site until empty, expired or child no longer needs it.
- Medication must be prescribed in the United States

If your child needs to receive the medication during the day, inform the Site Director or Teacher in Charge who will give the medication to them. Parents will need to complete a Medication Consent Form for all medications (prescription and non-prescription). Parent's instructions on the consent form must be in accordance with the instructions from the physician. If the consent form is incomplete, medication will not be administered and parents may have to return during the day to give the medication until the form is completed. A new form needs to be completed whenever there is a change (i.e., dosage.) Medications can only be given to the child indicated on the label. Twins and siblings cannot share medications! Parents may ask their pharmacist to dispense a second labeled medication container for school. Children may not bring self-administered medicines (i.e., aspirin, cough drops, eye drops).

Medical Treatments

If your child is required to have one of the specific allowable treatment procedures, such as a nebulizer, Epi-pen, or blood glucose monitoring, while in care, you will be asked to complete additional permission requirements, plus demonstrate for staff the proper use of the treatment.

Sunscreen

It is strongly recommended that children wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn. Parents should apply sunscreen of SPF 50 or higher before children come to school. Staff may reapply generic sunscreen (with signed consent) if the children are going to be outside after lunch, unless parent stipulates the child has an allergy and supplies their own sunscreen.

Allergies

If your child has been diagnosed with allergies, you must notify the Site Director. We must have a statement in writing from your child's doctor describing the specific allergy, any special precautions, emergency procedures, or medical treatment equipment your child may require.

If your child has any food allergies for which substitute foods or beverages are required, you must provide the statement from the child's doctor stating the nature of the allergy and what substitutions are necessary.

Emergency Information

Your child will be instructed on emergency procedures in case of fire or an earthquake while at school. S/he will participate in regular fire drills and learn other rules of safety. In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, staff will continue to care for your child until such time as you or your authorized representative can pick up your child. Each center has sufficient food and water or juice and other supplies to take care of children and staff for up to three days. Staff has disaster/emergency training. At all times, at least one staff member on duty has been trained in Infant/Child CPR. In any kind of natural disaster, as long as our facility has been determined to be safe, all children will remain on site unless an injury requires release to an emergency medical facility. In the event of an evacuation, signs will be clearly posted *at Choice in Learning Montessori* giving destination of evacuated children. Only adults previously authorized on the emergency forms will be able to sign out children.

Emergency Center Closure

The center may close or delay opening if the following conditions are present:

- Natural disaster which prevents use of the facility
- Room conditions prevent adequate ventilation and breathing

- Disruption of utilities which prevent meeting the safety needs of the children or natural light is diminished to be a risk to children and staff
- Presence of live wires
- Loss of water that disrupts hand washing, and toileting with clean running water

If possible, the outgoing message on the phone answering system will give information regarding closure and signs will be posted outside of the facility. Parents will also be notified through the Remind app (available at the App Store).

Nutrition

We serve children two snacks a day and a lunch that is provided by the parent. We ask that parents follow Healthy Eating Guidelines. We will provide water. A teacher is present and adequate time is given for eating and pleasant conversation. Active involvement in food service, table set-up and clean-up is included. We ask that **only staff serve food to the children.** This is done in order to avoid serving foods to children who may have specific food allergies. For children with severe food allergies, we ask parents to provide allergy appropriate snacks for their child.

General Policies

Sign In and Out

State licensing requires each child to be signed in and out by a parent or authorized parent representative every day. Sign In and Out sheets are with the teacher or the Site Director during car pick up and drop off times or are located in each classroom if not during check in and out times. The time and the responsible party's full signature are required to be recorded. Failure to follow these procedures may result in termination of services. Once children are signed in, they are the responsibility of the center staff. Once children are signed out, they are the responsibility of the parent.

Only people (at least 16 years of age) designated on the Emergency Form may pick up your child. Picture identification will be required. The name on the identification must match the name on the Emergency Form and the picture must match the person presenting it. A photocopy of the identification card will be taken. It is the parent's responsibility to notify office personnel of any changes on the Emergency Form. You may update this form at any time. We will ask you to update the form once a year. If an urgent issue arises and you and your contacts are not available to get your child, you can authorize an alternate person to pick up your child by calling and talking to the Site Director or Assistant Site Director AND emailing the person's full name and your permission to the Site Director or Assistant Site Director. Gina Velez, Site Director - gvelez@cilmontessori.org, Sharyn Harrington, Assistant Site Director - sharrington@cilmontessori.org.

State law requires that all children must be secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint (safety seat or booster seat), until they are at least 8 years old OR at least 60 pounds. Never leave any child alone in the car no matter how short the time! It is not only unsafe, but also illegal. We will not release your child if we know there is no car seat in the car.

Extra Clothing

Please provide your child with complete changes of clothing. Children who are prone to wetting should bring plenty of extra underwear.

Blankets and Nap Sheets

Each child who naps at *Choice in Learning Montessori* is required to provide a crib or nap sheet and a small blanket. The sleeping items are to be taken home at the end of the week and washed.

Confidentiality

The use or disclosure of all information pertaining to the child and his/her family shall be restricted to purposes directly connected with the administration of the program.

The California Department of Social Services has the authority to interview children or staff, and to inspect and audit child or child care center records, without prior consent. The Department also has the authority to observe the physical condition of the child, including conditions that could indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate placement.

Appropriate identification from the Department will be obtained prior to the interview.

Written consent is required if parents want the *Choice in Learning Montessori* to share information regarding their child to another agency (school district, health provider).

Child Abuse Reporting

All *Choice in Learning Montessori* staff are mandated reporters and must report cases of suspected child neglect and/or abuse (physical, emotional, and/or sexual) immediately to a child protection agency (California Penal Code 11165.7). Child abuse law considers discipline that results in bruises and any other injuries caused by spanking to be a form of child abuse. If you need information about disciplining your children or help with other parenting issues, please see the Site Director who will give you information, assistance and/or referrals to appropriate services.

Parent Responsibility

It is the goal of *Choice in Learning Montessori* to maintain a safe, caring, respectful environment for children, staff, and parents. Unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated. Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Use of abusive or offensive language including, but not limited to harassment, threats, yelling, rudeness, and profanity
- Theft or damage to property
- Physical or verbal abuse of children, staff or other parents
- Defiance of authority

Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and smoking are prohibited on the Preschool's premises. No child will be released to anyone who appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

Parents, children, and staff are expected to maintain a respectful relationships with each other. Parents demonstrating any of the above unacceptable behaviors may be terminated from the program.

It is not appropriate for parents to approach other parents or children to address an incident that happened at the Preschool. Parents must deal with such concerns through the teacher, or the Site Director.

If an incident occurs, the parents will be asked to leave the premises and:

- The parent will be required to meet with the designated administrative staff person in order for the child to remain in the program
- Continuation in the program will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the severity of the incident
- If the family continues in care, another such incident will result in termination from the program

Clothing

Active play is very important to children's overall development. Your child will regularly participate in "messy" activities such as painting, cooking, sensory activities, etc. Sturdy and comfortable play clothes that are easy for little hands to manage are appropriate and help children to become self-sufficient. Play shoes that are low-heeled, lace-up, or have Velcro closure, and a rubber sole are recommended.

Mark all clothing with your child's name. Staff will encourage children to take care of their belongings; however, we cannot be responsible for lost or damaged items. There will be a Lost and Found Box at the center. Please help your child learn to take care of his/her belongings.

We reserve the right to offer children alternative clothing if it is determined that a child is inappropriately dressed.

Weather

Children are outside on a daily basis as they explore the outdoor classroom. Children should come to school wearing appropriate clothing for the season in order for them to be comfortable while outdoors. On days of extreme temperatures (cold or hot) the amount of time outside may be reduced, but nonetheless, children will spend some time outdoors. Cold temperatures do not make children sick, germs do. On days of poor air quality, AQMD index of unhealthy or higher, children's active outdoor activities will be restricted.

Toys

Please help your child keep toys at home. Security objects such as a favorite stuffed animal are an exception and are welcome. Books and items related to the current unit of study are encouraged at any time; just check with your child's teacher before bringing them in to the center. Please mark these items with your child's name. Toy guns, weapons and money are not allowed at *Choice in Learning Montessori*.

Birthdays

A child's birthday is a day of celebration for some families and we will be happy to help make this a special occasion. Children start talking about their birthday weeks ahead of time, telling the teachers, "It's going to be my birthday." In order to include all children in the birthday celebration, we ask that families provide all juice popsicles or another agreed upon healthy treat. We will provide your child with a special birthday crown and sing the happy birthday song.

Visitors

All visitors at *Choice in Learning Montessori* need to sign-in at the office. Any visitors wishing to see children need to show their picture identification and be listed on the Emergency Form as an authorized individual.

After Hours Care

Staff is not permitted to solicit or provide care for children enrolled at *Choice in Learning Montessori* outside normal working hours. Staff is not permitted to provide transportation for children enrolled.

Discipline and Guidance

The goal of *Choice in Learning Montessori's* discipline policy is to assist children in developing emotional regulation and self-discipline through respectful interactions that support the child's emotional growth. The early years are a time of immense cognitive, physical and emotional growth for young children. Young children are still egocentric, meaning they still think mostly of their own needs and wants as opposed to

the needs of others. Because of this, it is not unusual for young children to use physical or verbal aggression in attempt to get their needs met. It is our job as adults in the environment to guide children through this time by setting clear limits and following through appropriately and consistently. Staff helps children understand the expectation for reasonable behavior by discussing, giving examples and by redirecting children to appropriate activities. Gradually, children are helped toward self-control and gain a sense of pride in their ability to care for themselves and each other.

“Rules” to Keep Everyone Safe

In our environment there are behaviors that need to be stopped by adults:

Physical aggression such as:

- Biting, slapping, hitting, or pinching
- Throwing objects at others

Willful destruction of school property such as:

- Tearing up books
- Destroying toys

Engaging in activities that may be physically or emotionally harmful to themselves or others such as:

- Using classroom or outdoor space toys or equipment dangerously
- Name calling, threatening behavior or teasing

This list is not exhaustive. It is important that the adults in the environment manage each case individually. They are trained to provide guidance, redirect and support children to be safe and respectful of one another at all times.

Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Behavior

The use of punishment which includes physical force is not allowed. This includes but is not limited to spanking, shaking, pulling, or jerking the child.

If the child’s unacceptable behavior persists over time the following procedures will be followed:

The teacher will help the child to change the behavior. Methods used may include redirection, reinforcement of positive behaviors and/or choices between acceptable behaviors. If the child’s negative behavior continues, further action may be required and will include a parent conference, behavioral plan, observation and referrals. If the child’s behavior endangers others, or is persistent the child may be removed from the program.

Grievance Procedure

Communication between parents and staff is important to achieving and maintaining a high quality program. Parents should have informal conversations with their child's teachers as well as check the activity board for plans and updates. If an issue arises you feel needs to be addressed, please follow the procedure outlined below. At any time during the process, if you are not satisfied, you may reach out to the Site Director.

1. Approach the classroom teacher and ask to discuss your concern with her/him. Please provide the details of the occurrence so the teacher is best able to discuss remedies with you.
2. If no changes have occurred after you have discussed a resolution that is mutually agreeable, request a meeting with the Site Director who can address your concerns with you and the classroom teacher together.

Termination Policy

Choice in Learning Montessori reserves the right to exclude children and/or families when it is in the best interest of the program. Termination may include but is not limited to:

- Chronic late payment
- Excessive absences
- Fraudulent information
- Safety and Health concerns
- Failure to follow policies
- Failure to comply with state regulations and guidelines
- Failure to maintain current contact information
- If the staff of *Choice in Learning Montessori* is unable to meet the physical, social or emotional needs of the child



Admission Agreement/Parent Handbook Receipt

Date _____. Please initial each of the following statements

- () I agree to pay the established tuition required for services based on rates posted by *Choice in Learning Montessori*. I understand that I will receive notice of any change in fees (30) days prior to the date when such changes are to go into effect.
- () I understand that after 5 days of consecutive absence childcare for my child will be discontinued if I have failed to contact the Site Director.
- () All information that I have provided is true and correct.
- () I understand the Department of Social Services has the authority to interview children and/or staff and to inspect and audit childcare records without prior consent. The Department of Social Services has the authority to observe the physical condition of the child, including conditions that could indicate abuse or neglect or inappropriate placement.
- () I have received a copy of *Choice in Learning Montessori's* Parent Handbook. I have read all policies and procedures and agree to them. I understand that failure to follow these policies may lead to termination of services.

Child's Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Site Director's Signature _____