



ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT  
Palo Alto College

# Ray Ellison Family Center Parent Handbook

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210-486-3500

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## Program Overview

### History

Palo Alto College was chartered by the Texas Legislature on March 19, 1983 – the official date of its founding. Palo Alto College classes began with 231 students in high schools and at military installations in September 1985, and administrative offices were located at Billy Mitchell Village outside the Kelly Air Force Base gates. Since then it has grown by leaps and bounds on the Southside of San Antonio with the emphasis always being on the students of Palo Alto College. In October of 2001, The Ray Ellison Family Center (REFC) was opened to accommodate 66 children and earned accreditation status from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in 2010. In 2015, the REFC received reaccreditation and continues to maintain the standards set forth by NAEYC. In addition, the REFC is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) and is a four-star Texas Rising Star (TRS) vendor for the Child Care Services (CCS) system.

The REFC is an equal opportunity institution. The center, teachers, and staff welcome families of all racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Students and children are admitted without regard to race, nationality, color, creed, religion, sex, or family diversity. The REFC complies with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. We accept children with special needs provided they can benefit from our program and our staff can work effectively with them. If your child has a special need, please inform the Coordinator upon enrollment so that an evaluation and individual education plan can be developed.

### Mission Statement

The Ray Ellison Family Center provides a child-centered program for children of Palo Alto College students, faculty/staff, and community members. The REFC strives to provide an early childhood program that promotes the social/emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development of each child.

### Philosophy

At the REFC, we believe:

- Children learn through play
- Play is the most fundamental and valuable task/gift that can be given to children
- Childhood is an extremely precious time in the development of each individual which needs to be honored and protected
- Each child is worthy of respect because of the unique talents and skills each one possesses

Children develop into productive members of society when they are given the independence to make safe choices and supportive opportunities to realize their dreams. They are our most

precious and important resource, worthy of respect, and to be valued for their individual uniqueness.

We *believe* children are natural learners. When placed in a stimulating, interactive environment, each child's potential can be fully realized. We believe children are curious, open-minded, honest, and accepting. Take the time to observe them and listen to their ideas and thoughts will help staff fulfill each child's individual needs.

We *believe* that play is the most positive way that children learn. Play is exploring, experimenting, and joyful. Play is the process through which each child discovers and develops an understanding of the world. We believe that parents are the most important adults in a child's life. We want to develop a respectful partnership between teachers and parents. We assist the parent and ultimately the child when we provide support, encouragement and education for the parent.

### **Curriculum Goals**

The REFC utilizes the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos and for Preschool which are comprehensive and research-based. In addition to the Creative Curriculum the center also aligns the NAEYC curriculum standards in order to provide meaningful learning experiences and activities throughout the day. Teachers develop lesson plans based on children's interests, ideas, and early learning needs. In addition, the program will assist children in developing in the following areas:

- Developing safe and healthy habits in young children with an emphasis on proper hygiene, sound nutrition, exercise and physical care.
- Fostering positive self-esteem.
- Providing opportunities for creative expression.
- Supporting the development of social skills such as sharing, cooperation, generosity and empathy.
- Stimulating cognitive problem-solving skills with an emphasis on the concepts of cause and effect, classification, serialization, space, time, numbers, shape, and colors.
- Strengthening communication skills necessary for listening, reading, writing, and speaking by providing an environment rich in the practical uses of words.
- Enhancing fine motor and gross motor skills.
- Practicing decision making by selecting activities from a variety of learning centers (i.e. language, sensory, science, blocks, manipulatives).
- Access technology that they can use by themselves, collaboratively with their peers, and with teachers, i.e. tape recorders, microscopes, computers, and videos. Videos and film will be limited to developmentally appropriate programs on rare occasions.

The curriculum emphasizes developmentally appropriate play experiences. The teachers take into consideration family home values, beliefs, experiences and family languages.

For the specific objectives addressed at each age level, consult with your child's teacher.

### **Hours/Days of Operation Fall and Spring Semesters**

7:30 am – 5:30 pm Monday-Friday

#### **Summer Semester**

7:30 am – 5:30 pm Monday – Thursday

Due to Child/Staff ratio requirements, these hours are strictly enforced.

The lobby opens at 7:30 am daily, please no entry before that time. We observe the same holidays and closures as Palo Alto College. Please refer to the Palo Alto College website, [www.alamo.edu/pac](http://www.alamo.edu/pac) for center closures. In addition, the REFC schedules certain days as closed for Professional Development.

#### **Enrollment**

All children must be enrolled before attending the center. A complete enrollment packet must be submitted to the center prior to your child's first day of attendance with all the necessary documents. A new enrollment packet must be submitted each school year. If your child is enrolling from Fall to Spring, Spring to Maymester, or Maymester to Summer I/II you must review the enrollment packet on file with the Coordinator or Administrative Services Specialist to ensure all information is correct.

Enrollment Packet must include the following:

- Enrollment application
- Birth certificate
- Allergy Alert Form (if applicable)
- Alternate Nutrition Agreement with physicians Signature (if applicable)
- Current child's immunization record
- Physical
- Current semester schedule (PAC/AC students)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form (completed each semester)

#### **Contact Information:**

It is very important that the parent/guardian keep the information current at all times. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the center staff of any change of address, telephone number, work/training status, family sizes, and income, etc. Parents can update contact information any time without staff assistance by emailing the REFC email address at [refc@alamo.edu](mailto:refc@alamo.edu).

#### **Classroom Placement**

The placement of children in a classroom is determined by age and developmental level. In addition, the Center Coordinator and Administrative Services Specialist will review a child's enrollment packet to determine the appropriate classroom placement as it relates to developmental and self-help skills, i.e., toileting skills. We want your child to be placed where his/her individual needs will be met and interests will be challenged. The REFC staff will continuously monitor children's development to determine optimal placement.

The REFC attempts to keep the children with their current teachers for nine months or longer (depending on child's start date). This will assist in making the child comfortable with his/her

surroundings as well as creating a rapport with teachers. When your child is ready to transition to a new classroom, you will be informed and introduced to the new teacher. If your child is ready to transition, a transition plan will be developed and implemented.

At opening and closing, children of similar age groups will be combined for brief periods each day. The continuity of care is important to your child's development so every effort is made to minimize disruptions in care. To ensure teacher/child ratios, the Coordinator or Administrative Services Specialist will go into the classrooms several times daily, in the mornings and afternoons. Teachers are to position themselves apart on the playgrounds so that children can be visually and audibly supervised at all times.

## **Family Support and Involvement**

### **Parent Code of Conduct**

If any person, whether it is a parent or otherwise, becomes aggressive while in the center, in a classroom, or playground, the REFC staff will execute the following:

- An attempt to communicate calmly with the person.
- Ask another adult to call the front desk and notify the Coordinator or Person in Charge.
- If potential danger is suspected or armed person enters the Center, the office staff will immediately phone the Palo Alto College Campus Police for assistance.

### **Parent-Teacher Communication**

We strongly believe in maintaining open lines of communication, and your child's teacher wants to hear from you. Please inform us of any events in your child's life that may affect his or her behavior, such as serious illness or a death in the family (including pets), separation of parents, parents traveling, etc. We may be able to help your child at such a time, as well as understand what they may be going through. Unfortunately, arrival and departure times may not be adequate for a lengthy conversation with your child's teacher. Please feel free to speak briefly to your child's teacher at arrival and departure times in order to schedule a more in-depth conversation by phone or visit.

Your child's teacher may also request that you bring in pictures from home for your child to share. Children love looking at pictures and this is an excellent way to include you in what they do here at the Center. We will post the pictures for your viewing or create class photo albums that you are welcome to look at and enjoy with your child.

### **Parent Conferences**

Parent conferences will be conducted at least once a semester. During these conferences, Teachers will share information about the progress your child is making, show you samples of your child's work, and a report from GOLD (refer to assessment of this section). These conferences will be scheduled at your convenience and are important to ensuring close communication between the Center and home. You may request to schedule a conference at any time.

### **Parental Involvement**

The REFC encourages parents/guardians to participate in center activities. Parents will have various opportunities to visit and volunteer in the classroom/center, including having lunch with

their child, assisting in the classroom, reading to children, attending parent/teacher conferences, and attending parent meetings. The center promotes an "open door" environment in which parents may visit at any time during the hours of operation without securing prior approval.

According to TDFPS, any individual who is regularly or frequently present at the Child-Care center (more than once a month/15 minutes or more in the classroom) must submit a background check, complete a volunteer form, and participate in the Parent Orientation. Additional training may be required.

During the school year, the REFC will offer a variety of events and celebrations;

- Monthly Parent Meetings
- Open Houses
- Fall Festival
- Giving Luncheon
- Winter Party
- Valentine's Day Party
- Rodeo Day
- Week of the Young Child (Spring Semester)
- PacFest Activities
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Preschool Graduation

### **Parent Meetings**

Parent meetings will be held monthly during the Fall and Spring Semesters. The Parent Meetings are scheduled at different times throughout the year in order to accommodate parent's schedules. The typical agenda for the parent meetings are as followed;

- 15 minutes –Center updates
- 30 minutes- Presentation from either a PAC Advisor or Program Coordinator, REFC Teacher, and/or Community Partner
- 15 minutes- Open floor for parents to discuss any comments, concerns, or center recommendations/decisions

The agenda and minutes will be posted on the REFC website, <http://alamo.edu/pac/refc/>, for review if unable to attend.

### **Parent Orientation**

An initial introduction to the center is given to parents as they enroll their child into the REFC to cover operational and enrollment policies. A parent orientation time will be scheduled by the start date whenever possible. If not possible, the new parent orientation should occur within the first week of the start date. This helps parents understand about the expectations of the center and what is included in the parent handbook. Parents will be notified in advance of any changes in operations and enrollment policies. Parents agree to provide a signed form as written acknowledgement of receiving parent orientation and/or any such changes with the Parent Handbook.

## **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

As an NAEYC Accredited center, REFC ensures the quality of every child's daily experience and promoting positive child outcomes by following the 10 NAEYC Standards;

- Standard 1: Relationships
- Standard 2: Curriculum
- Standard 3: Teaching
- Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress
- Standard 5: Health
- Standard 6: Teachers
- Standard 7: Families
- Standard 8: Community Relationships
- Standard 9: Physical Environment
- Standard 10: Leadership and Management

For more information regarding the 10 NAEYC Standards please visit, <http://families.naeyc.org/accredited-article/10-naeyc-program-standards> .

### **Annual Program Evaluation**

Every year REFC must complete an annual program evaluation by April 1. In order to complete the program evaluation certain information and documentation must be obtained. Each semester parents will be given a Family Survey, created by NAEYC, in which they will have one week to complete from distributed date. Please note that a comments section is not located on this survey but a written comment on a separate paper may be submitted with completed survey. In addition to the family survey, teachers also complete a survey regarding program delivery. Ongoing assessment tools from NAEYC will be completed as well to assist with the annual report. Once all the data has been aggregated families will receive a letter informing them of the results of the annual program evaluation.

### **Smoking, Fire Arms, Gang-Free Zone, and Other Hazards**

- Smoking is prohibited inside the REFC at all times.
- Smoking is prohibited outside the REFC/Palo Alto College premises. It is deemed a tobacco free zone. This includes anywhere on campus.
- The use of foul or inappropriate language is prohibited on the center premises.
- Alcoholic beverages/drugs are prohibited at the REFC at all times. The REFC staff may telephone alternate pick-up authorizations or PAC Campus police, if they observe a parent or guardian is attempting to pick up a child while under the influence of a controlled substance.
- Law Enforcement officials who are trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty may have firearms or ammunition on the premises of the center.
- Firearms, hunting knives, bows and arrows, and other weapons are prohibited at the REFC.
- The REFC is a gang-free zone. Staff refer to and inform parents that under Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of child care center is aging-free zone where criminal offense related to organized activity are subject to harsher punishment.

- The REFC will follow the Palo Alto College Student Handbook, Code of Conduct, and PAC Procedure Manual when dealing with Hazardous or inappropriate situations that arise with REFC parents attending Palo Alto College.

### **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**

Under TDFPS the Child Care Licensing division ensures that licensed child care centers protect children through regulation and education. Since REFC is a licensed child care center the minimum standards for child care centers must be followed, parents can request to read the minimum standards, located in the Coordinator's office or visit the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Care/Child\\_Care\\_Standards\\_and\\_Regulations/default.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/default.asp) The most recent licensing inspection report is located in the front lobby in glass display for your review.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's centers licensing requirements you can contact the local TDFPS Agency at 210-337-3399.

### **Texas Rising Star**

TRS is a program that licensed centers may apply for. TRS is a quality improvement rating system which help improves the quality of services provided in Texas childcare centers. The centers must agree to serve Texas Workforce Commission subsidized children. As part of the TRS quality and rating improvement system for Texas early childhood programs, REFC must ensure they meet the following five categories to maintain its status as a provider;

1. Director and Staff Qualifications and Training
  - a. Director qualifications and training
  - b. Caregiver qualifications, orientation, and training
2. Caregiver-Child Interactions
  - a. Group size/staff ratios
  - b. Warm and responsive style
  - c. Language facilitation and support
  - d. Play-based interactions and guidance
  - e. Support for children's regulation
3. Curriculum
  - a. Lesson plans and curriculum
  - b. Planning for Special Needs and Respecting Diversity
  - c. Instructional formats and approaches to learning
4. Nutrition and Indoor/Outdoor Activities
  - a. Nutrition
  - b. Indoor learning environments
  - c. Outdoor learning environments
5. Parent Involvement and Education
  - a. Parent education
  - b. Parent involvement

For more information please pick up a TRS brochure in the front lobby or visit the TRS website, <https://texasrisingstar.org/parents/>.

## Program Policies

### Animals/Pets

The REFC does not have animals or pets in the classroom on a regular basis. However, to enhance curriculum, there are times when animals might be brought in by either teachers or families. You will be notified if animals will be in the classroom. The center follows the guidelines set forth by TDFPS and NAEYC;

- Classroom pets or visiting animals appear in good health.
- Pets or visiting animals have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show the animals are fully immunized (if applicable) and that the animal is suitable for contact with children.
- Teaching staff supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals.
- Program staff make sure that any child who is allergic to a type of animal is not exposed to that animal.
- Reptiles, amphibians, chickens and ducks are not allowed as classroom pets because of the risk for diseases.
- Teachers ensure that children do not handle any animal that shows signs of illness, such as lethargy or diarrhea; and
- Ensure that caregivers and children practice good hygiene and handwashing after handling or coming into contact with an animal and items used by an animal, such as water bowls, food bowls, and cages.

It is very important to let REFC teachers/staff know if your child is allergic to any type of animal so that they will not be exposed.

### Absences, Arrival, Departure and Attendance

All children should have regular attendance and have minimum abscess throughout the semester. Upon entry into the REFC, all shoes must be wiped on the mat to help prevent tracking any residue from your shoes into the center. When arriving or departing with your child, you may park your vehicle in the drop off curb area located directly in front of the center. This area is designated for REFC families only and not for school parking or other errands. After you have dropped off or picked up your child, please move your vehicle as quickly as possible to provide room for other families. PAC campus police will be contacted when vehicles are left in drop off area for more than 15 minutes. Vehicles are not allowed to idle in the parking areas.

Please call the center (210-486-3500) by **8:30 am** if your child is going to be absent. CCS families must report absences according to program guidelines. If your child is sick, please keep us informed so that we can alert the teachers and if illness is a communicable disease we must report.

### Absences

Children's daily attendance is highly encouraged so that children receive the optimal child care experience. In the event that a child will be absent, it is the parent's responsibility to contact the center via

email, [pac-refc@alamo.edu](mailto:pac-refc@alamo.edu) or by phone, 210-486-3500. If the parent has not contacted the center, an REFC staff will contact the parent regarding the absence.

### Arrivals

At the REFC we strive to implement a program developed around daily routines that support children's interest and ability to engage in various learning activities, therefore, we encourage parents to bring in their children **between 7:30 am -8:30 am**. This allows children to fully participate daily activities, daily schedule, and morning breakfast.

If your child is going to arrive after **8:30 am**, you must call the center by **8:00 am** that your child will be late. Tardiness (arriving after **8:30 am**) 3 or more times during the semester will initiate a discussion with the Center Coordinator to review Parent Handbook Policies.

- 1<sup>st</sup> tardy- receive a warning
- 2<sup>nd</sup> tardy and on- \$10 late fee
  - Proof of payment

Should your child have a doctor's appointment in the morning, it is required to give a 24-hour notice that the child will be in. The latest drop off time for children attending a doctor's appointment and 24-hour notice was given to the center is **11:15 am**.

All children must be signed in and out daily through ProCare and on the classroom attendance sheet. Parents are required to bring their child into the classroom each morning and have the classroom teacher complete a daily health check (refer to health checks of this section). Please allow extra time on a daily basis for this requirement. During arrival and departure each day, we recommend that parents share information about their child with the teacher.

\*Please note when children are in the company of their parents of the REFC premises, the parents are responsible for their own children.

### Departure/Pick Up Authorization/Late Fee

Parents or guardians must complete the appropriate forms to authorize any person, 18 years or older to pick up their children. Only persons listed on the form will be allowed to pick up your child. The first time a listed person picks up the child need to show their Picture I.D to the front office staff in which they will be verified for pick up and provided a registration code for ProCare. The REFC cannot release your child to any authorized adult if aware that the person does not have appropriate car child safety seating for children.

Either child's parent will be allowed to pick up his/her child unless legal documentation is provided to the REFC stating otherwise. Parents must provide a custody information with the enrollment form, if applicable. A copy of any court documents outlining custodial arrangements must be provided to the center. REFC will follow the Court Orders on file. Unless a copy of a court order granting legal right to withhold a child from a person who can be the child's biological parent. For further information please refer to Child Custody Issues of this section. Please note all children are encouraged to stay for Breakfast, Lunch, and Snack.

The REFC closes promptly at 5:30 pm. Late fees will be applied (refer to tuition and fees of this section).

If a child is not been picked up by 6:30 p.m. and the REFC staff has not been able to reach any of the emergency contacts listed for that child, Child Protective Services and the San Antonio Police Department will be notified.

### **Assessments and Referrals**

The assessment tool utilized is the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool which is comprehensive, valid and reliable tool designed for use with children from birth through third grade. The following areas will be assessed: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, the arts, and English Language Acquisition (if applicable). A collection of each child's observations, checklists, notes, and work samplings is used to complete the ongoing assessment. A summary of their progress and results are shared and discussed during parent-teacher conferences. During the conference teachers will ask the parents for any feedback, comments, or concerns regarding the assessment. Assessments are conducted each semester, within 45 days of enrollment.

Results of the assessment are used to help teachers plan and coordinate trainings to help enhance learning experiences Results as a center (not individually) are shared with the college leadership team to show how our center is working towards ensuring children's educational needs are being met.

If the child's teacher feels that your child needs additional support outside of what the REFC can offer, he/she may refer your child to a community resource (i.e. area agencies or public school districts) for therapy such as speech, physical or occupational. No referrals will be made without family consent and a signed confidentiality agreement.

### **Bringing Items from Home**

Children frequently want to share "special" items from home with their class. Such items are especially welcomed if they support the topic being studied. For example, children may bring in shells during a unit on the beach or a picture of Grandpa and his garden during a unit on *gardens or family*. It is always a good idea to check with your child's teacher first before bringing items to the Center. Other than bringing items to share with the classroom, REFC policy discourages children from bringing in cosmetics, candy, food, drinks, gum, jewelry, toys or money to the Center. We appreciate your cooperation to ensure the safety for all children at the Center.

REFC is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

### **Cell Phones**

The REFC requests that families not use cell phones in the center while dropping off and picking up their child. The use of cell phones with cameras to photograph a child from another family is not permitted without consent. A cell phone and electronic device policy must be signed by all parents/guardians. Parents and REFC are discouraged from texting one another during center operating hours.

### **Celebrations**

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday, we ask that you coordinate with your child's teacher. The center is happy to celebrate the birthday of each child in age-appropriate and healthy way in the classroom. Healthy treats are highly encouraged. Healthy treats include, but not limited to;

- Fruit tray
- Strawberry shortcake
- Frozen yogurt cups
- Sugar free popsicles
- Sherbet
- Mini cupcakes with whipped icing (please no large cupcakes)

All food items brought into the center must be commercially prepared/store bought. We encourage parents to actively involve their child in this important celebration. No gifts will be exchanged other than ones children may create for each other during the day at school. Birthday party invitations for parties away from the center may be distributed ONLY if all children in the class are invited. They can be distributed through the children's cubbies in their classrooms.

At the REFC, our goal is to provide consistent, meaningful learning experiences for all children. It is our goal to be respectful of the wide range of cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds of all families. Please share with the center staff celebrations that are important to your family. Every effort will be made our teachers to respectfully honor your family's culture and traditions.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

In an effort to protect the well-being and safety of children, the State of Texas requires anyone who suspects child abuse and neglect to report it to the proper authorities. The REFC staff are trained annually to identify signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. In addition, the center takes several precautions to ensure the prevention of abuse and neglect during center operating hours.

The Child Abuse and Neglect hotline is 1-800-252-5400. Reports may also be filed online via the Hotline website [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us).

### **Child Custody Issues**

Information and documentation concerning legal custody of the child(ren) needs to be submitted when the child(ren) is/are enrolled. Legal custody issues must be taken care of between parents. The REFC teachers/staff are not to be involved. The REFC staff will not be responsible for releasing a child to a non-custodial parent if there is no documentation on file. It is the custodial parent's responsibility to keep the staff informed, in writing, as to whom the child may be released. Documentation of legal custody must be provided and placed in the child's file. If there is a problem regarding custody of a child enrolled, the REFC will abide by any legal court issued orders. Should an aggrieved parent come to the Center and cause a disturbance, the PAC campus police will be called and a complaint will be filed by the REFC staff.

### **Clothing and Individual Supplies**

Children should be dressed in simple, washable clothing suitable for play, please no open toe shoes. During an average day play could involve art, water activities, or outdoor play. Although smocks are worn by children during messy activities, occasionally accidents do occur so your child may need to be changed during the day. In addition, clothing should also have easy access for toileting purposes.

The children must be able to participate in outdoor learning activities (weather permitting) including cold and hot days. It is recommended that children be dressed appropriately with hats,

scarves, mittens, raincoats, jackets for cold weather and dressed in cool clothing for when the weather is hot.

The following items are needed for your child's attendance. Please bring these items and leave them in your child's cubby. Remember to write your child's name or initials in permanent marker on each item. Also, be sure to update your child's clothes for weather and size changes:

- Wipes.
- Diapers (8 diapers per day).
- Training underwear or pullups with Velcro.
- Minimum of 3 changes of clothing with socks and shoes (additional changes of clothing may be necessary for children who are toilet learning).
- A small blanket and crib sheet for nap time.
- Comfort item for nap time (small pillow or small stuffed toy/animal).

### **Confidentiality/HIPAA/FERPA**

The REFC is committed to keeping all information regarding children and their families confidential in accordance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Enrollment files, including health records are kept in a locked file cabinet. Only the Center Coordinator or Administrative Service Specialist may grant access to children's enrollment files to other REFC teachers/staff if deemed necessary.

Other persons, such as counselors, therapists, and health professionals, can gain access to information from files only with written permission from the parent or guardian. REFC teachers/staff will not give out information over the telephone or internet unless identification is verified and confidentiality secured. All records may be subject to on-site review by representatives of the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, Child Care Licensing, USDA/TDA, and/or police authorities in the event of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Upon withdrawal from the REFC, children's records are maintained for 3 months on site and then destroyed at the end of this period.

### **Complaint Procedure**

As a parent it is recommended that you develop a relationship with your child's teacher to establish a foundation for addressing questions or concerns regarding your child's care and education. If your child's teacher is unable to help resolve the concern or question, please make an appointment, call, or stop by to speak with the Coordinator. Please direct all questions regarding billing, parent handbook policies or any other matter regarding the operation of the REFC to the Coordinator. If the Coordinator is unable to resolve it, the next level would be to make an appointment with the Dean of Student Success or Vice President of Student Success to discuss your concerns.

### **Consumer Product Safety Commission**

At the beginning of each month the Center Coordinator or Administrative Services Specialist will check the Consumer Product Safety Commission website for the latest recalls. A Children's

Products Certification is signed each month and posted in the front lobby glass display. All recalls from the month are printed and placed in the U.S Consumer Product Safety Commission Recall Binder located in the front lobby. The REFC also has subscribed to the Consumer Product Safety Commission to receive any notices and updated information.

### **Diapers**

Upon dropping off your child, you must check their diaper and change if needed before leaving. Diapers are checked every 2 hours or as needed. Staff will promptly change a child's diaper or soiled underwear in designated changing areas only. If a child's clothing or cloth diaper has been soiled by urine or feces, they are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.

For most children, disposable diapers will be used unless there is a documented medical reason. For those children who require cloth diapers, the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit.

### **Discipline and Guidance Techniques**

#### **Discipline**

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control

#### **Guidance**

Teachers are responsible for only using positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which includes the following:

- Using praise and encouragement for good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- Using brief, supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child or teacher. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abrasive, or profane language;
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and

- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Please discuss with your child's teacher specific guidance techniques that work best with your child. Changes at home may affect a child's behavior at the Center. The Center staff will be available to work with you regarding behavior problems at the center or home.

### **Separation/Behavior Policy**

In cases of continued behavior that is challenging and/or potentially harmful to your child, other children or property, you will be notified immediately. A collaboration between the teachers and parents will be conducted to set up an Individualized Guidance Plan in order to address the needs of the child. Communication with the parent will be ongoing to work in solving the behavior issue. The Coordinator has the discretion of discontinuing services by terminating the child's enrollment if the child has not adjusted to the program or demonstrates inappropriate behavior (hitting repeatedly, kicking, causing injuries to self or to others), only after all other options listed above have been exhausted.

### **Emergency Procedures**

#### **Evacuations**

All staff are trained in procedures to follow during an emergency. Fire and evacuation drills are held monthly. Severe Weather Drills are held every 3 months. The evacuation routes are posted in each classroom.

In case of a toxic fume release or if the building must be evacuated, the children will be taken to one of the following locations depending on the nature of the emergency:

#### **On campus:**

**Ozuna Children's Library located next to the center: 210-486-3557**

#### **Off campus:**

**San Antonio Metro Health Clinic: 210-924-9031**  
9011 Poteet/Jourdanton Hwy.

In such an event, parents or emergency persons listed on the enrollment form will be contacted by teacher's cell phone/land line as soon as possible after the children have been safely evacuated.

#### **Inclement Weather**

REFC follows the Alamo Colleges District Inclement Weather and Other Emergency Closings (D.5.5.1). In case of inclement weather the center will close immediately and parents have 45 minutes from the time they are notified to pick up their child. During a weather alert situation local radio and television stations will make announcements. The Weather Alert / Campus Closing Line is (210) 208-8189.

#### **Operational or Emergency Closing**

In cases of operational or emergency closing, parent will be notified and asked to pick up their child immediately for the safety of your child. All children must be picked up within 45 minutes of being contacted.

### **Health Checks**

There will be an arrival personal health check of each child consisting of the face, arms, legs, and hair being checked every morning the child is brought to the classroom. Arrival checks are done in front of the parent. It is important that upon entry into the classroom you and your child wash your hands.

Note: If head lice are found anytime during the day, the parent will be notified for the child to be picked up. The child may return to the center once the hair is nit-free.

### **Health Services**

Vision and hearing exams are required of 4 and 5 year old children. A form for such exams may be acquired through the front office personnel.

In accordance with the Texas Department of State Health Services and TDFPS Minimum Standards, all required immunizations MUST be completed by the first day of school attendance or be scheduled for completion of required immunizations by his/her physician. If after 30 days the child is not up to date, the child may be excluded from attendance until requirements are met.

Tuberculosis testing/screening requirements are based on criteria identified by the Texas Department of State Health Services and/or the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District for children. Center may request documentation of a TB screening based on results of the TB questionnaire, if applicable.

Protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases: Employees are not required to be vaccinated according to the U.s Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/adult/adult-schedule-easy-read.pdf>

### **Illness and Exclusion**

One of the most serious challenges facing group care situations for young children is preventing illness. The staff will strive to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness and sanitation. Proper hand washing procedures will be followed and taught to the children. The toys, eating surfaces, toileting and diaper equipment will be sanitized between children's use.

One of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease is to have strictly enforced standards regarding the exclusion of ill children. If your child becomes ill at the Center, we will notify you immediately. Your sick child needs to be picked up within 45 minutes of the time you were notified. Your assistance is necessary.

Do not bring ill children to the Center. If you find yourself wondering if your child is too ill to participate in any daily activities, then please keep your child at home. This includes outdoor play since this is an integral part of each day's curriculum.

According to NAEYC standards and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, children cannot attend the Center if one or more of the following conditions exist:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in facility activities.

2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children.
3. The child has any one of the following one:
  - a. An axillary (armpit) temperature of 100 degrees or greater, oral temperature 101 degrees or greater, or ear temperature 100 degrees.
  - b. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, uncontrolled breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, vomiting illness (two or more episodes in 24 hours) rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior change, or other unusual signs.
  - c. The child has been diagnosed with a contagious disease, and/or until medical evaluation determines that the child is no longer communicable and is able to participate in the facility's activities.

Please refer to the *Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child-Care Centers* located in each classroom.

In addition, the Center's policy requires that your child be free of symptoms of illness (i.e., fever, diarrhea or vomiting) for at least 24 hours prior to the child's return. Please keep in mind that if we send your child home because of illness, the child will not be admitted to the Center the next day.

The Center reserves the right to require a doctor's statement before the child can be re-admitted to the Center.

If a child has been exposed to a communicable disease, signs will be posted immediately to warn you of the potential exposure. This will include the type of disease, possible symptoms, mode of transmission, period of communicability, control measures that are being implemented at the center and any precautions that should take place within the home.

### Meals and Snacks

All meals (breakfast, lunch, and snack) are provided and prepared by the cook in the center's kitchen. The kitchen is inspected by local officials annually; the annual report can be located in the glass case in the front lobby. No prepared food, gum, drinks, candy, or meals from home are allowed into the center. If a child arrives at the center eating, the parent must supervise his or her child as they eat outside of the classroom or discard the food item.

Meals are served family style (with teachers and children sitting at the table together) encouraging children's social and language development as well as self-help skills. Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach. We do not use any meals as a reward or punishment. Children are encouraged to taste all foods served, but are not required to eat any particular food item. We serve milk, fruits, and vegetables with our meals, unless it is stated by a parent that their child cannot have milk, fruits or vegetables. In such case we need a doctor statement with recommendations or substitutions. If your child requires a therapeutic or special diet, please provide written direction from a physician. The written note must include: 1) a list of foods to avoid and 2) a list of the proper substitutions. Parents must provide milk substitutions. If a child has any food allergies, you must also complete the Alternate Food/Allergy Alert Form informing us of:

1. The symptoms resulting from the allergy
2. The severity of the allergy
3. The steps to take in case of a reaction
4. Specific food substitutions and precautions to be taken

The foods children eat influence their growth and development, capacity to learn, and overall behavior. Variations to menus are developed individually for the purpose of meeting children's ethnic, religious, or dietary restrictions/preferences. Our staff are educated on food allergies and they take precautions to ensure children are protected. Information on foods that might cause allergies is placed on our Parent board information area in the hallway by the office.

As participants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, menus are nutritionally balanced according to the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines and the TDFPS Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers. Menus are posted in each classroom and in the glass case in the front lobby. Effective October 1, 2017 REFC will comply with the new meal pattern, by USDA, <http://www.squaremeals.org/Programs/ChildandAdultCareFoodProgram/CACFPMealPatterns/ChildandAdultMealPattern.aspx>.

Breakfast is served at 8:45 am, therefore having your child in the center by 8:30 am is important. We begin serving lunch at 11:30 a.m. with the lunch count being based on the number of children at the Center at 8:30 a.m. If you would like to join your child for lunch, please communicate this to the Front Desk or teacher. All children and teachers will be served first, if there is extra food than the parent will be offered a plate. An afternoon snack is served after nap time, 2:30 p.m. Children must eat their snack in the classroom, cannot be taken out of the center. Please call the center if you are going to be late, so we will have an accurate meal count.

REFC has begun the process of composting food that children have not eaten. The composting is completed primarily by the cook, at the garden located by the Vet Tech Building, but teachers and children play a large role as they have learned to dispose of uneaten food. The purpose of composting is that once the soil is ready children will be able to work with the teachers and cook to plant a fruit and vegetable garden in which they will maintain by watering. Once the fruit and vegetables are ready to be picked than a cooking activity will be done in the classroom.

### Medications

When it is absolutely necessary for your child to receive medication or special medical procedures during the day, the staff will strictly adhere to the following guidelines for administration of medication/procedures:

- Parents must complete and sign the medication authorization form. Your child's teacher can provide you with this form.
- It is the parent's responsibility to give the medication to their child's teacher; medication cannot be left in bags or backpacks accessible to children. It is the parent's responsibility to retrieve the medicine at the end of the day.

- For liquid medications: Parents must bring a medication cup or spoon with clearly marked dosages matching the prescribed amount.

There are specific requirements for prescription and non-prescription medicines. Please be sure you understand this policy and feel free to ask your child's teacher if you have any questions.

#### Prescription Medicine

1. Must be in the original container.
2. Must include the prescription label with your child's first and last name, current date, expiration date, directions, and physician's name. It will be administered only as stated on the label. The prescription label must have specific dosage amounts. It cannot state "as needed."
3. We cannot administer fever-reducing medication (such as Tylenol, Motrin or Aspirin) without an additional letter written by the physician that includes the dates to be administered.

Non-Prescription Medicine (such as diaper creams, ointments, sun screen lotion, etc.):

1. Must be in original container
2. Must be labeled with your child's name
3. Cannot be expired.

### Minor Injuries and Medical Emergencies

#### Minor Injuries

The REFC will inform parents of all accidents and other issues concerning their child. When minor injuries occur with a child, teachers/staff will provide first aid. Scrapes, small cuts/bumps, bites will be treated and will be communicated to parents via a written accident report/phone call on the day the injury occurs. The report must be signed by a parent/guardian. Due to confidentiality policies and for the best interest of the children, the REFC staff does not give the names of children involved in any incident other than that of your own child.

#### Medical Emergencies

During a medical emergency, the REFC will follow these steps:

- If your child is injured at the Center, a trained teacher/staff member will provide First Aid or CPR.
- Teachers must notify the Coordinator or Person in Charge when an injury occurs at the REFC or on the premises of Palo Alto College (For example, during a walking field trip).
- The Coordinator or Person in Charge will make the determination to contact PAC Emergency 485-0911
- The Coordinator or Person in Charge will contact PAC Campus Police.
- The parent of the injured child will be contacted as soon as the child's medical needs have been met.
- If the injured child needs to be transported by an ambulance, a staff member will accompany your child. So that we may contact you quickly, your Emergency Contact Information must be kept current; please provide us with new phone numbers ASAP.

- State law requires that notification be given within 48 hours to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Service regarding the medical emergency.
- Alamo Colleges requires that a Student injury form be submitted to the Risk Management Department.
- NAEYC requires that within 72 hours notification be provided regarding the medical emergency.

#### Naptime

According to TDFPS Minimum Standards for Child Care Center, all children are required to have a rest time after lunch. The Center provides a mat for each child. Please bring a small blanket, crib sheet, pillow and/or a quiet toy for your child to have during naptime. Please check with your child's teacher for guidelines on what toys your child may have on his or her mat. Children are not obligated to sleep but all children will be expected to lie quietly and rest for at least one (1) hour on his or her mat. An appropriate naptime will be created by providing a restful environment. This includes turning off lights, playing soft music, and providing a comfortable temperature. Individual attention to help a child fall asleep will be given, if necessary. This includes appropriate touching such as rubbing backs, gently patting backs, stroking hair, or rubbing as on arms or legs. It may be appropriate to rock some toddlers. The rest area will be lighted in such a way which allows visual supervision of the children at all times.

Naptime will extend no longer than three (3) hours, mostly between 12:00 am and 2:30 pm, depending on individual and classroom schedules. Children who are not sleeping at the end of the one-hour rest period may get up, go to the restroom or have their diaper changed, and choose from quiet activities provided. These quiet activities will take place on the child's mat or in a designated quiet area of the room. Toward the end of the nap period, the lights will be turned on so that all children can slowly wake up.

#### Nursing Mothers

The REFC provides a comfortable place with an adult sized chair in room 100 for nursing mothers. Nursing mothers are always welcomed to nurse at the center's designated room or provide breast milk for their child in care. In addition to room 100, nursing mothers may nurse in the teacher's workspace located in between classrooms 102/104 and 124/109 (this is the only time parents are allowed in the teacher's workspace area).

Palo Alto College also has a designated space for nursing mothers in the BAE B Safe program, Student Center 129.

Upon request, a compilation of breastfeeding education and support resources in the community can be provided such as WIC program offices information and breastfeeding brochures available in the front lobby. For additional resources please visit the following websites;

- [www.lalcheleague.org](http://www.lalcheleague.org)
- [www.hmhbw.org](http://www.hmhbw.org)
- [www.sanantonio.gov-babayccafe](http://www.sanantonio.gov-babayccafe)
- [www.Texasensteps.org](http://www.Texasensteps.org)
- [www.Breastmilkcounts.com](http://www.Breastmilkcounts.com)

## Outdoor Safety

Children are taken outdoors in the morning and afternoon, weather permitting. The majority of the playground areas have shade however it is recommended that children wear sun-protective clothing. To help protect children from the sun we ask that parents apply non-aerosol sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA of SPF 15 to exposed skin before dropping off children.

Insect repellents only containing DEET should be used and should be applied once a day before dropping off children, only if you want your child to wear an insect repellent. Please note that applying DEET with sunscreen is not recommended as the DEET makes the SPF less effective. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Insect-Repellents.aspx> The exterminator comes to the center once a week and sprays if an insect problem occurs. Spray is done when children are not in the center for a minimum of 12 hours.

## Parental Notifications

Parental notifications will be posted on the door of the center or sent as emails so please be sure to check front door and classroom doors every day. Notifications and/or updates on these operating policies will also be distributed this way.

Family members will receive a daily report from teachers notating daily activities, developmental progress and any other pertinent information.

## Physical Activity

In order to support children's physical development indoor and outdoor activities are provided daily. Physical development is divided into fine motor and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills engage smaller movements with hands and fingers while gross motor skills use large body movements, usually involving the entire body. During outdoor time children have the opportunity to engage in running, climbing, riding a bike, throwing balls, or shoveling. This physical activity allows children the opportunity to enhance and develop gross and fine motor skills. In the event that the children cannot go outside due to weather, a classroom is available for children to engage in physical activity.

## Release of Children

Children are released only to persons authorized by the information the parents supply on the enrollment form. Each authorized person will have a registration code to obtain a finger print for the ProCare system.

Any person picking up a child in an impaired condition (ill or under the influence of drugs or alcohol) will be assisted by the center to find alternative transportation. In case of conflicts, the proper authorities will be contacted.

## Safety Procedures

Safety is a priority at the REFC. In order to ensure the safety of all teachers, staff and children, the REFC has a key code entry system at the front door. Parents will utilize a 4 digit code to access the front door. All visitors must buzz at the box by the front door and announce the purpose of their visit to gain access to the center.

In addition, the REFC utilizes the ProCare Child Care Software as the center's management tool. This computer program enables the office staff to update and organize children's records, accounting, billing information, and children's attendance. Parents must sign their children in at drop off through our computerized system and sign them out at the end of the day. This is done by a digital fingerprint imaging machine located at the entrance to the two hallways in the center.

For your child's safety, children must be brought into the Center and released to the assigned staff. Parents must check their children in and out of the Center every day. Be sure the teacher sees you and greets your child.

## Screen Time

Screen time is limited to the use of computers in the classrooms, no televisions are allowed at REFC. Children under the age of 2 years will not have screen time while attending REFC. Throughout the day the daily schedule allows for children to engage in center activities, during this time children are allowed up to 15 minutes during morning center activities and 15 minutes during afternoon center activities to use the computer. The computers in the classroom have software that allow children to engage in educational activities and story time.

## Toilet Training

At the REFC, teachers will start a dialogue with parents regarding toilet learning. Parents and teachers will watch for the following signs that indicate children are demonstrating toilet learning readiness:

- Interest in using the toilet
- Ability to indicate need or desire to use the toilet
- Awareness of physical cues prior to using the toilet
- Can stay dry for at least one to two hours at a time
- Often wakes up dry after nap
- Usually children are off the bottle
- Wants diaper to be dry; dislikes soiled or wet diaper
- Some interest and ability in dressing

Please consult your child's teacher before you send them to school in underpants.

Children new to wearing underwear should bring several extra pairs of underwear and complete changes of clothing, including socks and shoes. Toileting accidents will be dealt with in a calm, pleasant, and casual manner.

## Transportation

The REFC does not provide transportation.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition rates are set by the ACCD Board of Trustees and calculated on a weekly rate listed below.

<b>Fall and Spring Schedule and Fees</b>
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Ages		Student Weekly Tuition PAC/AC students only/ must provide school schedule	Community Member Tuition
Young and Older Toddlers (Ages 18 mos. -36 mos.)	M-F	\$163.00	\$191.00
	M/W/F	\$97.80	\$114.60
	T/Th	\$65.20	\$76.40
Preschool (Ages 37 mos. – 60 mos.)	M-F	\$160.00	\$186.00
	M/W/F	\$96.00	\$111.60
	T/Th	\$64.00	\$74.40
<b>Maymester, Summer I and Summer II Schedule and Fees</b>			
Ages		Student Weekly Tuition PAC/AC students only/ must provide school schedule	Community Member Tuition
Young and Older Toddlers (Ages 18 mos. -36 mos.)	M-Th	\$130.40	\$152.80
	M/W	\$65.20	\$76.40
	T/Th	\$65.20	\$76.40
Preschool (Ages 37 mos. – 60 mos.)	M-Th	\$128.00	\$148.80
	M/W	\$64.00	\$74.40
	T/Th	\$64.00	\$74.40

Weekly tuition must be paid at the Bursar's office or online in advance of services being provided. Receipts will be provided to the parent by the Bursar's Office/online. One copy must be returned to the Center so that your account will be properly credited. Non-payment of tuition/fees will result in a hold on PAC registration and transcripts for student parents and/or suspension of child care services. All receipts must be delivered to an REFC front office staff or if the tuition or fee is paid online, a receipt from [drocha2@alamo.edu](mailto:drocha2@alamo.edu) must be forwarded to [pac-refc@alamo.edu](mailto:pac-refc@alamo.edu). There are no discounts for days missed due to illness, absences, vacation, or the Center being closed for holidays, teacher in-service days, work days or emergencies. Parents will be informed of current rates when children are enrolled. If there is an increase in rates, parents will be given advanced notice regarding the new rates. At the end of each calendar year, the Center will furnish yearly statements to use for Income Tax purposes upon request.

**If after two weeks no tuition payment has been made, the Program Coordinator will consult with you to receive payment or set up a payment plan. If no payment has been received after three weeks, your account will be deactivated and your child will not be able to attend.**

A registration fee per child of \$40.00 is due upon enrollment each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer as a whole) for a total of \$120.00 annually. The registration fee is non-refundable.

A two weeks' notice is required if you plan to withdraw your child before the end of your contract date. If you are unable to give a two weeks' notice, you will be financially responsible for those two weeks.

Please understand that you will be charged late fees if your child is at the Center after closing. The late fees must be paid at the Bursar's office or online before your child will be allowed to return to the Center. Receipt must be presented as proof of payment. The REFC closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. The late fee is determined as follows: pick-ups after 5:30 are charged a \$20.00 fine for the first 15 minutes or fraction thereof and \$20.00 for each additional 15 minutes or fraction thereof until 6:00 p.m. Please be aware that if a child has not been picked up by 6:30 p.m. and the staff has not been able to contact the child's emergency numbers, Children's Protective Services and the San Antonio Police Department will be notified. Any child picked up late three times may be subject to dismissal by the Coordinator.

Late fee policies are strictly enforced. Please ensure that you have a back-up plan to ensure your child is picked up before closing.

#### **Visitors To The Center**

Approved family members are always welcome to visit the classrooms at any time. In addition, there may be some other visitors to the center such as therapists, student observers (from the PAC education department who will be participating in early childhood development courses), Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (Licensing) Representatives, NAEYC Representatives, Texas Rising Start (TRS) Representatives, PAC staff/faculty or community members, etc. All visitors to the center will need to be approved and receive access to the classrooms by REFC administration.

#### **Walking Field Trips**

The REFC will participate in walking field trips around campus (i.e. Children's Library, gym, etc.) during hours of operation. The teacher will post a sign on the classroom door notifying parents of the walking field trip location and time of departure and arrival. Each classroom will be required to have a first aid kit, classroom list of children, emergency contact phone numbers, and a communication device while on a walking field trip.

#### **Water Activities**

The REFC may schedule "Splash Days" during the summer months or as deemed appropriate. As part of "Splash Days" the outdoor play curriculum will include lawn sprinklers for the children to play in and stay cool. Parents will be notified in advance and will be asked to supply suitable clothing (i.e. bathing suits, water sandals, extra changes of clothes) and beach towels.

*The parent handbook is reviewed annually and updated as necessary.*