



Siskin Early Learning Centers  
**Parent Handbook**  
2022 - 2023

Welcome to Siskin Early Learning Centers. We thank you for choosing Siskin Early Learning Centers to educate your child. As outlined in this Parent Handbook, the goal of our policies and procedures is to ensure the lives of all children are improved. With your help, we can achieve our goal. Please review the handbook thoroughly to learn about our policies and procedures.

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## INSTITUTE OVERVIEW

### About Us

Siskin Children's Institute works to improve the quality of life for children with special needs and their families.

Founded in 1950 to serve children with special needs, Siskin Children's Institute is a nonprofit organization based in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Today Siskin Children’s Institute helps children

of all abilities, families and professionals through four areas of focus: **education, outreach, health care and home visiting.**

**Siskin Early Learning Centers** provide a quality early childhood education to children of all abilities at our two locations. Inside our classrooms, children learn and play in a nurturing environment that celebrates the accomplishments of every child. A comprehensive team of education specialists' work together to help all children reach their full potential.

**Siskin Outreach Services** provide disability information to families, professionals, and college students through a dynamic array of programs that weave through the Institute's other areas of focus. Outreach services include family support, a lending library, consulting & training services and student training opportunities for future professionals in the fields related to early childhood development, early intervention and special education.

**Health Care** The Siskin Center for Developmental Pediatrics is a regional developmental pediatric center, led by a team of developmental pediatricians, with services available in Chattanooga and Nashville, TN. Children are referred to the Institute for medical, psychological and cognitive assessment, diagnosis and treatment, including physical, occupational, speech and language, applied behavior analysis, and other therapies as well as counseling and social skills groups.

**Siskin Home Visiting Program** provides collaborative consultation visits between the family and an early interventionist in the home and community. The focus of these visits is on support and consultation to strengthen the family's confidence in meeting their goals for themselves and their child. The Early Interventionists focus on emotional, material and informational support and well as behavioral consultation around child and family goals.

**Helen Siskin Pregulman Family Voices of Tennessee, Southeast Partnership** provides emotional and educational support to the families of these children. To reach these families on what can be a lifelong, complex healthcare journey with their child, Family Voices of Tennessee has created a unique network of experienced staff and volunteers who have personal experience navigating the healthcare journey of an individual with a special healthcare need, chronic illness, or disability.

## VISION

Siskin Children's Institute will be a nationally recognized leader of evidence based services for children with diverse abilities using a family centered approach to increase access and opportunity for each child to reach his or her life goals.

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## PHILOSOPHY

We believe that *every moment* should be a *teaching opportunity* and that every day is a celebration of each child's strengths, abilities and accomplishments.

We believe that *children of all abilities are unique and capable learners* benefiting from exploration within a predictable, loving and safe environment.

We believe that the *family is a child's first teacher* and that collaboration, respect and family involvement in the team approach to early education are paramount.

We believe that a *positive and accepting learning environment* supports each child's social, emotional, physical, motor, language and cognitive development.

We believe that *children of all abilities grow and develop to their full potential* by having the opportunity to engage in developmentally appropriate activities, being exposed to multiple instructional approaches, interacting with peers and developing relationships with caring adults.

We believe that *community collaboration*, resources and partnerships provide valuable awareness, educational, and outreach opportunities to support children, families, and professionals.

We believe that *interaction with children and educators* in a setting which demonstrates recommended practices is essential in the preparation and retention of professionals who work and will work with children and their families.

We believe that it is our responsibility and opportunity to *value, nurture, and develop the potential* within our human resources, including employees, volunteers, community partners and donors.

We believe that our human resources, including employees, volunteers, community partners and donors, *are the essential element* in providing an ever-evolving array of services to our community.

We believe in the responsible *stewardship* of those who invest their time and financial resources into helping us fulfill our mission.

## GOALS

1. Children will demonstrate a high level of engagement in meaningful, developmentally appropriate activities.
  - a. Projects involve children in studies of things that interest them and are expanded through children's participation in active hands-on learning.
  - b. Staff act as facilitators and will use incidental teaching strategies to facilitate engagement.
  - c. Staff embeds the Tennessee Early Learning Standards within project work to ensure progression of development.
2. Children will exhibit independence in classroom activities and routines.
  - a. Routines and classroom experiences are accessible and encourage independence for all children.

- b. Environments and experiences that are provided match each child's developmental level and individual style of learning.
  3. Children will develop social relationships with peers and adults.
    - a. Classroom experiences are designed to encourage children to interact with each other.
    - b. Cooperative play is supported and encouraged as children develop.
    - c. Appropriate social interactions are identified and reinforced.
  4. Parents will be active participants in their child's educational program.
    - a. Parents and teachers will have multiple opportunities to exchange information and share in decision making.
    - b. Families and professionals will have a partnership for designing, implementing and evaluating programming.
    - c. Information will be exchanged between the family and classroom staff in order to meet the needs of the children.
    - d. Families will be supported in achieving their hopes and dreams for their children.
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## SISKIN EARLY LEARNING CENTERS

Siskin Early Learning Centers is an early childhood program utilizing evidence-based practices to assist children in reaching their greatest potential. Siskin Early Learning Centers are open from **7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.**, and serves children six weeks through five years.

Siskin Early Learning Center is licensed by the Tennessee Department of Human Services and the Tennessee Department of Developmental Disabilities (Carter Street location), as well as an approved Tennessee child care center. Siskin Early Learning Centers is a Three Star rated child care center.

### Classroom Staffing

Classrooms are staffed by teaching teams composed of a lead teacher and teaching partners. Staff hours are staggered so that there are familiar adults with the children throughout the day. The center strives to keep consistent floaters and substitutes so that children and families can get to know them. Staff are asked to introduce themselves to families but please feel free to introduce yourself to any staff that you do not recognize. Each learning center has a Center Manager as well as classroom interventionists to provide classroom support consisting of hands-on staff training to make sure high quality care is provided at all times.

Classrooms are staffed with Lead Teachers who have child care experience and knowledge of children of all abilities. All teachers and teaching partners receive many hours of training and the opportunity to attend conferences in order to keep current on evidence-based practices.

### Schedule

Each classroom has a daily schedule designed by the teachers to meet the needs of the particular children in that group. These schedules may change from day to day depending on class interests and activities, but everyone has a predictable routine for breakfast, lunch, snack,

and rest time. Your child's teacher will share this with you. Activities are arranged so that there are active ones and then quieter ones scheduled throughout the day.

Please bring your child to the center in clothes designed for active indoor and outdoor play. These should be clothes that you and your child are willing to get dirty. We will go outside each day, weather permitting, so help your child dress appropriately including shoes for running (no crocs, flip flops, or sandals) and a jacket when necessary. On sunny days please apply sunscreen at home and then we will reapply with your consent.

#### Clothing

Each child should have at least one change of clothing in their cubby. Please label all clothing with the child's name. During the toilet training process please bring several changes of clothing and underwear. We require a protective barrier when using cloth diapers, training pants or underwear for children who frequently have accidents. This is to ensure the classroom is clean and sanitized.

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes that are appropriate for the weather. Jewelry, flip flops, Crocs and sandals are prohibited for safety reasons. Teething necklaces may not be worn while your child is at the center due to being a choking hazard, this is a child care licensing requirement.

#### Toys from home

Please leave personal toys at home or in the car rather than bringing them into the center. A soft toy may be brought for naptime use only. When personal toys are brought to the center they get lost or broken. They can also cause disagreements and hurt feelings. Some classrooms have show and tell one day a week and we encourage children to bring a book, photo or a treasure from nature to share with the class.

#### Outside play

Outside play is a part of our daily program. The Department of Human Services child care licensing requires that we take ALL children outside daily when the temperature (adjusted for wind chill and heat index) is between 32 degrees and 95 degrees and it is not raining. Children should be properly dressed depending on weather conditions. If your child is not well enough to play outside, he/she is not well enough to attend for that day. Teachers may ask for rain boots, jackets, etc. in order to allow children the opportunity for fresh air even when the playground may be wet.

#### Nap time

Soft mats or cots are provided for children to use. Carter Street location asks parents to bring a clean crib sheet and blanket each week. Little Miss Mag provides the cot sheet and asks parents to provide a clean blanket each week. Nap time is scheduled for 1 ½ hours per day. The Department of Human Services child care licensing requires that all children have at least a 30 minute rest time (or quiet activity). If children do not go to sleep after 30 minutes quiet activities are planned. Each room has naptime routines such as reading a book, putting on soft lights and music. Teachers rub the backs of the children that respond to soothing touch.

#### Birthdays

Celebrating birthdays is an exciting and anticipated event in our daily lives. Each classroom has unique traditions and celebrations. For example, in the past some classrooms have allowed the birthday child to decorate a letter that is displayed in a special place in the room, a special job, and/or select a special activity. If you would like to join in celebrating your child's birthday in their classroom, please let the teacher know in advance. We can work together to make this day

special for your child. We ask that outside food is not brought into the center due to the number of allergies. We want to celebrate your child and will work with parents to do this in an unique way. If you would like to invite your child's friends to a birthday party, invitations distributed within the class must go to everyone.

#### Signing In and Signing Out

Your child must be accompanied at all times to and from the center & classroom by an adult and checked in and out using the computer system located at the main entrance to both of the Early Learning Centers. This is a Tennessee licensing requirement. Any person authorized to pick up a child from the center will be assigned a registration number to set up an account at the computer station. The adult must remember the Identification number and password they create and use this in order to check their child in or out each day. Not only is this a requirement from the State, but in the event of an emergency it is imperative to know which children are present. Children will be released only to those adults whose names are provided in the child's enrollment papers. Only persons 16 years or older may pick up or drop off a child. Children will not be released to anyone whose behavior may place the child at risk. If a child is not checked in or checked out, you could be charged a fee per child per day. Again, in the event of an emergency it is imperative to know which children are present. This also ensures proper staffing ratios for the day.

Because classroom staff are preparing the room for the day, they cannot accept a child earlier than 7:30 a.m. If your child will be arriving at school after 8:30 a.m. due to a doctor's appointment, etc., please notify the classroom staff regarding your expected arrival time in order for meal preparation. Dropping children off between 11:00 and 2:30 can be very disruptive, please avoid these times if you need to be late.

Children must be picked up and exit classroom by 5:30 in order to allow for staff to begin cleaning as well as to avoid a late fee. Business hours may change at the discretion of the Director of the Early Learning Center and/or the President/CEO.

Parental access to pick up children is mandatory by law. If a legal guardian or parent is not allowed pick up a child, we must have court documentation stating these guidelines.

Families may add additional names to the pickup list by notifying the center manager or administrative staff in writing. As a safety precaution staff will ask the pickup person for identification before allowing them to take your child from the center.

You will find a parent information board with the menu, lesson plans, upcoming events and other notes that help us keep you informed located outside your child's classroom door.

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## CURRICULUM

Siskin Early Learning Center is committed to ensuring a high quality early childhood education program for every young child through our partnerships with families. We utilize an integrated, developmentally appropriate curriculum to make sure that all children have access to program participation regardless of need, ability, or background. We provide opportunities for rich learning and relationship building through play and in-depth project investigations. Our

curriculum is guided by the child's interests, the Tennessee Early Learning Standards and The Engagement Model, which is research based and follows the national guidelines for best practice in early childhood education. As you move through our centers you will also see influences from the philosophy of the schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy.

Our program not only addresses the basic needs of all children but plays to the strengths, individual needs and interests of each child. At Siskin Early Learning Centers we have created a safe place where we partner with families to facilitate children's growth and learning. Each classroom environment is carefully designed to enhance learning through incidental teaching. Structured flexibility and routines provide a predictable and safe environment in which children feel comfortable to play, explore and grow. From infant rooms with soft surfaces for rolling and crawling to Pre-K classrooms with interest centers (blocks, dramatic play, games and toys, art, discovery, sand and water, computer, library, and music), each classroom creates opportunities to learn through play and engage with a variety of materials supported by adults. Each day consists of a balance of learning activities that foster language development and emerging literacy, the understanding of number concepts, gross and fine motor skills, self-help skills and social and emotional development. The children participate in a combination of large and small group activities and individual choice in order to develop these skills. The classrooms meet state and national standards and implement developmentally appropriate practices.

We also address the curricular needs of children through the Project Approach. The Project Approach builds on the children's natural curiosity. Teachers choose a project based on the children's interests. Children and teachers interact together to question, problem-solve, communicate, reflect and make connections to the real world. Through the project approach, children are learning to use critical thinking skills as they are exploring each project. Literacy and math skills are naturally embedded into the projects.

Our classroom environments are inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which originated in Northern Italy. True to the Reggio Emilia approach, we think of the environment as an additional teacher. Unique materials are intended to promote exploration. The materials of the classrooms are always changing based on children's interests and their projects. The classroom feels more like home and the materials are natural and inspire exploration. The role of the teacher as a researcher is enhanced by the teacher's ongoing observation and documentation of children's work and play. Teaching is intentional and relevant. Teaching staff engage actively in learning and promote investigation alongside children. In addition to using the environment to promote child engagement, classrooms are also organized to promote independence, social interaction and creativity.

Siskin Early Learning Center uses a collaborative approach to ensure the success of all children. We have a variety of support staff working in collaboration with teachers to adapt curriculum and materials. Teachers are trained to use a variety of teaching strategies. We believe that all children can learn. We have high expectations for each child. We strive to prepare all children not only for their next educational environment but to become lifelong learners.

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## ASSESSMENT

Siskin Early Learning Center uses ongoing authentic assessment to continually monitor program effectiveness, evaluate individual child progress, interests, and abilities while guiding teachers in the decision-making process.

All children are observed daily within familiar classroom routines. Teachers document observations using the TN Early Learning Standards which includes cognitive development, language skills, social/emotional development, and approaches to learning, health and physical development. Families also communicate with teachers on their child's progress related to the developmental continuum in order to participate in guiding their child's program. Procure Family and Engagement App is used to communicate your child's growth and progress over the course of the year. Teachers will meet with family at least once a year to discuss progress and/or address any concerns.

The first five years are critical in a child's life. The sooner a delay or disability is discovered the sooner you can help the child receive the supports needed to make a difference.

When there are concerns about a child's development the teacher and center director will meet with the family. Observations will be shared and information will be provided to the family on how they may obtain a formal assessment.

## GUIDANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

All young children are developing the social skills that enable them to play cooperatively with other children and to function as part of a group. Often when children have inappropriate behaviors it is because they haven't yet learned the skills to negotiate, to ask for what they need or to join in play with others, without grabbing, pushing, or hitting. Children are still learning how their behavior might impact others.

Siskin Early Learning Centers utilizes a positive behavior support approach. Behavior is managed by providing children with clear expectations about what behavior is acceptable and by encouraging, with positive reinforcement, those behaviors that are valued, while downplaying and redirecting those that are not acceptable. Corporal punishment and humiliation are never used.

Conflicts are seen as opportunities for supporting children's learning. We work with the children to identify the disagreement and then generate possible solutions that can be agreed upon by everyone involved. This form of conflict resolution, sometimes called "social problem solving," is more respectful of children than a teacher-dictated solution and builds social and cognitive skills.

Our goals for children during conflicts are that they:

- Support children to a sense of calmness
- Find words for their feelings, needs, and wants
- Listen to others' feelings, need and wants
- Develop and agree to a mutually satisfying solution and
- Continue to play together and understand each other's feelings.

In the case of a persistent or repeated problem, we inform and consult with a child's family and work together on a collaborative plan for helping the child. Staff considers the developmental stage of the child, what has occurred before the behavior, the consequences and other factors that may be relevant to the behavior. If necessary a behavior specialist may be consulted to help the teacher and family. A formal functional behavior assessment may be needed to assist in developing an individualized behavior support plan. Consultation with the family and parental consent would be obtained before completing a formal functional behavioral assessment. It may be appropriate to consider additional interventions only when these proactive prevention strategies are ineffective or do not result in behavioral changes. If the child exhibits behavior(s)

which interfere with his/her development, or ability to participate in educational activities or if the behavior is a danger to the child or others, a behavior plan may be appropriate, which includes additional intervention techniques. Siskin Early Learning Centers policy states that corporal punishment, verbal/physical/mental abuse, seclusion and other extreme interventions WILL NOT BE USED by the staff.

Specific staff members are trained in Safety with Care, a behavior management system that uses de-escalation tactics and as last resort a safe physical restraint. With parent permission and in a crisis situation this intervention may be used. Families will always be notified when it has been necessary to use this intervention.

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### Biting Procedure

Young children experiment with biting and other aggressive behaviors for several reasons, most of which are developmentally appropriate. Teething, sensory exploration, experimenting with cause and effect, imitating, emerging autonomy, need for attention, holding on or letting go, and expressing feelings such as frustration, anger, tension, anxiety or excitement can be reasons for such behavior. The following outlines procedure for dealing with biting incidents:

1. Immediate attention/first aid will be given to the child who has been bitten. Ice will be put on the bite, or if the skin is broken the bite will be washed with soap and water.
  2. Stern verbal disapproval of the biting will be expressed to the biter (i.e. "No biting" said in a stern voice).
  3. The biting incident will be reported on the standard incident report form and both families will be informed personally and privately the same day. The names of the children are kept confidential.
  4. When ongoing biting is experienced in a classroom, a plan will be developed in collaboration with the family outlining specific strategies to address the behavior.
  5. After the plan is developed a letter will be sent home informing all families of the behavior and strategies that are in place to address the behavior.
  6. The teacher and administrators will be available to answer questions, discuss any concerns or share current resources on biting.
  7. Aligning with the mission of the Institute, staff will support both the child and family through this phase of development. It is not the policy of the Early Learning Centers to expel and/or suspend young children.
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### ADMISSIONS/DISCHARGES

Part of what makes Siskin Early Learning Centers unique is that we serve children with and without disabilities. We celebrate ALL children and see the benefits of inclusion daily. If a family is interested in enrolling at a center, an application is completed and the child is placed on an applicant list. As spaces become available families are contacted.

#### General Admission Requirements

- Pre-enrollment tour of center

- Physical examination and current immunization record on the Tennessee Department of Health Child Care Immunization Record as required by Tennessee state law or a statement from the healthcare provider if immunizations are delayed. Information must be current within the last three months.
- Child must be between 6 weeks and 5 years of age.
- Court documentation must be provided for children with legal guardians or custody agreements.
- Application and registration completed.

#### General Discharge Criteria

The following constitute grounds for discharge from the program:

- Child reaches the maximum age-limit for the program
- Failure to obtain cooperation from the family regarding program policies and procedures which includes the parent conduct policy
- Failure to pay tuition and fees in a timely manner, not to exceed 2 weeks
- On determination that Siskin Early Learning Center cannot meet the needs of the child
- Excessive infringements of the 5:30 p.m. closing time

Siskin Early Learning Centers are a private organization and maintains the right to decline or discontinue services. All final admission and re-enrollment decisions are made by the Administrative Team.

#### General Suspension Criteria

- Failure to keep immunizations current as required by Tennessee state law
- Failure of parent to return required health forms
- The child's behavior is determined to be an extreme danger to self or others

#### Discharge Process

- A two week written notice of intent to withdraw must be turned into the Administrative Coordinator. Tuition charges will cease no sooner than 14 days after notice is received, regardless of child's attendance.
- Complete any applicable paperwork.
- Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may request a copy of the child's Tennessee Department of Health Child Care Immunization Record.

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## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### TUITION

Tuition is based on an annual rate broken down into weekly payments made via bank draft or credit card. This breakdown will eliminate the need to credit back holidays and school vacation periods, and the need for adjustments for inclement weather days. Each family is entitled to one vacation credit per school year. The amount credited will be equal to half of one week's tuition. In order to process the tuition credit, we need to receive a written notice two weeks in advance stating the vacation week requested.

Families are required to make the first tuition for each child at enrollment time, in addition to any applicable registration fees. Registration fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

Families are asked to sign an authorization form for the payments to be auto-drafted from their bank account or charged to their credit card on a weekly basis. We do not accept American Express. At enrollment, Siskin Early Learning Center will provide the necessary authorization form for signatures and bank account numbers from which payments will be drafted. Families are responsible for any charges resulting from insufficient funds. Families are also responsible for notifying the Center Manager of any changes in credit card or bank account information.

Children with child care certificates through the Department of Human Services will have a tuition adjustment based upon the level of the certificate. Child care certificate parent fees must be paid when applicable as well as the bridge payment in order to meet the rate of the child's tuition rate. Families entering the program with a child care certificate are still responsible for any registration fees. If the child care certificate expires or is not renewed, it is the parent's responsibility to notify the ELC and begin paying full tuition.

Additional fees may apply for clinical therapy services. Any miscellaneous fees will be billed by monthly statements and can be paid monthly by check. This may include late pick-up fees and/or being charged for not following the check-in / check-out policy.

Tuition Program Rate Structure:

<b>Infant Classrooms</b>	<b>Weekly Rate</b>
5 Day (Preference given to full-time)	\$260
3 Day (MWF)	\$193
2 Day (TTH)	\$136
<b>Toddler &amp; Preschool Classrooms</b>	<b>Weekly Rate</b>
5 Day (Preference given to full-time)	\$240
3 Day (MWF)	\$182
2 Day (TTH)	\$136

*Each additional sibling will receive a 10% discount off of the oldest child's tuition. This only applies to children who are full-time status.*

There is a \$10 late fee charge for pickup after 5:30 p.m. and an additional \$10 charge for every 10 minute period thereafter. Also, please be sure to check your child in and out of Procure. There could be a potential charge each time your child has to be checked out by an administrator. Any billing questions should be directed to the Administrative Coordinator at 648-1760.

Food Services/Pricing Program

Food Service fees are a part of the tuition for private pay children. Please see the Child Nutrition Services section of this handbook for more information

Inclement Weather

At times the ELC may close due to the threat of severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances. Our goal is to keep children and staff safe at all times. Families will be notified immediately of these decisions through School Cast and/or Procure.

#### Extended Leaves

In the event of the need for an extended leave, please contact the Siskin Early Learning Center Director to discuss options.

#### Past Due Accounts

If a child's account becomes more than 2 weeks past due, services will be discontinued until the balance is paid in full.

#### Parent Conduct Policy

We always welcome positive and constructive communication and embrace the opportunity to work with our families to solve everyday problems. Parents should feel comfortable speaking with their child's teacher when they have concerns or questions about the Siskin Early Learning Centers. Although, at times we recognize that the Center Manager or Director of Siskin Early Learning Centers needs to be involved. While we realize each parent's need to express their concerns and feelings, parents are not permitted to yell, threaten, curse at staff (whether on the phone or in person) or exhibit any disparaging action on center premises. Parents who exhibit any disparaging behavior including, but not limited to, being disrespectful, threatening, or harmful toward staff, other parents, or children in the program whether in person, in writing, or even on social media will not be permitted to return to our building. These kinds of behavior will result in the immediate withdrawal of the individual's child(ren) from the program. No further review or consideration will be given in such cases.

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## HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

### Health Requirements

Before admission to Siskin Early Learning Centers, all children are required to submit the following:

- Physical examination and current immunization record on Tennessee Child Care Record as required by Tennessee state law or a statement from the healthcare provider if immunizations are delayed. Information must be current within the last three months. For immunization exemptions please see the Center Manager.
- Immunization records from outside Tennessee must be transferred onto the Tennessee Child Care Record. Please visit the Hamilton County Health Department at 921 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street or call 209-8050 for more information.
- Health history completed by the family at the time of registration.

Health records required prior to each subsequent school year include:

- Current immunization record on Tennessee Child Care Record as required by Tennessee state law or a statement from the healthcare provider if immunizations are delayed.

- Updated History information

A form is needed listing the name of your physician, who to contact in case of an emergency, who may pick up your child and any medical conditions of the child which may require specific attention.

To provide the optimal program for your child, please inform the school of any changes in medication or health conditions as they occur. Please let us know if you have questions or need assistance with your child's health plan.

#### Insurance

Siskin Early Learning Center does not provide insurance coverage for children who may be injured during center activities. Insurance for such injuries is the responsibility of parents.

#### Illness

Bringing a sick child to the center exposes him/her to other secondary illnesses, exposes the staff and other children to illnesses and can be life threatening to our children with weak immune systems. Please see our COVID policy regarding quarantine which is another document.

Frequent minor illnesses are common in a center with young children. Your child should remain at home for their health and safety as well as the health and safety of their classmates if he/she exhibits:

- a fever of 100 degrees or more (within the last 24 hours)
- two or more unexplained episodes of diarrhea or vomiting (within the last 24 hours)
- exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet trained children if the diarrhea is causing "accidents."
- unexplained discharge from eyes and/or ears
- unexplained rash and/or quickly spreading rash
- mouth sores with drooling that the child cannot control unless the child's doctor states the child is noninfectious
  
- skin sores that are weeping fluid and on exposed body surface that cannot be covered with a waterproof dressing and/or are painful with standard care of child.
- difficulty or rapid breathing
- the child's illness prevents him/her participating comfortably in activities as determined by staff members (tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, cranky, or excessive whining)
- illness resulting in a need for care that is greater than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children (tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, cranky or excessive whining)

When a child becomes ill at school, parents will be contacted and expected to take the child home as soon as possible. We do not have staff that can give children the one-on-one care needed when they are ill. Please make sure to update any phone changes to the center office regarding where the parent or designated other may be reached in case of emergency situations. When appropriate, a child who is waiting on his/her parent for pickup will be secluded with adult supervision from the other children.

Children with fever of 100 degrees or more should remain at home for their health and safety as well as the health and safety of others. **They are not able to return to school the next day.** They

must be without fever reducing medicines for 24 hours. Please be mindful that we serve children with complex medical needs and weak immune systems.

We do not have sufficient staff to keep a child indoors. If a child is well enough to come to the center, they should be well enough to play outside.

Please notify the center if your child is diagnosed with chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, hepatitis, herpes (fever blisters, etc.), infectious diarrhea, whooping cough, shigella or other diseases so that we may notify other families.

We work to prevent the spread of communicable diseases by practicing careful sanitation. Children and staff wash hands before and after toileting, after sneezing or coughing, after outdoor time, before meals and many other times during the day. Toys are sanitized daily. We ask that when your child arrives at the center they go to the bathroom to wash hands as a means to prevent the spread of infections. Each child only uses his or her own bedding and mat.

If your child has an allergy please obtain an Eating and Feeding Evaluation form to be completed by the doctor indicating the type of allergy, symptoms, foods to be avoided and anything else that the child should not be exposed to. For severe life-threatening allergies an "emergency care plan" will be developed and posted.

#### Medications

The Federal Drug and Agricultural Department recommends that no over-the-counter medicine (Dimetapp, Robitussin, Triaminic, Tylenol cold and other cold medications) be given to children under the age of two. Due to this recommendation we will not be able to administer any medication for this age group without a doctor's order.

Medication from a doctor should be in the original prescription bottle with the child's name on the bottle and dosage to be given.

Parents should complete a medication form for all prescription medications. Medication must be removed from the child's bag upon arrival and given to an admin staff only.

We will not dispense any fever reducing medicine. Tylenol will not be given simply as a fever reducer. Children with fever of 100 degrees or more should remain at home for their health and safety as well as the health and safety of others. They are not able to return to school the next day. They will be able to return when they have been fever free without fever reducing medicines.

Written parental permission is needed for lotions, Chap Stick, diaper ointment and sunscreen. Please see your child's teacher in order for these to be administered to your child.

Nut Free Environment: Siskin Early Learning Center is a nut free environment due to the increasing number of children with severe nut allergies.

Our classroom staff are not allowed to remove ticks and/or splinters. They are not allowed to remove foreign objects/items from a child's ears, teeth or nose. Staff will call the parent and the parent may come and remove the item, tick, splinter, etc. or wait until the child gets home.

#### Toilet Training Procedure

Toilet training shall never be started until a child has been in the program long enough to feel comfortable. Children will not be forced to sit on the toilet for any length of time. We will consider beginning the toileting training process when there are indications that the child is developmentally ready. We have a set of readiness questions that both caregivers and parents use to determine when a child is ready to begin toilet training. These questions will be applied to individual situations, and families and center staff will come to mutual agreement regarding a child's readiness to be trained. Toilet training at our center should be a non-stressful experience that is appropriate for each child's individual development and involves the child, parents and caregivers. We will work with parents and caregivers to ensure that toilet training is consistent between home and the center. We will use written materials and conferences to establish a mutually agreeable plan before a child actually begins the process. Parents/caregivers and school staff will maintain communication about progress and will share any concerns or questions they have.

Our potties are child size and we have the ability to accommodate specific individual needs. Potty chairs or potty seats brought from home may not be used.

### Safety

All visitors must sign in and out with the Front Desk and obtain a visitor's badge. This procedure includes families of children unless they are dropping off or picking up a child. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children at arrival and pickup each day in the hallways and parking lots. Please carry your child or hold your child's hand when entering and exiting the building and in the parking lot. Children may not be left in the car while another child is being dropped off or picked up. Please do not leave valuables visible in your car. Also turn off your car and remember to lock doors.

### Smoking

Siskin Early Learning Centers are a smoke-free campus. This policy includes all building areas, entrances, traffic circle and the parking lot.

### Emergency and Courtesy Notification System

Siskin Children's Institute uses the SchoolCast alert system to ensure we communicate with parents, other caregivers and staff as quickly and efficiently as possible in the event of an emergency or another event of high importance.

SchoolCast is an online notification system that sends text messages, e-mails and prerecorded phone calls within minutes of an emergency. We use SchoolCast primarily to alert you of time-sensitive notices (for example, closing early due to snow). The system also can be used to alert you of "courtesy" notices like reminders about scheduled holiday closings or field trips.

The information you provide us is safe, and it will not be shared outside Siskin Children's Institute.

For the system to be as effective as possible, we need you to keep your contact information up to date in the SchoolCast system. When you register your child at our learning centers, the information you provide will be entered into the SchoolCast system.

If you have questions about SchoolCast, please do not hesitate to contact the Center Manager.

### Emergency Contact Information

Please notify the center office if any of your contact numbers or the names and numbers of those you authorize to pick up your child change throughout the year.

### Emergency Reunification Procedure

In the event of an emergency, the Institute staff will follow the appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of all children as outlined in our program policy and procedures. Children may not be dropped off or picked up during an emergency drill or an actual emergency. In the event an off-site evacuation becomes necessary for the safety of children and staff, the following reunification procedure will be followed:

- Children and staff, depending on the nature of the emergency and the recommendations of community emergency agencies, we may relocate to our assigned emergency reunification site. (Siskin ELC at Carter Street will move to Marriott Convention Center & Little Miss Mag will move to The Edwin Hotel)
- Early Learning Centers may furnish information to major television and radio stations for announcements that give the necessity for and location of an emergency pickup of your child. Also, the staff will notify parents and other listed contacts in your child’s record. Whenever possible, SchoolCast will be utilized. It is important that we always have current information.
- In addition, there will be signs on the doors or around the parking lot of Siskin Early Learning Centers giving directions to the emergency reunification site. If possible, a center staff member will remain on site to also give directions.
- When you reach the reunification location, there will be signs and staff to direct you to the proper place to pick up your child. Photo identification will be required. Please be sure that you, or the person picking up your child, bring this identification.
- To insure the safety of the children and staff please pick up your children as soon as possible after notification.

Be assured that your child’s safety will be our primary concern at all times during this type of event. If you would like additional information about the Early Learning Center’s Health and Safety policies and procedures, contact the Center Manager of your center. Emergency drills are completed in accordance with regulations.

### Child Abuse/Neglect

#### Response to Suspected/Alleged Abuse and Neglect

- A. According to Tennessee law, any person who has knowledge of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child has been abused must report it to local law enforcement authorities or the Department of Children’s Services.
- B. Each state designates individuals, typically by professional group, who are mandated by law to report child maltreatment. Mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect, according to Tennessee state statutes, include all citizens. Professionals included are health and mental health care professionals, social work professionals, education/child care professionals, law enforcement professionals, judges, etc. Other citizens include neighbors, relatives, friends, and any other person.
- C. The “reason to suspect” means that indicators of abuse have been seen, the child has disclosed abuse, or there is a “gut” feeling that something may not be right. It does not mean that there is certainty that abuse has occurred.

Reporting abuse, or suspected abuse, is actually a request for professionals to investigate further.

- D. According to Tennessee Code Annotated, 37-1-102(b) (1), (12), (21), “Abuse” exists when a person under the age of 18 is suffering from, has sustained, or may be in immediate danger of suffering from or sustaining a wound, injury, disability or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, neglect, or other actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian, or caretaker.
- E. At Siskin Early Learning Center, in accordance with Tennessee state law, suspected cases of child abuse or neglect shall be immediately reported by any person to local law enforcement or the Department of Children’s Services. Any staff member may make a confidential report but is encouraged to notify the Director of the Early Learning Center that a report has been filed.
- F. Any citizen is required by law to cooperate with the Department of Children’s Services (DCS), law enforcement, and other investigators regarding cases of abuse and/or neglect.
  - 1. As required for any citizen, Siskin Early Learning Center staff shall cooperate with investigations of child abuse and/or neglect by providing access to the records of children and staff and by allowing investigators to interview children and staff.
  - 2. Siskin Early Learning Center staff shall protect the child by requiring the investigator to provide identification and by knowing who is entitled to custody of the child.
  - 3. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) shall be notified before a child leaves the premises except in emergency circumstances, or as follows:
    - a) An investigator may take a child off the premises of the agency if he/she has obtained custody of the child through voluntary placement agreement with the parent, through court order, or through emergency assumption of custody without parental permission, or
    - b) if the child’s parent(s)/legal guardian(s) is present and approves, or
    - c) In conjunction with investigative procedures under the child abuse laws.
- G. Failure to cooperate for children in the case of an approved child care agency is, by itself, grounds for suspension, denial or revocation of the agency’s license. Interference with a DCS investigation by the child care provider may result in criminal charges.
- H. The Siskin Early Learning Center policy promotes developmentally appropriate, positive behavior supports and prohibits the use of seclusion, corporal punishment, verbal, physical, or mental abuse. Punishment that is shaming, humiliating, frightening, or injurious to children shall not be used.
- I. The following provisions apply to alleged instances of abuse or neglect by staff:
  - 1. Alleged/suspected instances of staff abuse and/or neglect are to be reported immediately to the Director of the Early Learning Center.

2. The Director is responsible for relaying the details of the alleged incident directly to the Human Resources Manager and President of the Institute.
3. In accordance with state laws, alleged instances of abuse and/or neglect by staff are also immediately reported to local law enforcement by the Director.
4. If allegations of abuse and/or neglect in the Siskin Early Learning Center are sustained, disciplinary action will be taken as described in the Institute's Personnel Policies.

For more information about child abuse and/or neglect, call or visit the following resources:

- Siskin Children's Institute Resource Library
- Children's Advocacy Center, 419 Market Street, Chattanooga, TN 37402. Phone: (423) 266-6918
- The Child Abuse Hotline in your area. Hamilton County: 1-855-209-4226.
- The Department of Children's Services, Cordell Hull Building, 7th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243-0290. Phone: (615) 741-9701.
- Local law enforcement.
- National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, [nccanch@calib.com](mailto:nccanch@calib.com), 1-800-FYI-3366.
- Childcare Complaint Hotline: 800-462-8261

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## DROP-OFF AND PICKUP

The safety of your child while at the centers are a big responsibility; therefore, we need to make you aware of safety practices in the parking area and driveways surrounding the centers. THE SPEED LIMIT IS 5 MILES PER HOUR. Please observe this limit. Please park in designated parking areas or spots for parents.

Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children at arrival and pickup each day in the hallways and parking lots. Please carry your child or hold your child's hand when entering and exiting the building and in the parking lot. Children may not be left in the car while another child is being dropped off or picked up. Please do not leave valuables visible in your car while unattended.

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## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Siskin Early Learning Centers believe that the family is a child's first teacher and that collaboration, respect, and family involvement in the team approach to early education are paramount. Research has shown a clear connection between child achievement and family involvement. Therefore, parents are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of their child's program.

There are many opportunities throughout the year to be involved. Opportunities will be shared in the newsletter, bulletin boards, and classroom correspondence. Please discuss with your child's teacher ways that you can be involved in the classroom. If you have a special skill that you would like to share with the center or classroom please let your child's teacher know. COVID-19 precautions may be taken at times during the year when there is an increased risk.

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## CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

Eating food with children is as important as any other time of day in a child's life. Children learn lifelong habits and develop relationships with food and their bodies during meal times. It is our goal that meals will be relaxed and conversational times for children and staff to visit and enjoy their food. We will encourage children to try their food but not insist that children eat everything. Foods cannot be withheld for any reason.

The Siskin Early Learning Centers participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a Federal entitlement program administered by the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Child nutrition and mealtime learning are important components of the educational programming at Siskin Early Learning Center, and this program meets the developmental requirements of young children by serving foods that are developmentally appropriate, have high nutritional value, promote good health and reinforce the development of lifelong healthy eating habits. The meal program offers children the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of foods and share this experience with their peers.

Families who are interested in seeing if they meet the criteria for free and reduced meals can complete an income eligibility application to determine eligibility. All participants are assured confidentiality as it relates to income eligibility. Tuition adjustments are available for families who qualify for free and reduced meals. Please speak to the Administrative Coordinator for your site.

CACFP meal program regulations allow substitutions of a required meal component if children are unable, because of medical or other special dietary needs, to consume or need a modification for food(s). An Eating and Feeding Evaluation Form must be completed by a physician yearly for diet restrictions and modifications. The Nutrition Department will provide an appropriate substitute meeting the nutritional guidelines of the CACFP meal components. A parent may choose not to participate in the meal program, however; tuition does not change. Staff will not cook or heat food sent to the center for children who do not participate in the meal program. Families of children who arrive after meals have been finished may be asked to remain with their child while they eat. The USDA food program is available to all children regardless of race, color, handicap, sex or national origin. Menus will be provided to families each month in which will communicate food and drink being provided as well as the components and measurements.

\*See the Siskin Early Learning Center website ([siskin.org](http://siskin.org)) under the For Parents link for more information on the CACFP Infant Meal Program. For further information about CACFP, contact the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Child and Adult Care Services, at (615) 313-4749.

## CIVIL RIGHTS/TITLE VI COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Anyone alleging racial/ethnic discrimination against Siskin Children’s Institute personnel or agency admission policies may file a complaint with the facility’s local Civil Rights/Title VI Coordinator or directly with the appropriate state agency which exercises quality assurance control over the agency’s program. Complaints may also be filed with the Tennessee Human Rights Commission (state level); the Regional Office for Civil Rights; and/or the Department of Justice (federal level). A complaint may be filed at both the state and the federal levels, separately or concurrently, at any time during the process.

Any person believing they have been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI requirements may file a written complaint with Siskin Children’s Institute Civil Rights/Title VI Coordinator. Federal law requires complaints be filed within 180 calendar days of the last alleged incident. A letter will be mailed to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the complaint within five (5) working days.

A fact-finding investigation will be conducted within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the complaint. The Civil Rights/Title VI Coordinator is responsible for this initial investigation.

Within five (5) days of completion of the investigation, a report will be given to the Director of School Operations. If the report includes a finding of violation of Title VI, the report will include proposed remedial action to be taken. Within five (5) calendar days after this report, the written findings will be given to the complainant. At this time the complainant will also be informed of their right to appeal to the state or federal level if there is a disagreement with investigation findings or the proposed remedial action.

It is the Tennessee Department of Education’s policy to provide an environment free of discrimination and harassment of an individual because of that person’s race, color, national origin, age (older than 40), sex, pregnancy, religion, creed, disability or any other category protected by state and/or federal law. If you feel your rights have been violated please contact:

Vickey Coleman, Ph.D  
Title VI Compliance Director  
710 James Robertson Parkway, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243-0383  
901-356-6324  
[Vickey.Coleman@tn.gov](mailto:Vickey.Coleman@tn.gov)

Jeaninne Houck, CFO  
Civil Rights/Title VI Coordinator  
Siskin Children’s Institute  
423-648-1720  
[Jeaninne.houck@siskin.org](mailto:Jeaninne.houck@siskin.org)

## FAMILY CONFIDENTIALITY

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student records. According to FERPA:

- Parents have the right to review student records at any time.
- Parents have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be incorrect or misleading.
- Siskin Early Learning Centers must have written permission to release any information from a child's record.

Our staff operates under a strict confidentiality philosophy and does not share any information about a child unless it is in the context of a professional relationship that involves people working directly with the child.

As a parent of a child in our Early Learning Centers, it is important that you understand and comply with our confidentiality policies. Parents who volunteer or visit the classrooms should be aware of the restrictions placed on our staff regarding confidentiality. We realize no one intends to breach confidentiality guidelines, and better education about what is prohibited is the first step in ensuring we honor the confidentiality of everyone. For example:

It is not appropriate to:

- Ask someone if a child has a disability.
- Take photographs or videos of children in the classroom, on the playground, etc. (Note: Understandably, this may occur on occasion in birthday photos, etc., but parents are expected to limit exposure of children besides their own).
- Post photos of children other than your own on ANY public medium (Facebook, other social media, personal website, via e-mail, etc.).
- Identify a child who receives a free or reduced lunch through the federal USDA program.

Please be diligent in adhering to these policies. Thank you for helping us protect the rights of children and families.

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## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Grievance procedures are a systematic method of resolving concerns, complaints or differences of opinion that may develop regarding a child's program while enrolled in one of our centers. Siskin Early Learning Centers subscribe to the mandate that parents participate completely in the development of an appropriate program for their child. The center is also aware that parents may, at times, have questions, concerns or opinions about their child's program that may result in disagreement. If such a situation arises, the following internal steps

will be followed so that parents will have an opportunity to voice their concerns. All complaints or concerns should be handled at the immediate point of dissent as an initial attempt at resolution. However, if this cannot be accomplished to the parents, teachers or other professional's satisfaction, a grievance may be written by the person submitting the complaint and the following steps should be taken:

- If the parent, teacher or other Admin cannot resolve the question, concern or complaint, a meeting should be convened with the Early Learning Center Director within one (1) week. Following the meeting, a decision should be given in writing within one (1) week.
- If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, an appointment with an impartial third party shall be made. In addition, the person filing the grievance may be given the agency names and numbers below to contact to pursue the issue outside of the Institute.

To report suspected licensing violations or possible illegal childcare operations, call the Childcare Complaint Hotline at 1-877-542-2873. Questions or concerns regarding USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program should be directed to the USDA at (800) 424-9121.

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#### RIGHT TO REVIEW ALL EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

Your child's records are confidential and protected and may only be reviewed by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and other authorized persons, such as program personnel and trainees, contract agencies, or state/federal representatives. Additional representatives chosen by the parent(s)/ legal guardian(s) may also review the record if written permission is provided. Copies of any material pertaining to your child will be made available to you upon request. One copy of the record must be provided to parents free of charge.

The center may presume that you or a representative of your choice have authority to inspect and review records relating to your child unless the center has evidence that you are not legally entitled to represent your child's educational interests because of separation, divorce, or other reason.

When any educational record contains information on your child and other children, you may only review the information related to your child.

Child files are kept for one year after the child is no longer enrolled in the program. After one year the records are destroyed.

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#### ADVOCACY SERVICES

The Arc of Hamilton County serves individuals with developmental disabilities. Services include advocacy, specific disability information and independent support coordination for Hamilton County and ten surrounding counties. Phone: (423) 624-6887 Online: [www.thearchc.org](http://www.thearchc.org)

Children's Advocacy Center is an agency that coordinates efforts to assist abused children. The CAC offers services to victims and their families with a supportive response of counseling about sexual abuse and advocacy on behalf of the family. Other services include medical exams for child abuse victims, extended assessments, community education for both professionals and general community, prevention education program for children ages 4 to 18, and coordination of multidisciplinary team responsible for intervention and services to abused children. Phone: (423) 266-6918 Online: [www.cachc.org](http://www.cachc.org)

Support & Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP) provides information, support and training to parents of children with disabilities throughout Tennessee to help them to be effective partners with professionals to plan appropriate educational programs for their children.

If you would like other resources, please do not hesitate to your center's manager to assist in connecting you with more resources within Siskin Children's Institute or within the community.

#### Early Learning Center Phone Numbers

Siskin Early Learning Center (Carter Street)	423-640-1760
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Siskin at Little Miss Mag	423-266-5286
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Please visit [www.siskin.org](http://www.siskin.org) for more information