

# Guilford Center for Children

## An Early Education Program



### 2013-2014 Parent Handbook

Guilford Center for Children, Inc.

47 Stone House Lane

Guilford, CT 06437

203-453-8050

[a.hillier@guilfordcenterforchildren.com](mailto:a.hillier@guilfordcenterforchildren.com)

[www.guilforddaycare.com](http://www.guilforddaycare.com)

## **A LITTLE HISTORY AND A BRAND NEW CENTER!**

Guilford Center for Children was started in 1971 by a group of Guilford residents concerned that children were being left home alone or under the supervision of siblings while parents were at work. We operated in the building near the library for 39 years, with renovation work and the addition of some square footage in 1989.

For the past 15+ years we have maintained an extremely long waiting list and were delighted to move into our lovely new center at 47 Stone House Lane in 2010, where we have the additional space to accommodate more families.

The Town of Guilford has been extremely supportive of the center since its inception, and continued that support by leasing us the land and barns we renovated into the current center. It was our goal to preserve the character of the barns as an acknowledgement of Guilford's agricultural past. Funds for the playground were raised in early 2011, and the playground was dedicated in May 2011. The second floor opened in January 2012 and contains a children's kitchen, an atelier, and a very large multipurpose space, in addition to offices.

We have been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children since 1995, which means that our staff and program have demonstrated the highest degree of quality. We are a registered non-profit organization and are governed by a Board of Directors. Board Meetings take place on the third Thursday of every month and are open to the public.

We look forward to a wonderful future of providing quality early care and education to some of Guilford's youngest residents.



**We receive funding from the Guilford Community Fund and from the Human Services Council of the Town of Guilford**



**We are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young  
Children**

### **Mission Statement**

*The Guilford Center for Children, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate environment for young children who need out-of-home care during the day.*

### **Philosophy**

Guilford Center for Children, Inc. , Early Education Center recognizes the importance of a safe, positive, nurturing, inclusive, and consistent atmosphere as the foundation for the social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development of each child. A curriculum that supports the standards set forth in The Connecticut Framework, Preschool Curricular Goals and Benchmarks is supported. The importance of fostering the development of self-awareness, self-expression, independence, and appropriate conflict resolution skills in each child is endorsed. The Guilford Center for Children further acknowledges that each child's family is of primary importance. We acknowledge that open and supportive relationships with these families are essential.

### **Goals**

Maintain a licensed high-quality program so parents may continue employment.  
Maintain a balance between families who need the sliding scale and those who do not.  
Maintain accreditation by NAEYC  
Maintain open and supportive relationships with each child's family  
Work together to establish goals for each child  
Communicate progress of each child to his/her family  
Support curriculum approach that supports The Connecticut Framework  
Provide a program that fosters growth in all areas of development: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language  
Provide a safe, positive, nurturing, responsive and consistent atmosphere  
Provide for health and nutrition of each child  
Provide referrals to appropriate local agencies whenever necessary  
Support positive conflict resolution  
Support appropriate expression of feelings and frustrations  
Model appropriate ways of listening, reacting, and setting limits for young children  
Meet individual needs of each child  
Encourage staff members' continued professional growth  
Educate the public about the need for and traits of quality early childhood programs  
Maintain an ADA-compliant facility and program.

**We are accredited by the  
National Association for the Education of Young Children**



Dear Families,

Thank you for choosing us to care for your children!

We are thrilled to welcome you and your child to Guilford Center for Children. We are a professionally-staffed early education center serving children from three through five years of age. We are open year round from 7:15 AM to 5:30 PM.

Our program strives to provide quality opportunities for the social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development of each child in a safe, positive, nurturing, and consistent atmosphere that includes language arts, gross and fine motor activities, creative arts, science, cooking, music, movement, Spanish and multicultural awareness, and much time for free play. Ongoing assessments help us plan our curriculum and individual and small group time with your child. We encourage each child in the development of conflict resolution skills and in the appropriate expression of feelings and frustrations. Children moving on to Kindergarten have had the opportunity to develop those skills and abilities which are necessary for a successful transition to Kindergarten.

We are thrilled to be part of the wonderful Guilford community and frequently walk to places around our town. We also enjoy field trips to some more distant locations in the community. We firmly believe in the home and school collaboration as an integral part of our program. We have set aside time for frequent interactions with parents and families. In addition, parents and families are welcome to visit the Center at any time. Formal parent/teacher conferences take place twice a year and informal discussions between staff and parents take place on an ongoing basis. We keep parents informed about daily activities, policy changes, and our everyday life at the Center through daily message boards, daily emails, our monthly newsletter, and through information put onto "Parent Shelves."

We are looking forward to sharing this year with you and your child!

Sincerely,

The GCC Staff

## **ABOUT OUR EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

### **ENROLLMENT**

Children who enroll at the Center must need care because their parents are working or searching for work. If a parent becomes unemployed, we will allow the child to stay for six weeks while the parent seeks employment. Children of Guilford residents are given priority. We then enroll children whose parents work in Guilford and then those who live along the shoreline.

The one-time registration fee of \$60 must be paid at the time of enrollment. In addition, the following paper work must be in place before attendance: application, current health form, income verification if applicable, permission slips, emergency contact and authorized pick-up forms, the first week's deposit, insurance information and the eligibility application for the food program. This information must be updated annually.

Guilford Center for Children, Inc. does not discriminate against any child or family based on race, color, religious creed, civil union status, national origin, ancestry, sex orientation, sex, age, and/or disability.

### **CONTRACT YEAR**

As we are a year round program, the contract signed for a child's care goes from late August (or the date of enrollment if starting at a time other than the beginning of the "school year") until approximately the end of the third full week of the following August. The weekly fee for tuition is due each week except the week at holiday time that the Center is closed. The family's "Unpaid Days" may also be used during this time.

Each spring, parents will be asked about plans for summer enrollment. At this time, parents may opt to reduce the number of days their child attends during the "summer weeks." Our "summer weeks" are determined each spring and generally are the Monday after our Center's "graduation in June until approximately the end of the third full week in August. If a parent opts to withdraw his/her child from the program entirely during the summer, the weekly tuition for these weeks will still be due. If a parent opts to withdraw his/her child from the program entirely during the summer and does not make the payments for these weeks in full, the child will be removed from the enrollment list and will be placed on the waiting list for the following school year. Should a spot for the upcoming school year become available, the \$60 registration fee will have to be paid again.

### **DISCOUNT FOR ADDITIONAL CHILDREN**

It is the policy of Guilford Center for Children, Inc., Early Education Program that the first child from a family attending the Center be charged the scheduled rate as determined by the Center for the family's income and size. The second child and any subsequent children from the same family attending the Center at the same time will pay 85% of the first child's fee. Discount does not apply to children on the sliding fee scale. Registration fees will not be discounted.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION**

The Center is open from 7:15 AM until 5:30 PM year round, except as noted below.

### **HOLIDAYS**

The Center is closed for one week in August, five non-holiday days in December at holiday time, and the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Presidents' Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after
- Christmas

### **WEEKLY FEES**

Weekly fees for income-eligible families are set by the state and based on family income and size. Our Board of Directors sets competitive fees for other families. Any increase in these fees most commonly takes place at the beginning of a new contract year (usually late August).

Fees are due during the week in which care is given. Fees paid late will be assessed a \$10 Late Payment fee. Inasmuch as your weekly fee is the same each week unless you choose to use an "Unpaid Day" for an absence, we do NOT bill you. Bills are given

only for accounts in arrears. If you pay for more than one week at a time, you must pay for future weeks, not past weeks. If an account is overdue by two weeks, the child will not be allowed to attend until the account is paid. Families in state-subsidized slots must report any change of income to the Director as these changes occur. Fee charges will be redetermined at least annually.

A fee box for checks is on the Director's desk in the office. We accept payment in the form of personal checks, bank checks, and cash. If you are paying by cash, please put the cash in a labeled envelope and hand it to a staff member. You may opt to have your bank automatically mail payments to us weekly. If you are using an "Unpaid Day(s)" (see below), please mark your check or envelope with the date(s) of these days.

### **UNPAID DAYS**

Full-time children may take a credit for 5 days each contract year (August - August) for which they are scheduled to attend but do not. Families who begin in June, July, or early August are not eligible for Unpaid Days until the beginning of the new "school year." The number of Unpaid Days is prorated according to the number of days per week that your child is enrolled. Credit may be taken for snow days, illness, holidays, or vacation. Except for credit for these Unpaid Days, you must pay your regular weekly fee each week except for the week in August and the five "regular" days during the December holiday time that the Center is closed.

### **MORNING ARRIVAL**

To enable us to keep accurate attendance records for the state, upon arrival an adult must sign each child in. We ask that all children arrive by **9:20 AM**. This allows time to play before Large Group time begins. If you arrive after the morning's scheduled activities begin, you will have to supervise your child on the blue bench in the entryway until Large Group time is over.

If your child arrives after 10:10 AM, he/she will not be allowed to stay for the day unless he/she has had to keep an appointment and you have notified us ahead of time that your child will be late.

### **DEPARTURES**

You must sign your child out at the end of the day with your full name and the time and notify a staff member of your departure.

*Please note that as long as the child's parent is on the Guilford Center for Children premises, the parent is responsible for the child.*



### **AUTHORIZED PICK-UP LIST**

At the time of enrollment, you will be asked to complete and sign an Authorized Pick-Up List form, naming those people to whom we may release your child.

If you want to give permission on a specific date for your child to leave with someone not on the list, please send in written permission. Telephone requests to release your child to someone for whom we do not have written permission will not be honored.

### **LATE PICK UP CHARGES**

If your child is picked up after our 5:30 PM closing time, a Late Pick-Up fee of \$10 for each 15 minutes or part thereof will be assessed. The Late Pick-Up fee will increase to \$25 for each 15 minutes or part thereof after you have been assessed the \$10 fee twice in a contract year. A Late Pick-Up Slip will have to be signed in addition to signing your child out. We appreciate your consideration in respecting the fact that staff members have family obligations at the end of the day. If your child is "reluctant leaver" please allow time for departure routines by arriving prior to 5:30 PM for pick-up.

### **TOILET TRAINING**

All children attending the Center ***MUST*** be toilet trained before enrollment. Children need to be independent about using the bathroom. They must be independent about handling their own clothing at bathroom time, as much as is age-appropriate. If a child demonstrates over a period of time that he/she is not yet toilet trained and independent about using the bathroom, we will ask that he/she takes a two-week "toilet training leave." You may use "Unpaid Days" for this purpose if you wish. Upon return, if there continues to be a problem, we will not be able to keep your child enrolled at the Center.

### **HEALTH**

CT Department of Public Health regulations require that your child have a physical examination each year, and that the Center has a health form on file to verify this.

The Director will notify you when your child's physical must be updated. Your child's continued attendance is contingent upon keeping the health records current.

Your child's health is a matter of major concern to all of us. One of the most serious challenges facing group care situations for young children is preventing illness. Our efforts toward protecting your child as well as others from contagious illnesses can

sometimes be an inconvenience for parents, but we trust that you will understand that we have strictly enforced standards regarding the exclusion of ill children. We need your cooperation for this.

If your child has a fever of over 101 degrees and/or other symptoms and is unable to keep up with the daily activities, we will contact you so that you may pick your child up from the Center. If we are unable to reach a parent, we will call one of your two Emergency Contacts. Your child will be placed in isolation under a staff member's supervision. The ill child must be removed immediately.

Please keep your child home if he/she has a cough that is excessive or a cold with excessive discharge from the nose or eyes. In addition, please note the guidelines for the following common childhood illnesses:

**Diarrhea/vomiting:** Will be sent home immediately after two unexplained episodes; must be kept out for 12 hours after the last episode.

**Conjunctivitis:** Must remain out for 24 hours after the first dose of medication has been given;

**Ear Infection:** Must remain out until all excessive cold symptoms have left and/or must be fever-free for 24 hours

**Head Lice:** Must remain out until medicated shampoo has been administered and **all nits** have been removed

**Fever:** Must remain out for 24 hours after a fever of over 101 degrees has disappeared without the use of medication for fever reduction

**Strep:** Must remain out for 24 hours after the first dose of medication has been administered

### **MEDICATION**

Trained staff members will administer medication with the proper documentation from your child's physician and on the approved forms and with your signature. Medications must be in their original containers and have a prescription label attached.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Matters of confidentiality are serious to everyone at the Center. Information about children/families obtained by any staff member as a result of employment will be kept confidential at all times.

### **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR POLICY**

If a child exhibits harmful and/or inappropriate behavior, the staff will speak with the child. If talking alone does not yield the desired results, we use the "1-2-3 Magic" system, which gives the child three chances before a short "time out" takes place. The "time out" will be followed by a short discussion to make sure the child understands the reason for the "time out." If concerning behavior persists over a period of time, parent(s) will be contacted. Staff and parent(s) will agree on a plan which addresses the elimination of the undesired behavior and the plan will be implemented. Parent(s) must be willing to utilize outside resources if the Director so requests. If the behavior persists without progress after the plan has been implemented, the child will be dismissed. If the plan is in place but not being followed through by parent(s), the child will be dismissed. If the child does not have the control to allow for the time necessary to implement the above steps, the child will be dismissed after a two-week trial period.

A child in "time out" will always be in view of a staff member or members. "Time outs" will be brief.

### **VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Each family is required to volunteer a minimum of seven (7) hours during each program year for fund raisers, house and grounds projects, membership on the Board of Directors, or activities for which we have sign-up sheets.

### **FIRE DRILLS**

We conduct fire drills on a regular schedule. All children are escorted from the Center to the dispersal area by the fence around the playground. Attendance is taken to ensure all children are present.

### **EMERGENCY DISMISSAL**

Should it ever become necessary to evacuate the Center, we will walk to the Community Center and call you or one of your two Emergency Contacts to pick your child up from there.

### **STORM DAYS**

If the Center will not open because of seriously inclement weather, an announcement will be made on Channel 8. Weather-related closings will also be posted in the Attention Box of the home page of our website. If we must close early because of the weather, we will call you or an Emergency Contact and request that your child be picked up by a specific time.

## **CLEANLINESS**

We have a cleaning service that does a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of the Center each evening. In addition, floors are swept after lunch, and tables are cleaned after each meal. Each child is assigned to his/her own cot and cubby, and sheets are laundered weekly.

## **CLOTHING**

Each child must have two sets of extra clothing (appropriate for the time of year) in his/her cubby to start each day. Please label all clothing. Be sure to check your child's cubby for any clothing needing laundering.

Provide simple clothing, free of complicated fasteners. Send your child in play clothes as we use messy art materials, sit in the sandbox, and play hard! Please make sure your child has outer clothing in keeping with the weather and time of year. In the winter, children need warm jackets or snowsuits, as well as boots, mittens, and hats.

During the rest of the year, please make sure a warm jacket or sweatshirt and long pants are available for the days that turn cold.

We ask that children limit their footwear to sneakers as they provide the best traction on our floors, blacktop, and outdoor equipment. Please also have your child wear socks each day or have them available. We do not let the children wear open-toed sandals, Crocs, or flip-flops.

## **OUTSIDE PLAY**

We play outside **every** day unless it is raining or extremely cold or there is a high heat index. The amount of time spent outside may decrease if it is very hot or very cold, but outside play is a part of our program. If your child is not well enough to play outside, please keep your child at home for the day.

## **MEALS AND SNACKS**

The importance of good nutrition is emphasized by our healthy meals and snacks. Our cook follows the FDA guidelines when planning menus. The current week's menu is always posted on the front hall bulletin board and on our website. In addition, menus are sent home so you can be aware of what we are serving each day.

*\*\*If you are sending something from home, please label it with your child's name and the date. Also, if you send a lunch from home, please limit dessert to fruit and omit such things as potato chips.*

We cannot heat items sent from home unless you have made prior arrangements with the cook.

### **REST TIME**

After lunch every day, the children have a quiet time. Each child will need a blanket to be used during this rest period. Label it well and take it home for laundering periodically. Some children like to use a small pillow and nap with a stuffed animal. Sheets are provided by the Center.

Children who do not fall asleep may get up after resting. The staff will wake those children who have not awakened on their own. If your child is getting too much sleep at the Center, please talk to a staff member about this as we are happy to wake your child a little earlier.

### **TOYS**

Because we offer a wide variety of toys and equipment for your child to use while at the Center, and because it is easier for preschool children to share the Center's toys, we ask that your child not bring toys from home other than on days of "Show and Tell." Transitional objects, like soft dolls or stuffed animals, which are used at nap time, are encouraged. We do not allow guns, war toys, or other toys of destruction at the Center.

### **ASSESSMENTS**

We assess your child's growth and development throughout the year through informal written observations and a systematic informal evaluation of specific goals and objectives. This assists us in planning for your child's continued growth and in identifying your child's interests and needs. We share this information with you at parent conferences.

### **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

If your child has a special need, we will make a plan with you to address it at the Center. If we feel it would be helpful to have additional input, we will assist the family in using local community resources.

### **SHOW AND TELL**

Please check the monthly calendars for “Show and Tell,” which will take place on different days each month. Many of the “Show and Tell’s” will have a special theme (Bring something yellow, for example). We would very much appreciate your support in assisting your child in selecting appropriate items for our “Show and Tell” days.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

We will provide a juice pop or something similar at snack time to mark your child’s birthday! Please feel free to join us for Snack Time that day if you would like to! If you have birthday party invitation to pass out, please put them on the Parent Shelves, or mail them. This minimizes hurt feelings in those not invited. Thanks for your help!

### **CONFERENCES**

Conferences will be scheduled two times each year. If you would like conferences at other times, please see your child’s teacher(s).

### **STAFF**

We are proud of our fine professional staff. Our Director, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants have degrees in Early Childhood Education or related fields. All staff members attend classes, conferences, and workshops pertaining to children of preschool age. All have quality care giving experience and are First Aid and CPR certified. In addition to these staff members, we have wonderful Teacher Aides, a great cook and assistant cook, and marvelous substitutes.

### **ABSENCES**

Please call the Center as early as possible on those mornings that your child is scheduled to attend but will not for any reason (illness, vacation, etc.) More than seven unverified absences during the course of the program year is a cause for dismissal from the program.

### **MANDATED REPORTERS**

All day care workers are Mandated Reporters for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Our own policy states that all staff members have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and to report abuse or neglect of any children involved in our

Center. This means that in cases of abuse or neglect or suspected abuse or neglect, we are required to call DCF about our concerns. DCF determines if any action needs to be taken.

### **INFORMATION SHARING**

The parent with whom the child resides the majority of the time will be the contact parent when setting up parent/teacher conferences, for issuing written reports on the child's progress, and for all other written communication. Requests that the second parent receive similar contacts will be honored unless prohibited by law.

If your child shares the week equally between both parents, we will put duplicates of all notices on the child's Parent Shelf. At conference time, we will discuss with the parents whether joint or separate conferences would be best.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

We hope that this parent handbook, along with staff efforts will make the day care experience an exciting, warm, and loving one for you and your child. If, at any time, you have a concern, it needs to be discussed and resolved as quickly as possible. Please take the following steps in this sequence:

- 1) Discuss your concern with the staff member with whom it is associated
- 2) Discuss your concern with the Director
- 3) Discuss your concern with the Board of Directors
- 4) Discuss your concern with the CT Department of Health, Day Care Licensing Unit, in Hartford

### **TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT**

Four weeks prior to withdrawing your child from the Center for any reason or reducing the number of days your child attends you must notify the Director. The regular tuition will be charged for this four-week period whether or not your child attends. All outstanding balances are due prior to the last day of your child's attendance.

### **STAFF BABYSITTING**

Guilford Center for Children, Inc. has a policy that prohibits staff members from babysitting for the children enrolled in its programs.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

If we are taking a field trip using Student Transportation of America (STA) for transportation, you will also have to sign a permission slip. We do “counts” of the children before boarding, after boarding, before loading for departure and after loading for departure. Children are assigned to specific staff members for most trips. A first aid kit, emergency medications for those children who have them and a telephone are always taken on field trips. Student Transportation of America (STA) will send another bus should we ever have bus trouble.

## **BUILDING SECURITY**

All doors at our Center are locked during operating hours. Anyone entering the building must enter through the front entrance door which is locked. At the time of enrollment, parents will need to complete a security system key fob request form to request an access fob for our Center. ALL families must have at least one fob assigned to them. Anyone without a fob will be required to ring the buzzer and will only be granted access into the building after showing proper identification to a staff member and confirming the reason for requesting entry.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We recognize that the family is of primary importance to our children. Our goal is to work in the spirit of collaboration with the families of children at the Center. All of us want you to be satisfied with all the different aspects of the program in which your child spends a great deal of his/her day. Please don't hesitate to initiate communication or ask for a conference with your child's teacher (s) or the director about topics of interest/concern. Please try not to discuss **in depth** issues at drop-off or pick-up time as staff members need to continue to spend time with the other children.

We send out daily emails about our day. If you would like to receive these emails, please make sure the director has your email address. The same information is also posted each day on a white board that stays on the top of the Parent Shelves in each classroom.

Whenever requested or felt it might be helpful, we will offer translations of all written documents that are distributed to families.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Prior to enrollment we will ask that you fill out a Family Data sheet, which will give us information about your family traditions and celebrations, your hobbies, interests, and job skills. Staff will consult with you about your willingness and availability to offer specific assistance at particular times.



### **ABOUT OUR WAITING LIST**

As applications for care arrived at the Center, they are dated and placed in the correct folder according to the year of desired enrollment. We take children off the waiting list according to the date submitted, but reserve the right to take certain situations into consideration as well. Among these are: Guilford residency, whether or not a family needs a sliding fee scale slot, and the age of the child.

### **GROUPING**

We take many things into consideration when placing children into their groups. Just one component is chronological age. We strive to place them where they will meet with success as well as be challenged. The placement of children in their groups is something discussed by staff members and the director on an ongoing basis. At any time of the year, if we feel it would be in your child's best interest to move to another group, we will discuss this with you.