

Personnel Policy Handbook

This handbook provides basic information about Thomas Arnold Activity Center's programs, and benefits. This handbook applies to the employees of Thomas Arnold Activity Center. These policies are effective September 2, 2008. This handbook does not attempt to cover all areas of policy, program, or benefits. It is designed to acquaint you with our company by answering your most frequently asked questions. Please do not hesitate to inquire about more details or any questions you may still have after reading this handbook. Any inquiries or questions should be directed to the Director.

The policies, programs, and benefits set forth are not to be construed as an employment contract or as creating any specific contractual rights. Thomas Arnold Activity Center reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policy in the handbook it deems appropriate, with sole absolute discretion.

All employees are hired on an "At Will" basis. Your continued employment with Thomas Arnold Activity Center is based on mutual consent. You have the right to end your employment relationship with the center at any time and for any reason. Similarly, the employment of any employee can be terminated for any reason, at any time.

We hope that you will find your employment with Thomas Arnold Activity Center to be a rewarding and satisfactory one.

All parents will be provided a comfortable place with a seat in the infant room that enables a mother to breastfeed her child; you also have a right to provide breast milk for your child's bottle.

We are required by Texas Family Code. #261.101 to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation directly to DFPS in strictest confidentiality.

Gang-free zone, is a designated area, 1000 feet around our center where gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law, Human Resource Code 42.064.

Employment Definitions

Regular Full-time Employees:

Thomas Arnold Activity Center defines these as employees who work more than 35 hours a week. These employees are eligible for benefits as specified under our benefit package.

Regular Part-time Employees:

Thomas Arnold Activity Center defines these as employees who work less than 35 hours a week. These employees are not eligible for benefits package.

Probationary Period:

All new full time employees must be employed 90 days before they will be eligible for many of the benefits offered.

Personnel Policies

Salary and Hourly Wages

Salaries are to be set for each employee by the Director. Salaries and hourly wages are based upon education, job responsibilities, training and

length of service. Checks will be issued every other Friday. It is the employee's responsibility to sign in and out each day. The employee may only clock in 5 minutes before scheduled start time and 5 minutes after scheduled dismissal time. The director reserves the right to adjust schedule.

Pay increases shall be commensurate with increased duties and responsibilities of the employee, professional growth through earning a CDA or other related degree, income of the school, implementation of school policies as well as compliance with Minimum Standards. Wages are NEVER to be discussed with anyone except the Director.

Performance and Review

The Director, on or near the employees anniversary date, shall conduct staff evaluations for all regular full-time employees.

Evaluations will cover:

- Fulfillment of job obligations
- Compliance to Thomas Arnold Activity Center Policies
- Compliance with Minimum Standards
- Attendance
- Attitude
- Dependability and Reliability
- Initiative in the classroom
- Flexibility

Examples of discipline are listed below. While this is not a complete list, the following are causes for discipline up to immediate termination:

1. Unsatisfactory work performance
2. Failure to comply with company rules and regulations
3. Failure to pass drug test
4. Abuse of equipment
5. Theft or dishonesty
6. Immoral or indecent conduct

7. Falsifying time sheets
8. Insubordination
9. Sleeping while on duty
10. Incivility towards parent or Co-workers
11. Negligence or carelessness
12. Failure to report and incident or accident
13. Absence from work without permission
14. Excessive tardiness or absenteeism
15. Non-compliance with Minimum Standards

In-Service Training

Regardless of any employee's previous work experience or education, ALL STAFF must obtain at least 20+ training hours a year in the field of Child Development as required by Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. We expect our employees to stay abreast of new research and knowledge in the field of child Development. Training may include, but now limited to, in-service training at the center, attendance at professional workshops, courses at nearby colleges, staff meetings, etc. CPR and First Aid do not count towards training hours required by the state.

Illness Requirements

Illness does happen; with your absence it affects the whole program. Therefore in an effort to create the least disturbance to the program we require at least two hour notice (before your shift is to start), otherwise you will have to come in until a substitute can be found.

Call the supervisor, if time off is needed, then with approval a substitute can be called.

Excessive tardiness or absences (3 or more in a month) will affect your scheduled working hours.

Things to consider if time off is needed

- Discuss it, determine best time
- Ask for a substitute
- Schedule in advance

When you do not work your scheduled hours for any reason you are putting your schedule in jeopardy.

You are each valuable but promptness, reliability, and consistency creates a positive learning environment, therefore these values will be considered in all advancements and schedules.

After time off for illness or vacation you are required to call before 5 p.m. the day before your return, to assure us of your return or no return. So that a substitute can be scheduled.

Health Requirements

- A. All staff must be clean and well-groomed at all times.
- B. All staff must wear disposable gloves when changing diapers
- C. All staff must wear disposable gloves when dealing with bodily fluids: all staff must wash hands with soap and water after dealing with bodily fluids.
- D. All staff must wash their hands after using the restroom and must practice healthy habits.
- E. All staff must meet requirements set forth by licensing.
- F. Use of drugs and alcohol at work is strictly prohibited. Violators will be terminated.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on the premises and in company vehicles.

Personal Telephone Calls

Personal phone calls are sometimes necessary: however, please use the phone briefly on your break. We will not call you out of class to receive calls unless it is an emergency or a doctor's office. The office staff will

take messages and you can return the call on your break. *Do not ever leave your class out of ratio to use the phone.*

NO CELLULAR PHONES ARE ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM.

Dress Code

Dress shall be appropriate for working with children. Appearance shall be clean, neat, and well groomed. The following clothes are acceptable to wear:

1. Slacks/jeans- tight jeans are not accepted.
2. Skirts-please do not wear mini-skirts or other short skirts.
3. Shorts-shorts must reach to the end of your fingers, otherwise they are considered too short. No gym shorts are allowed unless you are a school-age camp counselor.
4. Swimsuits-one piece only.
5. Shoes-Please wear comfortable shoes. Sandals, tennis shoes, etc. no heels please. NO Flip Flops must have a back.
6. Body piercing is unprofessional.

All staff is expected to have a professional appearance at all times. If you come to work dressed inappropriately, you will be asked to go home, unpaid, to change. Please have pride in your appearance.

Uniform Policy

TAAC will provide two uniform tops for you to wear with blue, black or tan pants or shorts. The Shirts must be worn daily, no exceptions. You may not work without the uniform. Shirts are to be returned in good condition upon leaving the center or the cost will be deducted from your final pay. You may purchase more shirts if you want.

Copy Machine

The copier is to be used for Thomas Arnold Activity Center business only. As a reminder, we do not approve of “ditto sheets” and they will not be allowed as a teaching tool in the classroom.

The office must approve any letters to parents before they are sent out.

Computer Room

The computer room is to be treated with respect and is to be used for educational purposes. Teachers are to interact with the children and are not allowed to “sit and play” while on the clock. Educational programs must be used in the morning. Recreational games may also be used in the afternoon. Please be sure you “walk” the room and be observant of how the children use the computer.

Resources and Materials

All resources and materials will be provided in each classroom as well as in the staff workroom. Manipulatives are to be used on a weekly basis and returned, in tact, so another class may use them. If additional supplies are needed for your classroom, please notify the office in writing one week before you need them. Manipulatives must be sanitized weekly by classroom staff.

Pets

Pets are encouraged in every classroom. They must receive a clean bill of health by a veterinarian. They are to be kept clean at all times. Their care is the responsibility of the class in which they reside. They are to be taken home over holiday periods. The Director must approve all pets: absolutely no birds are allowed on premises.

Hours & Special Events

- Staff must be on time so that proper ratios can be maintained throughout the premises.
- Tardiness and excessive absences will result in disciplinary action.
- Staff is expected to attend all staff meetings.
- Employee working hours will vary. Detailed hours will be given to the employee upon employment.
- Due to various circumstances, employee hours may change; please remain flexible.
- All staff is required to attend school-sponsored events. Staff must arrive at least 15 minutes early for these events and stay through their entirety.

- Your job responsibilities, due to training, staff meetings and special events will be from Monday-Sunday, 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- Please be certain to clock in no earlier than 5 minutes before schedule begins and no later than 5 minutes after schedule ends, all other times must be approved by director.

Tuition Reimbursements

Tuition reimbursements are a benefit for the employee; this will be figured on an individual basis. Full or partial reimbursements are provided for employees children during the scheduled working hours of the employee. Care other than working hours will be charged full price.

Voluntary Termination

If you wish to terminate your employment with Thomas Arnold Activity Center, please give the office, in writing, a two-week notice.

Cleaning

All teachers shall share the responsibility of cleaning the classrooms. Children may be “helpers” in picking up toys, setting out plates, etc. but ARE NOT responsible for cleaning or helping with bathroom cleaning or other cleaning requiring sanitation.

Keep all cleaning supplies out of reach at all times.

- Bathrooms and sinks are to be cleaned by the classroom staff at least twice a day.
- Tables are to be sanitized before and after lunch and other messy activities.
- Floors are to be cleaned after lunch and at the end of the day.
- Cabinets and shelves are to be kept orderly and neat.
- Cleaning may be done while children are napping or at the end of the day.
- Afternoon cleaning is not to begin before 4:45 P.M.
- Chairs may not be stacked on the tables until 30 minutes before closing the room.
- Responsibility of the staff bath, teacher’s workroom, etc. will be shared among all staff.

- Toys “mouthed by children must be sanitized daily. (All two year old toys!)
- Blankets, pillows, and security items must be sent home every Friday for a “bath”, all other bedding removed from cots, to be washed at the center.
- All manipulatives are to be sanitized once a week.
- Teachers may not simultaneously supervise children and perform major cleaning such as mopping and cleaning bathrooms.

Lead teachers are responsible for ensuring that their room is kept clean at all times. The teaching staff are responsible for the cleaning of the rooms, each staff must leave the room clean. Responsibilities include, but not limited to, sweeping, cleaning sinks and mirrors, putting the chairs on tables, wiping down tables, cleaning toilets, sorting toys and picking up the classroom. Please pick up all debris from the floor and be sure your shelves are organized and picked up before the last teacher leaves from your room each day. The lead Teacher or Director is responsible for ensuring these tasks are carried out and shared equally among classroom staff.

Releasing Children

Staff may release children only to their parents. If someone other than the parent comes to pick up a child, the office staff will require a driver’s license and prior approval from the parents before releasing the child. It is the staff’s responsibility to check with the office before releasing the child to anyone other than the parent.

Please be sure all noses are wiped, faces are clean, and shoes are tied before sending a child home. This is a routine that should be practiced throughout the day.

Greet each parent every morning and every afternoon! Parent satisfaction is our best advertisement and provides children therefore you have a job!

Expenditures

Teachers must be approved for any expenditure.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be performed on a monthly basis. Follow the evacuation plan placed in your classroom. An alarm will sound and teachers are instructed to take their children to the nearest exit. Staff must get roll sheet before leaving the building.

Count your children and match them to the roll sheet when you get outside. You will be notified when it is safe to return.

Disaster Drills

The office will notify each classroom when it is time for a disaster drill. Please escort your children to your designated area. Assume the “duck and cover” position and count your children. Wait for notification before returning to class.

Stereos and Television

Stereos and television are for children’s education only. All material must be “G” rated.

Kitchen

For health and sanitation reasons, please do not “hang out” in the kitchen. Do not take food home from the school unless it is approved by the Administration. Food is purchased for the children and may be purchased in advance for the next week’s menu.

Snacking in front of the children is unacceptable unless it is the snack being served to all the children.

Personal Differences

We expect all staff to behave in a professional manner. Any differences must be resolved away from the children and in a mature manner. In the event that staff members cannot resolve the issue, it will be discussed with both parties and the director.

Personal Problems

Personal problems must be left at home! When you arrive at work, we expect you to behave professionally. Your mood and attitude affects the entire class and teaching staff. We expect our staff to be cheerful at all times. Foul moods are not acceptable!

Bulletin Boards

Each room is expected to display children's artwork on their walls. They are to be updated frequently. Display weekly lesson plans and your classroom schedule.

Parent Relations

Greet each and every child when they arrive in the morning. Help the parents put up bags and release the children to us. This can be a difficult time for the parent and child: please be helpful and assuring to the parents.

Greet the parents when they pick up their child. Send them home on a positive note and communicate at least one successful experience daily. Never discuss the child negatively when he/she can hear you. Only after speaking with the Director should a parent receive negative information about their child.

Send the children home with clean faces, wiped bottoms (if diapered) and tied shoes.

Be respectful of a parent's beliefs concerning their children. It is inappropriate to be judgmental of parents and to discuss them with the other staff members.

Workers Compensation

Thomas Arnold Activity Center is not a subscriber of worker's compensation insurance. If you are hurt on the job, please notify the Director immediately. All staff members are covered under our accident insurance policy. Each injury will be reviewed and evaluated on an individual basis.

Drug Testing

In order to maintain a workplace that is free from the effects of drug and alcohol abuse, Thomas Arnold Activity Center reserves the right to conduct medical test of employee's hair, blood, or urine. Refusing a test may result in dismissal. All employees are subject to random drug testing.

Harassment

Harassment and sexual harassment in any form is disruptive and will not be tolerated. Remember, what one person might consider humorous, another might deem offensive. If you believe you are the victim of harassment of any kind, immediately report it to the Director. If you believe you are a victim of harassment by the Director, immediately report it to the Department of Human Services. All reports will be investigated promptly.

Programming

Philosophy

The educational program of Thomas Arnold Activity Center is based on the assumption that children learn best when they are touching and interacting with real things and caring people around them. We will utilize the latest research on how children learn by using the criteria set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Our program will stimulate each child to reach his or her full potential and develop a lifelong love of learning. The teaching staff will design the environment carefully to allow children the freedom to move about and choose from interesting, multi-sensory and stimulating activities. The classroom will be divided by learning centers to encourage meaningful play and learning. Curriculum ideas can change rapidly or last a long time depending the children's needs and interest.

Self-esteem is of utmost importance. The Thomas Arnold Activity Center believes that self-confidence is fostered when children have challenging activities in their environment. Our role is to offer an appropriate learning environment that incorporates many successful experiences for each child on a daily basis.

The program will strive to meet each child's emotion, physical, social and cognitive needs. Our staff will act as facilitators and assist children to reach their full potential by setting up appropriate environments whereby children can learn and grow.

Lesson Plans

Weekly lesson plans are required by each classroom and are the responsibility of the teacher. Copies of the plan are due in the office by Wednesday prior to the week for which they are to be used. A curriculum is provided although it is your responsibility to complete the plans and activities.

Progress Reports

Teachers are responsible for keeping records of the child's ongoing progress in our school. Progress reports for all children are to be completed in October, February, and May. Check with office on the developmental checklists. All progress reports must be assessed by the Director.

Daily Reports

Notes for two-year-olds are to be completed on a DAILY basis. These reports will let the parent know of the child's eating habits, sleeping habits, toilet training progress, and any other events of the day. These are very important to parents of children who cannot explain their day.

At no time shall a staff member communicate negative information home to a parent without the Director's approval. Please send each child home on a positive note. Any discussions on behavioral issues shall be cleared through the office. *We want the parents to receive positive, professional feedback from our staff*

Nap Rooms

It is the staff's responsibility to soothe and comfort the children until they are sleeping and resting. You are required to pat backs as need be. At no time is the staff member to lie down and rest with or without a child. Your

job is to supervise the children, even when they are resting. Rooms need to have enough light to see every child.

Soft, quiet, calming music may be played at naptime (preferably classical). Cots are provided for each child, names are to identify each child's cot. Sheets are to be in place on the cots, please remove on Friday and bring to the office.

Children only need to rest quietly: forcing a child to go to sleep is unacceptable.

Nap times in each room may be adjusted to fit the needs of the children in the class.

Swimming

All staff must escort their class to the pool. Preschool and Pre-K teachers, and school age teachers are required to get in the water with the children. Supervision is paramount! Know your ratios and count the children constantly. Children who cannot swim must wear a life vest or "floaties" (provided by the parents) before entering the pool.

Room Arrangement

Rooms are to be set up in learning centers according to the developmental levels of the children. Too much open space encourages running in the classroom. Loud centers (blocks, woodworking, and home living) should be placed away from quieter areas of the room.

AN ORDERLY ROOM ENCOURAGES ORDERLY BEHAVIOR.

Materials and equipment used by children should be organized so they can be gotten out and put away easily by the children. All materials should have a specific storage space in the classroom.

Field Trips

Field trips are limited due to insurance regulations and transportation issues.

Playgrounds

Staff is expected to continuously walk the playground and interact with the children. It is against policy to cluster on the playground and talk with other staff. Never turn your back to children. Supervision is extremely important outside, as this is where most accidents occur. **NO SITTING** Is allowed on playgrounds. Please do not leave your class out of ratio at any time. If assistance is needed for a child, please call or send a responsible child to the office. If a child needs to use the restroom, please stand at the outside door and watch the child walk in and walk back out of the building, (hint: always go to the bathroom before going outside). Teachers are not allowed to carry drinks on the playground. This is unfair to the children and will not be tolerated.

During the summer months, it may be necessary to go out earlier in the day or not stay out as long. During other times of the year, only one hour each morning and afternoon of playground time is permitted. You may split this up into smaller increments if the schedule allows.

All sand toys, riding toys, and balls are to be taken inside or returned to container.

Pebbles stay on the ground does not allow on the slide, steps or play equipment. Always encourage safety by reminding the children what they can do (up the ladder, down the slide, one at a time on the ladder).

Positive Guidance

When children in our care are having trouble following directions or treating others without respect, developmentally appropriate guidance techniques are to be used. Positive guidance involves telling a child what you want them to do, not what you don't want them to do.

- A. Positive reinforcement-the child is encouraged and praised when they demonstrate acceptable behavior.
- B. Removal and Redirection-The child is redirected to another activity and given another chance to try the activity again at a later date and/or time.

- C. Give children choices only when you intend to let them make a choice.
- D. Be consistent
- E. Follow through
- F. Teacher should never make comparisons between children and should never discuss the child in front of others. Children's attitudes about themselves are formed at a very early age and can be affected by what they hear other people say about them.
- G. Let the children know you care about them.
- H. Favoritism is unacceptable!
- I. Be happy, cheerful and calm.
- J. Always get on eye level when talking with a child.
- K. Use positive statements such as:
 - “Let's use our walking feet inside” instead of “Don't Run”
 - “Blocks are for building” instead of “Don't throw the block”
 - “Biting hurts our friends” instead of “Stop Biting”Making positive statements may be a change for you. Practice on your family and friends. It will soon become second nature. Erase the word “don't” from your vocabulary. Your tone of voice can also be they key to good discipline.

At no time is physical punishment to be used: at no time are loud, harsh words to be used. This will result in immediate termination. If a child in your care is out of control, please call the office on the intercom and we will come intervene when necessary.

Time out is to be used only as a last resort. One minute for each year of the child's age is an appropriate time for separation from the group.

Nurturing children is one of our most important responsibilities. A child's healthy self-esteem is paramount.

Common Discipline Mistake Made by Adults:

1. Demanding that children apologize.
2. Giving in to tantrums
3. Bribing children

4. Offering choices where none exists
5. Failing to reward appropriate behavior
6. Forcing children to compete
7. Forcing a child to share or cooperate
8. Calling children names
9. Trying to shame the child
10. Making promises you cannot keep
11. Comparing the misbehavior of one child to the good behavior of another.
12. Threatening the child.

“As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool to torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, a child humanized or de-humanized.” Haim Ginott

Injuries

If a child in your care receives an injury, fill out the incident report form and give the parent the original and keep the duplicate for our files. Report all injuries, no matter how insignificant they may seem. Parents notice every little scrape and they want to know what happened to their child. If the incident involved another child, never release the child’s name to the parent of the injured child. Fill out the incident reports professionally.

All head injuries need to come to the office. When filling out a report on a head injury, please bring the form to the office and we will require the parents to sign the form upon receipt. All bites, bruises, bumps, scrapes, and any other injuries must be documented.

Clean all injuries with hydrogen peroxide before using Band-Aids. Ice for an injury is located in the kitchen.

Good Teachers...

Give everyone a chance

Enjoy teaching
Are supportive
Understand feelings
Explain well
Respect other children's opinions
Make learning fun
Have a positive attitude
Are fair
Use reasonable discipline
Use appropriate language
Expand learning opportunities
Have a sense of humor
Listen
.....List compiled by students.

Ethical Policies

1. Gossip, the sharing of negative or destructive information is prohibited.
2. Avoid discussing one family with another family in the school.
3. Videotape children only when you have permission to do so.
4. Get written permission to photograph children before using them in advertising or for any other purpose.
5. Only break confidentiality when a child is endangered either in areas of neglect, abuse, or health. You will need to report confidential facts without permission.
6. When children impart information to you that implies abuse, or neglect, you are legally obligated to report that to the proper authorities.
7. Both children and adults have the right to be corrected in private. To correct children in front of other parents, staff, and children is inappropriate.
8. It is unethical to pursue one's own business while being paid to supervise children.
9. Staff should refer any parent's requests regarding other children to the Director.
10. Personal information about families should only be divulged to

other staff members to the extent of what they need to know to support the child.

11. Judging families and imposing your own values on their children is inappropriate.
12. Favoritism is unethical.
13. Spending time discussing other staff members, their habits, and personal lives is unproductive and considered to be gossip.
14. Children' files are private and are to be kept in the office.
15. Be truthful about sickness, your attendance is vital to the program, if time off is desired please schedule in advance.
16. Be supportive of the school at all times.
17. Remember that your conduct outside of work reflects on the center.
18. Profanity is unacceptable.
19. Theft or dishonesty not be tolerated.

Building Use Policies

1. There will be no smoking in the building or on the premises.
2. Mops are only to be washed out in the mop sink.
3. All staff must clean up after themselves in all areas of the building.
4. Always inform the administrative staff of any repairs that need to be made inside or outside the building.
5. All outside toys must be put away at the end of the day.
6. All staff is responsible for ensuring that children do not ear up or destroy school property. Staff on duty will be held responsible.
7. Be sure to return all items where they belong.
8. Construction paper is to be used for art projects only. Use other paper for writing and free art. Use all supplies wisely and economically.
9. Keep your rooms clean and orderly.
10. Clean up after yourselves.
11. Congregating in the kitchen is prohibited.
12. In a timely fashion, submit requisition for supplies that are near depletion.
13. Teach the children to respect Thomas Arnold Activity Center and its property.

We are required by Texas Family Code. #261.101 to report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation directly to DFPS in strictest confidentiality.

All parents will be provided a comfortable place with a seat in the infant room that enables a mother to breastfeed her child; you also have a right to provide breast milk for your child's bottle.

Gang-free zone, is a designated area, 1000 feet around our center where gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law, Human Resource Code 42.064.

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Employee Handbook

This is to acknowledge that I have received the Thomas Arnolds Activity Centers Personnel Policy Handbook and I will familiarize myself with its contents.

This handbook is effective September 2, 2008. I understand that this handbook represents only current policies, programs and benefits and that it does not constitute a contract for employment or create any contractual rights. Thomas Arnold Activity Center may change these policies and benefits, as it deems advisable to meet the needs of our school and its employees.

Upon termination, I agree to return this handbook and any other materials owned by TAAC.

I understand that TAAC does not carry Worker's Compensation Insurance and if I am hurt while on duty, I must report my injury to the Administration immediately.

Finally, I understand that compliance with the policies, rules, and procedures in this handbook as well as Minimum Standards, and as hereafter amended, is a condition of my employment with Thomas Arnold Activity Center.

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____