

Avalon Academy

A model learning community built on the principle of multiple intelligences
Infants through age 5 & after-school kids

Parent Handbook

Dear Avalon Families,

Welcome to Avalon Academy in Houston, Texas! We are happy that you have chosen us to care for your children. We hope this handbook will introduce you to Avalon Academy and answer many of your questions. Whether it is for infant, toddler, 3,4 or 5 year old children, we are here to meet your needs.

Purpose of the handbook

Both the home and the school have important functions to serve in educating the child. Neither can work effectively without the understanding, support and assistance of the other. Guiding the development of a child is a cooperative endeavor. Therefore, it is very important that there is open communication between parent and teacher.

Avalon Academy's purpose and goals

As an instructional facility in which staff are trained to care for and enhance the child's developmental progress, Avalon has a responsibility to the community as well as to parents and children. We aim to fulfill that responsibility by way of the following purposes and goals:

- to provide a supervised educational environment; this will meet the physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs of infants, toddlers and pre-school children
- to provide a "model" child care center where children can be served and teachers can learn the best and latest instructional methodologies
- to serve as a demonstration center of developmental child care practices pertinent to the needs of the general public and professional in the field of early childhood education
- to provide a developmental and intercultural learning experience for young children in a setting congenial to the spirit of harmony, generosity and goodwill.

We value:

- parents who are actively involved in their child's pre-school experience
- service to the Avalon students, families, staff and community
- learning environments where children are actively involved, exploring and following their own interests
- warm nurturing environments where children play and staff use
- developmentally appropriate practices
- ethical conduct of staff and parents, keeping information confidential when needed
- a program that encourages diversity
- positive communication to everyone in a kind, friendly and courteous way
- love, acceptance and respect for everyone
- a child's sense of independence
- staff competence
- teamwork and collaboration and much more!

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Director's Qualifications

The Director has a Bachelor's Degree in Child Development and a Master's Degree in Child Care Administration. Her responsibilities include curriculum development, budget management, in-service training and the parent-education program.

Child caregivers

Each caregiver receives on-going in-service training through staff meetings and at early childhood conferences and workshops held throughout the year. All of our employees are trained in pediatric CPR, first aid and are screened with background checks.

Your child will remain with the same caregiver throughout most of the day in order to develop a close and loving relationship. We strive to be available to share information each day with you and to allow time for concerns and questions.

Please feel free to call your child's caregiver and/or the director at any time.

Center organization

Avalon is a non-profit organization, 501C3. It is licensed for a maximum of 146 children through Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. We comply with all child care regulations set forth by that agency. Avalon Academy provides childcare in a professional and caring manner.

Days and Hours of Operation

Avalon Academy is open Monday through Friday, all year long, from 7am to 6pm, excluding holidays and in-service days.

Enrollment

We will need the following information to enroll your child:

- Enrollment application and fee
- Child health exam form, including food allergy information
- Permission and release form
- Immunization card
- Pick-up permission form
- Signed Avalon Academy contract

Tuition

Tuition is payable in advance and due in full at the first of each month. Statements are not sent out each month. You may choose to pay your tuition in full on the first of the month or half on the first and half on the fifteenth.

Parents will be notified when payments are past due. Since Avalon operates on a break even budget, past due accounts cannot be tolerated.

If an account is two months past due, parents may be asked to remove their child.

Late fee: \$30.00

There is a \$25.00 returned check fee.

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Child Staff Ratios

Age of Child	Maximum number of children supervised by one caregiver	Maximum group number of children two or more caregivers may supervise
0-11 months	4	10
12-17 months	5	13
18-23 months	9	18
2 years	11	22
3 years	15	30
4 years	18	35
5 years	22	35

Registration Fee

A non-refundable registration fee is charged for each student to cover administrative costs in registering the child. The current fee is \$100.00.

Disenrollment

All children who are accepted and enrolled at Avalon will be guaranteed a space as long as their tuition is current.

Any child absent from the center for longer than 2 weeks without notifying the center will automatically be dropped from active enrollment and will need to re-enroll.

Parents are required to submit a 30 day written notice or monetary equivalent when withdrawing a child from the program. This practice allows the center to contact families who are on the waiting list.

Health

According to licensing standards, a child must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to the center. Please do not give a fever-suppressant and bring your child to the center. This is unfair not only to your child but also to the other children and teachers.

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Health, cont.

Listed below are reasons why ill children may be excluded from the center:

Fever:

Infants younger than 4 months: 100F under arm
4-24 months: 101 F under arm
older than 24 months: 102F under arm or oral

Signs of possible severe illness, including unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing

Uncontrolled diarrhea, defined as an increased number of stools compared with the child's normal pattern, with increased stool water and/or decreased form that is not contained by the diaper or toilet use.

Vomiting, two or more times in the previous 24 hours unless the vomiting is determined to be due to a noncommunicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration

Mouth sores, with drooling unless the child's physician has determined the illness not to be a communicable disease

Skin rash, with fever or behavior change until a physician has determined the illness not to be communicable

Purulent conjunctivitis (pink eye), defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, often with matted eyelids after sleep, including a child with eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye

Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment was begun

Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment has begun and child has been fever free for 24 hours

Pinworm or ringworm, until 24 hours after treatment was begun

Chicken pox, until 6 days after onset of rash or until all lesions have dried and crusted

Rubella, until 7 days after the rash appears

*Source: American Academy of Pediatrics / American Public Health Association reference standard 1990 in NAEYC's *Healthy Young Children*.*

If your child becomes ill while at the center, you will be called to pick up your child as soon as possible. You will be notified should your child be exposed to a contagious disease. Please notify the center should your child become ill so that we may notify parents of a contagious disease.

Exposure to communicable diseases and any infectious illness should be reported promptly to the center, so our staff can look for any early symptoms.

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Immunizations

Parents are required to provide the center with a record of the child's immunizations. Please submit updated forms at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 12 months old, and at every birthday after that.

See **2010-2011 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Child Care Facilities** online at http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/docs/school/6-15_2010-2011.pdf.

As a licensed child care provider, Avalon may access **Texas Department of Health's ImmTrack system** for confirmation of your child's immunizations. For more information on ImmTrack, visit <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/immtrac/default.shtm>.

Medication

Medication prescribed or ordered by a physician or dentist will be administered during the time the child is at daycare. No medication, either prescription or non-prescription, will be given without written parental authorization. Parents will need to give written authorization and instructions by filling out a Medication Permission Form. This form needs to be filled out before the child will be given any medication at the center. All medication brought to the center should be in its original container and given directly to your child's teacher or the front desk staff member. Medications must be properly labeled with

- the child's name
- medication name
- date
- amount and time to be administered.

Child Accident Form

Our staff takes every effort to ensure the safety of your child. Unfortunately, accidents to occur. If your child is involved in a mishap that requires any type of attention or first aid, and the office feels that you do not need to be called, you will be notified with an accident report. This form will be filled out by Avalon staff describing the accident and what care was given. A copy with your signature will be retained for your child's file.

A child coming into Avalon with injuries may require an accident form so that both the parent and Avalon staff are aware the injury did not take place at Avalon.

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Should an accident occur which requires emergency medical treatment, the child will be taken to:

Texas Children's Hospital, 6621 Fannin Street Houston, TX 77030
832-824-1000 <http://www.texaschildrens.org/>

The parents will be contacted immediately to meet the staff member and the child at the Emergency Room. If neither parent can be reached, we will call the emergency contact person designated on the child's information sheet. When you sign your child's information sheet, you are authorizing us to implement the plan described above.

Discipline

As children mature and try to gain self-control, they may lose control. At such times, children may be redirected to another activity. Sometimes talking about what has happened eases the tension. A child may occasionally need to sit quietly in order to calm down and regain self control. Brief periods of "Thinking Time" are sometimes appropriate.

Corporal punishment and verbal abuse are prohibited at Avalon.

Child Incident Form

An incident form will be filled out by Avalon staff if your child exhibits behavior that is not acceptable or does not adhere to the classroom discipline policy. A copy of this form with your signature will also be kept in your child's file.

Abuse and neglect

If a child is suspected of being abused or neglected, it is the responsibility of Avalon staff to notify Child Protective Services.

Confidentiality

The only information teachers should share with parents is information concerning that parent's child. Conversations about other children, other parents, co-workers or supervisors are unprofessional and in some cases illegal.

Arriving at the center

It is required that all children be escorted inside the center and that the arrival time is recorded on the attendance sheet at the front desk.

Difficulty with separation is not unusual for children, especially during their first two weeks of attendance. Please help prepare your child for your departure. Don not try to "sneak away" or "slip out" as this can actually create anxiety for your child. Tell your child it is time for you to go to work, then leave. Prolonging good-byes sends a mixed message to your child and can also increase anxiety. A teacher will be happy to help you if necessary and your child settle into an activity.

If your child is upset when you leave, please know that children usually calm down and participating in activities before the parent reaches the parking lot. Please feel free to call anytime to check on your child.

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Some parents find it beneficial to gradually phase their child into the center. This may include several visits prior to the first day of attendance and perhaps staying only through lunch or nap time on the first day. Phasing-in not only helps the child to adjust to the new schedule and program, but also helps the parents.

Leaving the center

When picking up your child please be sure to notify a staff member and record the departure time on the attendance sheet. Please check your child's cubby or mail box each day for messages, art work or other take-home items.

It would be appreciated if the center is notified when your child will be absent from the center.

Please do not allow older children to enter the building or classroom alone.

In the event that a parent or other authorized person arrives to pick up a child and he or she appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, security will be called. A ride home or other appropriate assistance will be offered in order to ensure the safety of the child.

Please remember that drop-off and pick-up times are busy periods in terms of transitions and adjustments. This is not usually the best time to discuss your child's progress or growth especially if he or she is standing with you. The best way to address questions or concerns is by calling the office and leaving a message. When the classroom is quiet and the children situated, the teacher can return your call.

Late Pick Up

The center closes at 6pm. If you are running late, please the center to inform the staff. There is a \$10.00 late pick up fee applied immediately at 6p.m. with a \$1.00 per minute charge for each minute thereafter. If payment is not received on or before the next day, a \$25 late fee will be assessed. Please understand our teachers' and cleaning staff's need for prompt student pick-ups at the end of the day.

Authorizing Individuals to pick up your child

On the enrollment form, you will find a line asking for the names of the individuals who are authorized to pick up your child. You may authorize as many individuals as you wish in completing your form. We ask that you alert a staff member on days when one of your authorized persons will be picking up your child.

We will not allow your child to leave with an unauthorized person. This is for the safety and protection of your child. We will check the ID of the person listed to pick up your child. Please remember to keep this form updated with your current phone number and address changes.

Meals

All children provide their own meals, drinks and snacks.

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Allergies

Please inform Avalon of any allergies, food or otherwise, your child may have. The office will provide an allergy form and make a copy for your child's teachers.

Birthdays

If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday at the center, please discuss your plans with the classroom teacher. He or she can advise you of any food allergies or scheduling conflicts. Your child's birthday may be celebrated in the classroom during afternoon snack time. Your child may wish to donate a puzzle or book to the classroom in lieu of goody bags. Please consider the age of the children when selecting food for the celebration - plain cupcakes or muffins are great for 1 and 2 year olds. No chocolate or heavy sugar for children under two. Please discuss specific plans with your child's teacher.

If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday away from the center, we cannot distribute invitations in the classroom unless the entire class is invited.

Transitions

As your child grows and matures, he or she will transition from one classroom to another. Here at Avalon we strive to make these transitions as stress-free as possible. You will be notified in advance if your child will be transitioning to another room. Both classrooms work together to devise a visitation schedule for your child so that they will not be a stranger when they officially move.

Outdoor play

All children go outside every day. Please send labeled clothing appropriate for the weather. During light rain, we may take a walk, so a raincoat is advisable. On cold days, send layers of warm clothing as appropriate. In the summer, we will have weekly splash days and will let you know which day of the week your child should bring a swim suit. We ask that children wear rubber-soled shoes for outdoor play. Sandals, flip-flops, crocs and "jellies" can hinder a child's ability to participate and can often create safety hazards. Closed-toe shoes and socks are the best bet.

Toilet training

We ask that you advise us when you are ready to begin toilet training with your child. It is best if we can duplicate the routines and methods that you are using in order to have consistency for the child.

Communication

Avalon keeps families informed of classroom and center activities through various means.

Daily report forms are sent home with infants through 3 year olds offering detailed reports of each child's food and drink, diapering and toileting, variety of activities and child's mood.

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Communication, cont.

Children ages 4-5 have age appropriate homework and other communications in their folders which are to be taken home every day. (Summer time is play time at Avalon, so no homework is assigned June-August.) Detailed bulletin boards outside classrooms show curriculum and art work.

Please also share with your child's teacher any information concerning your child - were they up late? Are they teething? Is a parent ill?

The Avalon website (www.avalonacademy.org) offers information about upcoming special activities and events, holidays and in-service days.

There will be a monthly Avalon Academy newsletter. Look for it in your child's cubby. It will include information on upcoming events and activities. It may also include messages or requests for families.

Emergency preparedness

Avalon staff are prepared to deal with a variety of emergency situations. Teachers will remain calm and stay with the children. Avalon staff will call parents with information as quickly as possible.

In the case of a weather related emergency, such as a tornado, hurricane or other severe wind storm, children will be evacuated to the designated shelter for Avalon, across the street at Wilson Elementary's cafeteria.

In the case of chemical fallout, Avalon staff and students will shelter in place with air conditioning turned off.

If HISD schools close, Avalon will follow that example. Check HISD announcements online, on television, or on the radio.

Family Involvement

Informal parent participation in the center is always welcome. Parents are invited to visit the center at any time. On some occasions, such as field trips, parents' help may be requested.

A volunteer Board of Directors provides leadership and direction for Avalon Academy, advising the Director. This board meets monthly and consists of community members and parents. If you would like to be a member of this board, please contact the director of Avalon Academy.

Volunteers

Avalon Academy encourages volunteers. Volunteers are important and can often serve as a mentor in your child's life. All volunteers are required to have a criminal records check.

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Clothing

Dress your child in appropriate clothing so that they feel free to participate in all activities. Please bring at least one labeled full change of clothes for your child. We cannot be responsible for damaged clothing.

Personal belongings

The center provides sheets for baby cribs. Please send your child with two blankets. If your child has a favorite sleep toy or other security item, they are welcome to bring them to school. Please label all items brought to school.

Appropriate books and music enrich the children's lives and may be brought at any time.

We ask that children do not bring the following to the center:

- money
- gum or candy
- cosmetics
- toys or toy weapons of any kind
- jewelry

Donations

Avalon Academy wants to offer affordable childcare for all families. Avalon also wants to attract and maintain caring teachers to provide for your family. Avalon opens its doors to donations of toys, books and other appropriate equipment and supplies. All donations will be noted and appreciated. Donations are tax deductible.

Babysitting

Occasionally parents may ask teachers to baby sit. Avalon does not encourage this practice and assumes no responsibility for employees after their scheduled work hours.

Field trips

Children at Avalon do not leave the center on field trips but fun and enriching special activities are often brought to Avalon.

Again, welcome to Avalon Academy!

Ms. Connie McGrew, Director