

PARENT HANDBOOK

red caboose

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CHILD CARE CENTER

654 Williamson Street, Madison WI 53703 608-256-1566
www.redcaboosechildcare.org

Updated December 2017

Introduction

The Red Caboose Child Care Center is a non-profit corporation created to provide high-quality care for children ages 11 months through six years. Full and part-time care is available while parents are working or in school. We offer toddler, pre-school, and 4K programs at our main location, 654 Williamson St. We offer an after school program for grades K-2 at Lapham Elementary School at 1045 E. Dayton St., an after school program for grades 3-5 at Marquette Elementary School at 1501 Jennifer St., and a Summer Camp for grades K-5.

The Board of Directors is the policy-making body at Red Caboose. It is composed of parents and staff, elected annually. The Board receives input and recommendations from the standing and ad hoc committees. These committees (Finance, Long Range Planning, Fundraising, Education, Personnel, and Health, Safety & Nutrition) are made up of parents and staff and are an essential part of the center's daily and long term operation.

The Board hires an Executive Director who is responsible for the overall operation of the organization. A Preschool Program Director is responsible for the personnel and programming at the center. Teachers are hired by the Preschool Program Director, through a hiring committee of parents and staff. There is a Lead Teacher in each classroom who is responsible for enrollment, program planning, staff scheduling and parent relations. In addition, there is a School Age Program Director, and a Site Supervisor at each school age site.

Red Caboose is committed to active, ongoing parent involvement, both on the structural level (policy and decision making through committees and the Board) and in the day-to-day activities in our center. Involvement may take many forms, and may be of an ongoing nature, such as membership on the Board or on a committee, or of limited duration.

You are always welcome to spend time in your child's room, unexpectedly or planned, on a regular basis or occasionally. There are many instances in which your participation will be sought, such as clean-up days, fund-raising events, and parent education workshops.

Red Caboose embraces play based education for young children. We believe that children learn through play and hands-on experiences. The day is divided into periods of teacher directed and child initiated play, large group time and individualized activities, and quiet and active play. Our major emphasis is on the social and emotional development of children.

We encourage children to express their feelings and ideas, develop language, problem-solving and other social skills, and grow in self-confidence and independence. Cognitive skills, fine and large motor coordination, art, and music are also an important part of the curriculum.

The environment is stimulating and

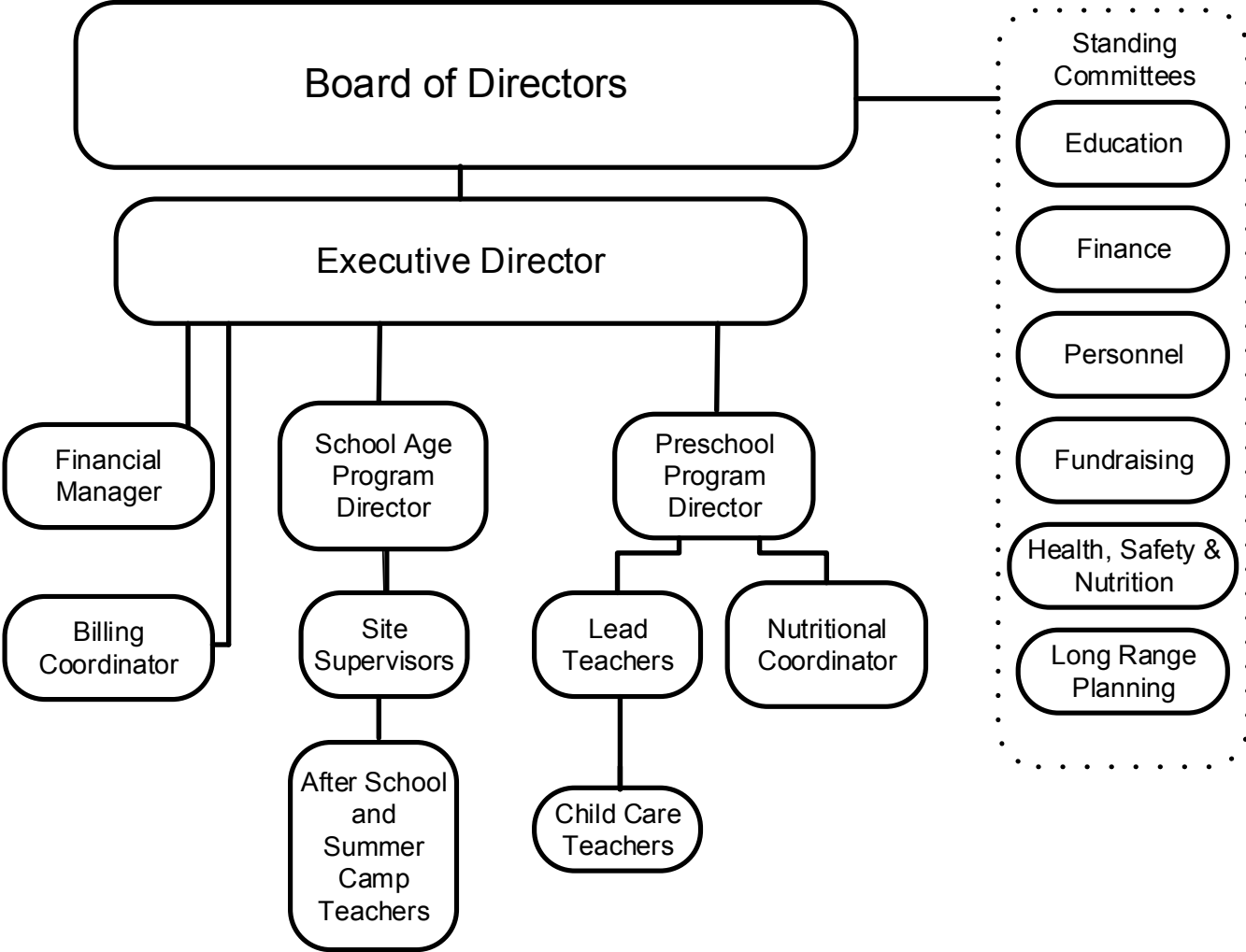
designed to promote creativity. Everyday activities and routines encourage the children to learn self-help skills and responsibility, and to make decisions. Field trips into the community are an integral part of our program.

A knowledge of each child's background, needs and interests helps us work more effectively with that child. In this and in all aspects of programming and the center's functioning, input from home is very important.

Red Caboose is committed to serving all children of all races, cultures, and economic groups represented in the community, including those with special needs or handicapping conditions. We believe all children benefit from diversity.

Red Caboose does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in its enrollment or employment practices.

Red Caboose Organization



Daily Schedule

DAILY SCHEDULE

7:00	Red Caboose opens
7:30	Turtle Room opens
8:30	Breakfast
9:00-11:00	Morning program in each classroom
11:15-11:15/11:30	Lunch
12:30-3:00	Naptime
1:30-3:00	Wake up and free choice
2:15-2:30	Snack offered
3:00-5:30	Afternoon program in each classroom
5:30	Turtle Room closes
5:15-5:30	Late snack
6:00	Red Caboose closes

To assure a smooth mealtime, please bring your child a few minutes before the meal. Unless you have made special arrangements with a teacher, please avoid picking up or dropping off your child during naptime.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

You may enroll your child for:

- Full time (Monday through Friday full days)
- Part time (2, 3 or 4 full days per week)

Availability of specific slots is dependent on enrollment in a given classroom.

Things to Remember

BLANKET

For your child's comfort, please provide a blanket (labeled) for naptime. Blankets should be taken home and washed weekly.

CLOTHING

In order for your child to take part in all activities, please make sure s/he is appropriately dressed. Winter clothing includes a coat, hat, snowpants, boots, mittens, and a scarf. We try to go outside for fresh air and exercise every day, weather permitting. A swimming suit and towel are useful during summer months. Label all clothing with your child's name. Please keep an extra change of clothing in your child's locker at all times.

DIAPERS

If your child is not yet toilet trained, please supply diapers and wipes.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Please do not bring food, gum, candy or money to Red Caboose. If you wish to bring birthday or other special occasion treats, please give prior notice to the staff. Red Caboose suggests you bring healthful treats such as juice popsicles, fresh fruits, dried fruits, or other foods low in salt and sugar, or non-food items such as stickers. If you decide to bring a baked good, it must be from a food store or bakery and must list the ingredients.

Because they are difficult to keep track of, and often cause problems among the children, all toys (with the exception of books, and CDs), should be kept at home. Dolls and stuffed animals may be brought for naptime.

Parent/Staff Communications

NEW PARENT ORIENTATION

Upon enrolling, you will receive an orientation by the Preschool Program Director, including a tour of the facility and an overview of Red Caboose philosophy, policies and procedures. Shortly thereafter, the Lead Teacher will give you a room orientation.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Parent involvement at Red Caboose is very important. Each year parents are given a survey listing different areas from which parents can choose to volunteer time, services, expertise, and ideas. Please take a few minutes to fill it out.

LOGS

Each room has a daily log in which parents and staff can communicate. It is used for teachers to let parents know information regarding programming, field trips, and children's activities; and for parents to share information with the staff about their child, medication, pick up, etc. Please read the log each day.

CONFERENCES AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Parent-teacher conferences are offered twice per year; once within three months of enrollment or of changing classrooms and another at the end of the school year. At that time a progress report is written for your information.

If you ever have questions or concerns about your child, just ask for a conference with one of his/her teachers.

PARENT PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

A mid-year (winter) and end-of-the-year (spring) evaluation is given to each family. These help us identify both our strengths and areas in which to improve. Your feedback is very important to us, to ensure we are meeting your and your child's needs.

PARENT DIRECTORY

A parent directory with phone numbers and addresses is distributed to all parents in the fall.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Red Caboose Annual Meeting is usually scheduled for May. The agenda includes reports from the Board of Directors, committees, and staff, as well as Board elections. There is an all-center dinner preceding the meeting. Child care is provided.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Board of Directors meets monthly, or bi-monthly and committees meet as needed. Board meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the main bulletin board. A notice of all Board and committee meetings is posted weekly on the white board. All meetings are open to Red Caboose parents.

PARENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If you have a complaint or grievance about a staff person, you are encouraged to talk first with the person in question. If the problem is not resolved, you should then talk with the staff person's appropriate supervisor (see RC organizational chart). If no solution is agreed upon, you should bring the issue to the Preschool Program Director, or, if still not resolved, to the Executive Director. If you have a complaint or grievance about the Executive Director, you should bring the issue to the Executive Committee of the Board.

If you have concerns or complaints about the program you should first talk to the Lead Teacher in the room. If the problem is not resolved you should then bring the issue to the Preschool Program Director. Program policy issues may be referred to an appropriate committee.

If the above processes do not resolve the dispute, the issue may be brought to the Executive Committee of the Board, followed by the full Board if necessary.

If you feel that all other routes to resolve the dispute have been exhausted, you may notify The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Early Care Regulation; Southern Regional Office.

608-266-2900

P.O. Box 8947

Madison 53708-8947

DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP YOUR CHILD

When you bring your child into the classroom, please let a teacher know that s/he is here. We cannot be responsible for a child if we do not know s/he is here (i.e. left out in the hall). Similarly, please let a teacher know when you are picking up your child.

There are sign-in/sign-out sheets near the log. You must sign your child in with the time of arrival and your initials, and sign out him/her out with the time of departure and your initials.

Once your child is signed out, s/he is your responsibility.

PLEASE CALL Red Caboose by your regularly scheduled arrival time, leave a message on the answering machine at night, or leave a note in the log if your child will be absent, arriving late, or leaving early so we can plan for staffing and field trips. If you do not notify us in advance of late arrival or absence, State Licensing requires us to call you to verify the whereabouts and safety of your child.

CHILD RELEASE POLICY

Authorization

Parents with legal custody are the only persons allowed to authorize anyone (including a non-custodial parent) to pick up their child/ren. This authorization must be written. Blanket authorization to pick up can be given by listing an individual on the emergency card. A one-time or limited authorization can be given by writing a note in the log and completing a Take Home Permission form.

Pick up

Parents with legal custody (sole or joint) are allowed to pick up their child/ren at any time.

Authorized persons (as described above) are allowed to pick up the child/ren in accordance with the type of authorization. If a person is not known to the staff, they will be asked for identification.

No child under 18 years old shall pick up a child enrolled at Red Caboose, unless cleared by the Preschool Program Director or Lead Teacher, and with a written release from the parent

WE WILL NOT RELEASE A CHILD TO ANYONE WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE CUSTODIAL PARENT OR GUARDIAN.

Enrollment & Tuition Policies

TUITION RATES

The Board of Directors and the Finance Committee have developed a fee schedule to generate adequate income to operate Red Caboose. Red Caboose charges "full tuition" to all families. However, private paying parents may qualify for a discounted tuition rate based on family size and income. You will be billed according to the income information you give us. Please let the Billing Coordinator know if your income changes at any time, so you are billed at the correct level.

BILLING POLICY

Red Caboose bills in advance for the month, based on the number of Fridays in the month. The bill shows any past due balance, the tuition charged for each week, payments received in the past month, and the total balance due by the end of the month.

The bills are either emailed or placed in the child's locker.

Part- Timers

Parents will be billed for the days the child is scheduled. If parents wish to add any "drop-in days", you must check with the Lead Teacher for availability of space. A parent cannot "switch" one scheduled day for a "drop-in day". The charge for "drop-in days" will be added to the next month's bill.

PAYMENT POLICY

Payment of Tuition and Co-Pays

Payment is due in advance, by Friday, for the following week. Parents may pay for more than one week in advance if they wish.

If a parent overpays their account, the over-payment will be credited on the next bill.

Late Fees

A \$10.00 late fee will be charged on accounts that are more than two weeks overdue. Subsequently, a \$10.00 late fee may be charged weekly until the account is current.

Parents are strongly encouraged to speak with the Billing Coordinator before their account becomes overdue. The Billing Coordinator may arrange a payment plan with parents who have an outstanding balance. Continuous past due accounts may be grounds for disenrollment of the child/ren from our program.

Payment Upon Withdrawal

A family withdrawing from Red Caboose will be given a final bill. Full payment should be made by the last day of attendance. If a private paying family has a credit balance, they will receive a refund.

CITY OR COUNTY FUNDING

Parents who receive city or county tuition assistance are responsible for paying the difference between Red Caboose's full tuition and the amount paid for by the funding source (co-pay). There is scholarship money available for this purpose.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

The Executive Director, Preschool Program Director, and Billing Coordinator are available to give you information about tuition assistance for child care.

SCHEDULE CHANGES AND WITHDRAWAL

A two-week written notice is required before a child changes schedule or withdraws. Forms for this purpose are available on the bulletin boards. Schedule changes must be approved by the Lead Teacher to ensure consistent group size.

During the period of May 1 through September 1, one month written notice is required for change of schedule or withdrawal.

If the required notice is not given, parents will be charged for the length of the required notice following the date of notification.

ENROLLMENT FEES

A \$40 registration fee is collected upon enrollment; a \$25 association membership fee is collected upon enrollment and annually thereafter, entitling each family to two half-votes at the annual meeting. If a child is withdrawn and later re-enrolled, a \$40 re-enrollment fee is collected.

LATE PICKUP FEES

A late pickup fee of:

\$6.00 up to the first five minutes and

\$6.00 for any portion of each additional five minutes

will be charged for each child left after:

5:30 in the Turtle Room

6:00 in the Elephant,

Bumblebee and Grasshopper Rooms.

Teachers will attempt to notify parents, or emergency contacts, if a child has not been picked up by closing time.

Parents who arrive late must sign a late pickup form stating the time the child was picked up. Late pickup fees will be added to the next month's bill.

Consistent lateness on the part of parents (more than three times per month or six times in a year) may be grounds for disenrollment. Parents will receive a written warning before this action is taken.

HOLIDAYS

Red Caboose is closed on the following holidays. You are charged for these days if your child is scheduled to attend on them.

NEW YEAR'S EVE DAY
NEW YEAR'S DAY
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
MEMORIAL DAY
4th OF JULY
LABOR DAY
THANKSGIVING
DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING
CHRISTMAS EVE DAY
CHRISTMAS DAY

If a holiday falls on a weekend, the center will be closed on a preceding or following weekday. Yearly closing schedules will be given to each family in January.

Sign up sheets are placed by each log close to holiday times; please let us know your whether or not your child will attend as regularly scheduled. We plan staffing according to the number of children expected each day during these periods.

CLASSROOM SET-UP DAY

Red Caboose teachers have a classroom set-up day the Friday before public school starts in the fall. There will be no care for children on that day. You are charged for the day if your child is scheduled to attend.

Health & Nutrition Policies

ILLNESS POLICY

Each child shall be observed upon arrival by a staff person for symptoms of illness and injury. Any evidence of unusual bruises, contusions, lacerations or burns received by a child in or out of center care shall be recorded in the medication and injury log book and reported to the Preschool Program Director.

Any child well enough to come to the center is well enough to go outside. Any exceptions to this must be cleared with a staff person from the child's classroom

Ill Child Procedure

Children may not attend when they show the following symptoms: temperature over 100 degrees with other symptoms of illness, such as lice, ringworm, unexplained rash, vomiting, diarrhea, or illness or condition having the potential to affect the health of other persons. You should notify us if the child contracts a communicable illness.

If any of the above symptoms appear while a child is at our program, we will contact you to ask that you take the child home immediately. If we cannot reach you, we will call the emergency contacts listed on the child's emergency card. It is your responsibility to keep these cards up-to-date and inform the emergency contacts of their responsibilities.

Children who become ill will be provided with a cot and a blanket and isolated (within sight and hearing of a staff person) until you or another designated person picks them up.

In addition, the staff will take the following into consideration when deciding whether you should be called to pick up a child who is feeling sick, uncomfortable, lethargic or unhappy:

- the child's illness prevents him/her from participating in routine activities.
- the illness requires more care than our staff can provide without compromising the needs of other children in the group.
- keeping the child here poses an increased risk to that child, or to other children or adults, due to symptoms including, but not limited to, cough or mucus discharge.

When a child is suspected of having a reportable communicable disease or condition, the City Public Health Department will be notified.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

Whenever a child has a reportable communicable disease or condition transmittable through normal contact, the parents of exposed children will be notified.

A child with a reportable communicable disease may not be admitted or be permitted to remain in the center during the period when the disease is communicable.

A child may be readmitted if the parents provide a statement from the physician that the child's condition is no longer contagious, or if the child has been absent for the period of time equal to the longest usual incubation period for the disease as specified by the Department of Public Health.

We will use Public Health Service Guidelines for determining disposition of suspected or confirmed communicable diseases.

We will comply with applicable statutes and rules regarding exclusion of children.

MEDICATIONS

We can administer prescription or non-prescription medications only under the following conditions:

- a. a signed and dated Authorization to Administer Medication form is on file. This form must be filled out by you once at the beginning of each new request for the administration of any medication.

Blanket authorizations that exceed the length of time specified on the label are prohibited.

- b. medication is in the original container and labeled with your child's name, name of drug, dosage, and directions for administering. The dosage and frequency must not exceed the guidelines on the label. If they exceed the guidelines, written instructions from the doctor are required.
- c. You must make a daily note in the room log, stating your child's name, the name of the medicine, time it is to be given, dosage, and your signature. Staff will initial in the log that the medication has been given, and will enter a written report in the bound medical log.

You are responsible for updating or removing medications from the locked medicine cabinet and refrigerator.

SUNSCREEN

Red Caboose provides sunscreen for the children. Every spring there is a permission sign-up sheet in each classroom with the active ingredients of the sunscreen listed on it.

Please let us know if you would like us to use sunscreen on your child by signing and dating the sheet. If you prefer, you may bring in your own sunscreen.

ACCIDENT OR INJURY

Superficial wounds will be cleaned with soap and water and protected by a band-aid. Ice will be applied to minor bumps or bruises.

A record of accident or injury will be filled out by a teacher, given to you for your signature, kept in your child's file and entered in the medical log.

In case of head injury, your child will be observed for symptoms of concussion, and you will be notified.

In case of serious accident or injury, staff will act to the extent of their first aid training while a parent or 911 is being called. Your child will be transported by ambulance to the hospital of your choice as noted on emergency card, or to University Hospital if none is selected. A Red Caboose staff person will go the hospital with your child. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

MEDICAL EXAM & HISTORY

Each child under 2 years must have an initial physical exam not more than 6 months prior or no later than 3 months after admission, and a follow-up at least every 6 months. Each child over 2 years must have an initial physical exam not more than 1 year prior to, or no later than 3 months after admission, and a subsequent exam at least every 2 years thereafter. The medical exam form must be signed and dated by a physician, physician assistant, or HealthCheck provider.

A Health History and Emergency Care Plan Form must be completed by the first day of attendance.

IMMUNIZATION

Each child must have a record of immunizations on file within 30 days of admission.

TOILETING

Children need not be toilet trained to attend Red Caboose; teachers will work with you and your child on toilet training.

FOOD PROGRAM

The focus of the food program at Red Caboose is to provide healthy and nutritious meals and snacks, and incorporating as many fresh, unprocessed foods as possible. Milk is available at all meals. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and homemade entrees made "from scratch" are emphasized. Use of salt, sugars, and preservatives is minimal, and no foods containing added nitrates are served.

Meals and Snacks

Red Caboose serves breakfast at 8:30 and lunch at 11:15/11:30. We offer snack starting between 2:15 and 2:30, and late snack between 5:15 and 5:30.

Menus are posted weekly on the bulletin boards and in the kitchen.

We are a peanut and nut free facility.

Special Diets

Red Caboose serves both meat (mainly fish and poultry) and non-meat lunches; there is always a vegetarian option. Breakfast and snack do not include meat.

A special diet, based on a medical condition, excluding food allergies, but including nutrient concentrates and supplements, may be served only upon request of the parent and with written instruction of the child's physician. This includes soy milk.

A special diet based on a food allergy may be served upon written request of the parent.

When a child has a special diet, Red Caboose may be able to fully accommodate the diet. If a child's diet is very restrictive, you may be asked to bring in special food.

Child Care and Adult Food Program

Red Caboose is a participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The CACFP gives financial assistance to child care centers throughout the state. In Wisconsin, the CACFP is administered by the Department of Public Instruction. Reimbursement to the center is based on the USDA Income form which must be completed yearly by each family.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the *Department*. *(Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)*

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

Other Policies

CHILD GUIDANCE

The staff use positive techniques to guide children's behavior, so that each child learns how to best function as an individual within a group. Teachers explain the basic expectations, rules, and limits to the children in a clear, understandable way, and provide consistent follow-through. Directions are given in firm, positive terms. Redirection is used as appropriate.

The use of "logical or natural consequences" and problem solving are encouraged when discipline is necessary. Emphasis is placed on the inappropriate behavior, not the child.

Teachers model problem-solving techniques and encourage children to talk and listen to each other, using problem-solving skills as developmentally appropriate.

The staff have the opportunity to discuss individual children and behavior problems at weekly room meetings. To provide consistency for the children, staff members will discuss methods of dealing with behavior and needs with the parent.

The staff may wish to consult a professional resource person from outside the center for additional evaluation and suggestions, with written permission from the parent (see Consultants Statement)

CONSULTANTS STATEMENT

There are many resources available to the staff at Red Caboose in our community, including Madison Metropolitan School District, Rainbow Project, and City of Madison Child Care. If the staff in a room decides that help, advice, diagnosis, or an outside opinion is needed about an individual child, the teachers, after discussion with the Preschool Program Director, will talk with the parent and get the parent's written permission to call in a consultant.

The consultant may then discuss the child with the teachers; observe, interview or test the child; and meet with the staff and parent.

The consultant may suggest strategies to use with the child at Red Caboose and home, and may suggest further evaluation of the child. A consultant's conclusions or opinions may be one factor in deciding whether Red Caboose has the necessary resources to meet the child's needs.

PLANNING FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Red Caboose is committed to serving all children and, as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, will make reasonable accommodations to address the special needs of enrolled children and children who wish to enroll.

Every parent will be asked to identify their child's special needs at the time of admission, and are required to inform the Center if their child develops a special need after enrollment. This helps the Center prepare for a successful experience for the child. Special needs may include but are not limited to: attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, physical handicaps, disruptive behaviors, learning disabilities, medical conditions or other health impairments.

When a special need is identified, the Preschool Program Director will conduct an individualized assessment of the child. The individualized assessment includes scheduling a meeting between the staff and parents to discuss the extent of the child's needs, to determine whether the Center can meet the needs, and to assess the need for and availability of possible outside resources.

As part of the individualized assessment, the Center will request information about the child's special needs including, but not limited to, the child's individualized education plan (IEP). Parent cooperation in providing all pertinent information to the Center is necessary for a meaningful individualized assessment.

The purpose of the individualized assessment is to explore reasonable accommodations, to determine whether the Center can meet the needs of the child without fundamentally altering the Center's program, and to determine if the child's presence poses a direct threat to the health or safety of other children or teachers.

All information regarding the child and family will be kept confidential in accordance with the Center's confidentiality policy.

DISENROLLMENT POLICY

Red Caboose may terminate a child's enrollment in the following situations:

- 1) Failure to pay fees or make arrangements with Billing Coordinator
- 2) Failure to observe rules regarding late fees or other arrival and departure rules.
- 3) Needs of individual child cannot be served by center (see below).

Red Caboose tries to meet the needs of each child enrolled in our program. However, it is sometimes necessary to disenroll a child whose needs cannot adequately be met with our available resources.

When disenrollment is being considered, the teachers, in consultation with the Preschool Program Director, will initiate a conference, or series of conferences with the parents. The situation will be discussed, and plans will be made for solutions, responsibilities, and follow-up. Options may include: calling a consultant to observe the child at Red Caboose, behavior modification plans, coordination between home and Red Caboose, and scheduling changes.

Disenrollment may be necessary if the staff and/or parents believe that our program is not an optimal placement for the child. Factors to be considered in this decision may include:

- extent of problematic behavior in the classroom
- demands on staff time
- availability of resources to Red Caboose
- extent of disruption of the classroom
- possibility of danger to the child or others in the class
- ability of staff to meet child's needs
- willingness of parents to work with us and/or get outside help

Confidentiality among Red Caboose staff will be maintained at all times. Written records of meetings, etc., will be kept by Red Caboose staff.

Red Caboose reserves the right to disenroll a child. If the center and parent/s mutually decide that placement at Red Caboose is inappropriate, written notice of withdrawal may be waived.

ACCESS TO RECORDS AND INFORMATION

In the absence of a court order or other legal document specifically prohibiting access to records, conferences, or information, this policy will be followed by staff:

Natural parents and legal guardians, and persons authorized in writing by a natural parent or legal guardian (for example, step-parent, family friend, grandparent, partner etc.) shall have access, upon request, to all records and reports maintained on their child. The staff will be available for conferences with the persons mentioned above to discuss the child's adjustment to the program, growth, and development. If necessary, the staff will hold a separate conference for each parent.

The staff will be available to the persons mentioned above to discuss daily events at the center. When a child lives in two households, and both households have contact with the center, the center will routinely make available a copy of any printed material for both families.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

All information regarding children and families enrolled in Red Caboose will be considered confidential by the staff, including substitutes and student teachers. The staff will not discuss individual children or families with parents of other children in the center or with anyone outside the center, with the exception of the Madison Accreditation staff who may be used for consultation, in a confidential manner, for the purpose of improving the quality of our program and sup-

porting staff to best meet the needs of the children in the classroom.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

Child care teachers and volunteers are required by State law to report known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. In accordance with this requirement, any Red Caboose staff person with knowledge or suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child enrolled in Red Caboose shall report it to Child Protective Services immediately. Confidentiality will be maintained in cases where Red Caboose makes a report to the County; discussion will be limited to Red Caboose employees only.

DIVERSITY POLICY

Red Caboose supports all children and families and respects the differences among them. We are committed to serving children and families of all races, cultures, family structures and economic groups, including those with special needs. We believe all children benefit from diversity.

We strive to help every child feel proud of his or her own family and culture and to appreciate the rich variety of families in the center and community. Teachers respond to all children's questions and interests in developmentally appropriate ways. We openly discuss diversity issues and actively support all children.

We respect family cultures and invite parents to share traditions with us (special foods, holiday celebrations, favorite music etc.). Staff and parents will plan together how best to present these traditions in the classroom. We hope to give children insight into the different family cultures of their classmates and support children from less well represented cultural and religious backgrounds by recognizing their experiences in the classroom.

Religious holidays are not celebrated at Red Caboose, and the teaching of religious doctrine is specifically excluded. Staff respond to children's questions about religious holidays factually and non-judgmentally, perhaps beginning, "Some people believe or observe...".

We do observe and celebrate some non-religious holidays. These observances are designed to give focus to the passing of the year, to celebrate particular values (such as friendship on Valentine's Day), and to be fun for the children and staff.

Our classroom environments reflect the diversity of the world around us. Posters on the walls, books, music and songs, dolls and toys show the children many different kinds of families, cultures, races, ethnicities, and physical abilities of human beings in unbiased and nonstereotypical ways.

Our curriculum, enrollment and holiday policies are designed to encourage a wide variety of families to feel welcome at Red Caboose.

ROOM TRANSITIONS

Children are enrolled into a classroom on the basis of age. The Turtle Room accepts children one to two, Elephants two to three, Bumblebees three and four, and Grasshoppers four and five. Ages overlap in each program, allowing for individual differences in children as well as the ages of children wishing to enroll at Red Caboose. Unlike the public schools, all children do not change rooms simultaneously. However, peak times for transition (June and August) do exist. Children will be changing rooms throughout the year based on a combination of children's needs, parent's desires, and space available in each classroom.

The key to a successful transition into a new room is good communication among staff from both rooms, the child, and the parents. Some children will make this transition with great ease, and some will benefit from a slower transition. As a child is approaching the time to move into the next room, staff and parents will develop a plan for assuring a smooth transition, including visits to the new room. This plan will take into consideration the child's bond to the staff and the children in the old room, and the need to develop such bonds with the children and staff in the new room, as well as the need to become accustomed to the routines in the new room.

WINTER WEATHER CLOSING POLICY

Red Caboose will be closed when the Madison Public Schools do not open at the beginning of the day, due to inclement weather. If the Madison Public Schools have a delayed start time, Red Caboose will be open as usual. If the Madison Public Schools close during the school day, Red Caboose will remain open.

However, in the event of a winter weather-related emergency, the Executive Director, in consultation with the President of the Board of Directors, may decide to close the center, and will notify parents via announcements on TV and radio..

Parents will be charged the usual rate if the child is scheduled for a day/s that Red Caboose closes due to weather.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Additional policies may be found in the Red Caboose policy book and are available upon request. State Licensing Regulations are available in the Pre-school Program Director's Office.

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider.”