

2020/2021

Wild Earth Preschool Family Handbook



Wild Earth Preschool
650 S. R.L. Thornton Freeway
Dallas, TX 75203-3013

Education Main: 469-554-7300
Education Fax: 469-554-7382

Early Childhood Manager

Katie Grimes
Katie.Grimes@dallaszoo.com
469-554-7346

Early Childhood Assistant Supervisor

Anna Lewis
Anna.Lewis@dallaszoo.com
469-554-7305

Director of Education

Marti Copeland



Family Handbook

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Welcome

Family Handbook

Greetings, families!

We are delighted to introduce you to Wild Earth Preschool, the Dallas Zoo's nature preschool.

This handbook is intended to assist you in making important decisions about your child's care, and I encourage you to use it as a stepping stone to further conversations with me about the goals you have for your child and any questions you may have about your child's best fit.

Policies in this handbook are subject to change as we progress, and we'll notify you in writing if changes occur.

We look forward to meeting you and your family!

Katie Grimes

Early Childhood Manager

Wild Earth Preschool

About Wild Earth Preschool

Dallas Zoo

The Dallas Zoo is committed to engaging people and saving wildlife, with a vision of making a better world for animals. Wild Earth Preschool believes that by connecting young children to animals and nature, we improve the outlook both for the child and for the future of the natural world. Young children who are immersed in a sensory-rich, nature-rich, authentic, and dynamic environment benefit in the areas of cognition, physical skills, social skills, and emotional intelligence. And when children grow up connected to nature, they are likely to continue to inquire, explore, and protect it.

Nature Preschools

As a nature preschool, Wild Earth Preschool brings together the tenants of high quality early childhood education and environmental education, with a focus on connecting young children to animals and nature for the benefit of both the child and the natural world. Inspired also by the Reggio Emilia approach, the preschool follows an emergent curriculum with opportunities for project based learning and for children to use their "100 languages" of expression. Our program is guided by the principles of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Daily field trips to the zoo offer the child rich experiences in animal and plant interaction, global awareness, nature play, and the many ways the zoo community works together.

Classroom Families

Wild Earth Preschool classroom families consist of no more than 14 children ages 3-5, facilitated by a dedicated and knowledgeable teaching team. Mixed-age classrooms provide benefits in whole child development. During field trips, any group containing one or more 3-year olds will have a ratio of 1:6. Groups that do not have 3-year olds may have a ratio of 1:8.

Our Teachers

Our teaching staff are dedicated professionals, chosen for their interest in both the education of young children and the environment. The educator's role includes appreciating and respecting each child; guiding child development with wonder, fascination, and awe; preparing and supporting the learning environment; developing a joyful and peaceful class family; and partnering with the child's family and culture. Educators will structure the environment for child-directed learning and will provide opportunities for daily small group and individual interactions to scaffold learning, to model skills, to provide feedback, and to assess learning. Both indoor and outdoor classroom spaces will reflect the opportunity for children to experience a variety of materials in different centers for whole-child development across all domains.

Our Families

We believe that families are powerful partners in educating their children. You are your child's first teachers and their lifetime mentors, so the support you provide of your child's play, learning, development, and growing skills in conservation will nurture their growth in our program. Parents and guardians are invited to actively participate in the school through volunteer opportunities, sharing a skill, classroom conferences, and ongoing communication with both teachers and the Early Childhood Manager. In addition, parents and guardians are invited to visit the center at any time during our hours of operation without prior approval to observe your child, the program activities, or the facility. If you have questions or would like more information about ways to be involved, please see the preschool manager.



Family Handbook

Our Administration

Wild Earth Preschool is a program of the education department at the Dallas Zoo and Children's Aquarium at Fair Park. The Dallas Zoo and Children's Aquarium at Fair Park are operated by Dallas Zoo Management, Inc. (DZM) under a management agreement with the City of Dallas. The education department is directed by Marti Copeland. Wild Earth Preschool is headed by Early Childhood Manager, Katie Grimes. Katie has more than 20 years of experience in public, private, and informal educational settings, with specialties in environmental education, early childhood education, family programming, trauma-informed care, and special education. She earned her B.A. in Humanities and M.A. in Teaching with a concentration in special education from Trinity University, and is a Registered Horticultural Therapist.

Early Childhood Manager Designee, Additional Staff, Volunteers, and Interns:

At times when the Early Childhood Manager is not on site, a qualified designee will be assigned, and this assignment will be communicated to the preschool teaching staff.

We are thankful to have the support of the Dallas Zoo education department, and the Dallas Zoo volunteer and intern program. Education instructors, staff, or volunteers who assist the preschool as substitute caregivers or manager designees will meet DFPS minimum standards for caregivers; and those who assist in the center in a non-caregiver role will meet DFPS minimum standards for employees. Staff or volunteers that meet the standards for employees, but not for caregivers, will not be left with the children in the absence of a caregiver.

Licensing

Wild Earth Preschool adheres to the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for review in the education office or by contacting the local licensing office at (214) 951-7902, the Child Care Information Line at 1-800-862-5252 or at the TDFPS website: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>.

Families may also request to review the preschool's most recent licensing, fire, and health and safety inspection reports located in the office.

Gang Free Zone

Under Texas Law, the childcare center is within a designated gang-free zone that extends 1,000 feet from its boundaries. Anyone engaging in organized criminal activity or certain gang-related criminal activity within this area is in violation of this law and subject to increased penalty under state law. Notification is posted on the bulletin board in each classroom of Wild Earth Preschool and can be found in sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

Weapons Policy

DZM prohibits any person, except authorized law enforcement and contracted security personnel, from entering its premises with weapons of any kind. Employees shall not possess weapons while performing DZM business or in the licensed child care unless authorized to do so in the event of a Code Red animal situation. In this circumstance, children and preschool staff are directed to a safe place.

Smoking Policy

The Dallas Zoo is a non-smoking park. Wild Earth Preschool staff members or zoo employees who smoke must do so in designated areas which are at least 25 feet from the licensed childcare center, and must wash their hands before returning to work. Smoking must not be seen or smelled by the children.

Operating Times

Hours of Operation

8:00 am – 5:30 pm

Monday – Friday, all months of the year

Enrollment Options

Days per week:

Full week enrollment only is available for the 2020-2021 Academic Year session.

Hours of attendance per day:

Standard Care enrollment is 8:30 am – 5:30 pm.

Arrival before 8:30 am is available with prior arrangement or by appointment for no extra charge.

Late fees apply after 5:45 pm.

Sessions:

Children may enroll for a school year session, a summer session, or both.

Transportation

Parents or guardians are responsible for providing safe transportation for their children arriving to and leaving from the center, including the use of age appropriate child restraint systems as required by law.

Center Closures

Weather

If Dallas Independent School District or the Dallas Zoo and Children's Aquarium at Fair Park closes for business or opens late due to inclement weather, Wild Earth Preschool will follow their decision. The school will alert parents and guardians by text message or alternate designated method. If inclement weather causes the preschool to close early, staff will contact parents or guardians by text message or alternate designated method.

Health Emergencies

Wild Earth Preschool is subject to regulatory closure from local and state agencies for health emergencies. Please see our Covid-19 policy addendum for full information.

Holidays and Professional Development Days

Wild Earth Preschool will close each year for certain holidays, professional development, and teacher work days. These dates are listed on the annual academic calendar that is provided with the admissions packet.

What to Bring to Wild Earth Preschool

Please label all belongings.

- ✓ 1-2 **changes of clothes and shoes in a labeled plastic box** that is smaller than 15"x15"x15". Don't forget underwear and socks (can stay at school)
- ✓ Spill-proof water **bottle** with covered or fold-down spout (take home daily for washing and sanitizing)
- ✓ Safely-packed, low-sugar, nutritious **lunch** (take home lunch box daily)
- ✓ A **cuddle item** for rest if desired and a **blanket** or naptime roll, placed **in a labeled plastic box** that is smaller than 15"x15"x15". These items will go home once a week for washing, or if soiled.
- ✓ When applicable: Wear one **fabric face covering**. Bring 2 extra. These will be placed in reusable pencil pouches and sent home as needed for cleaning. Provide clean, sanitized face coverings each day.
- ✓ **Come to school dressed in winter clothing as needed:** layers, gaiters, coats, hats, gloves, boots
- ✓ **Come to school dressed in rain gear as needed**, including unlined rain boots or weather-proof winter boots. Provide a change of shoes for rainy days.
- ✓ A smile!

Dress and Nature Play

Nature play can get messy! Children at Wild Earth Preschool are encouraged to engage in big body play and focused activities that include water, sand, soil, non-toxic plants, the investigation of non-stinging insects and animals, etc. During the course of play they will get dirty and wet. Parents are asked to provide sturdy play clothing and shoes appropriate for the weather, and at least one change of clothing and shoes. Multiple changes are sometimes needed.

Please provide modesty shorts or leggings under dresses.

Shoes should be closed-toe for your child's safety, and water resistance is recommended.

Fall and Spring Clothing:

In the fall and spring, appropriate clothing for the weather varies greatly. Please check the forecast to decide the best option, and provide layers and jackets as needed for abrupt temperature changes.

Rain jackets and boots are needed for wet day. Rain pants or all-in-one rain suits are also helpful.

Winter Clothing:

In the winter, layers are a must! Fleece outerwear is preferred by most children for ease of movement.

Leggings, long underwear, warm socks, and boots keep children warm outside during play.

Hats and water-resistant gloves or mittens keep extremities warm.

To prevent strangulation, children should not wear scarves or clothing with neck-ties, like some hoodies.

A neck gaiter is a safe alternative to a scarf.

Summer Clothing:

In the summer, your child should wear lightweight shorts, pants, T-shirts, dresses, etc.

A swimsuit, towel, and closed toe swim shoes will be needed each week of summer session. The swimsuit and towel will be sent home for washing after each use.

Sunscreen

Sunscreen should be applied daily by the parent or guardian prior to arrival. Parents or guardians will sign a consent or non-consent to allow the teachers to reapply. If consent is not granted, the child will need an alternate form of sun protection. Wild Earth Preschool uses a sunscreen with at least 35 SPF.

Insect Repellent

Parents or guardians will sign a consent or non-consent to allow the teachers to apply insect repellent. If consent is not granted, the child will need an alternate form of insect protection. Wild Earth Preschool uses a family-safe, EPA approved insect repellent.

Dry skin and lips

Parents or guardians will sign a consent or non-consent to allow the teachers to apply protection for dry skin and/or lips. If consent is not granted, the parent may send their own option. Wild Earth Preschool uses child-safe products for skin and lip protection. Lip protection, such as Vaseline, is applied in a hygienic manner such as a single-use Q-tip. Skin protection may include a hypoallergenic skin lotion with a pump or squeeze applicator.

Curriculum and Activities

Environmental and Conservation Education

We believe that young children develop a lifelong relationship with the environment by first experiencing the wonder and awe of its natural beauty and mysteries. Children enrolled in Wild Earth Preschool will spend 50% or more of their day outdoors during all safe weather conditions, either at the preschool's outdoor area, or at the zoo grounds on an expedition. Authentic investigations, playful interactions, and discoveries guide children's learning of systems, our interdependence with nature, and place based knowledge. Environmental education opportunities are guided by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) Guidelines for Excellence: Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs.

https://cdn.naaee.org/sites/default/files/final_ecee_guidelines_from_chromographics_lo_res.pdf

Integrated sustainability and conservation practices include:

- Turning off lights and water when not in use
- Reducing, Re-using, and Recycling (the 3 R's)
- Respecting all living and non-living things
- Responsible collecting
- Composting
- Gardening with organic, sustainable practices

Global Awareness

The Dallas Zoo environment provides the context for children to develop an awareness of and an appreciation for the ecosystems, people, and cultures of our world. Children will broaden their understanding of our global community through guided investigations of zoo exhibits, independent play, animal and plant care, and the incorporation of multi-cultural art, language, music, and dance within the context of experiential learning opportunities.

Project Based Learning for Whole Child Development

By observing children's play, paying close attention to the questions children ask, and involving the children in the planning process, the preschool teaching staff will facilitate the implementation of authentic, concept-based projects that stimulate the children's approaches to learning and integrate child development in the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional domains. Some of these projects may be ongoing for a week; some may last a month or longer. The projects, sparked by the children's curiosity and wonder, provide opportunity for skill acquisition in literacy, math, science, and social studies while developing the whole child. For example children may investigate the various ways people and animals communicate; different helping relationships between animals, plants, and people; healthy food and how it grows; construction techniques; the ways living and non-living things move; gardening; conservation actions; and more.

Zoo Field Trips

During expeditions to the zoo, children will conduct investigations and/or engage in nature play. Some weeks, the group may forego the animal exhibit area for additional time in nature play. Field trips may include the following:

- Observation of zoo animals, habitats, and horticulture
- Interaction with zoo staff
- Interaction with animals and environments in the Lacerte Family Children's Zoo
- Interaction with outreach animals
- Nature play
- Nature walks
- Educator modeled mini-lessons to develop skills in the cognitive, social/emotional, and physical domains. For example, mini-lessons will focus on literacy development through environmental print; language development through call and respond chants and discussions; science and math skills through graphing, sorting, and counting; gross motor skills through locomotion activities, animal mimicry, and manipulation of natural materials; fine motor skills through manipulation of small objects and materials, and social/emotional skills through guided cooperation and activities that require self-regulation.

Independent Skills of Daily Living

are integrated in the daily schedule as teachers provide the time and support necessary for children to dress, put on shoes and boots, put on coats and outdoor gear, prepare and eat food, wash hands, use the bathroom, and care for animals, plants, and each other with increasing independence according to their development.

Child-Directed Learning and Activity Opportunities

In the outdoor environments, children will choose activity centers designed by the teaching staff to develop positive social interactions and pre-academic skills. Children are invited to interact with teachers and the learning environment in a way that develops inquiry, creativity, and thought processes, or expands on a project or interest. Activity opportunities include construction, dramatic play, language and literacy, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math), and daily living skills. Activities include both group, imaginative play environments and individual skill-based work.

Developing Healthy Minds for Well-Being and Brain Function

Wild Earth Preschool incorporates Dr. Dan Siegel's model of the Healthy Mind Platter, integrating into each day the seven essential mental activities that create well-being and optimize brain matter. These activities include Focus Time, Play Time, Connecting Time, Physical Time, Time In (reflection), Down Time, and Sleep Time. By developing these habits of the mind early in life, children establish a foundation for lifelong mental health and brain functioning.

Technology Policy

For more information, see the NAEYC position statement: [Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/topics/PS_technology_WEB.pdf)

https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/topics/PS_technology_WEB.pdf

In Early Childhood Education, technology refers to the use of tools for learning such as rulers, magnifying glasses, gears, hand tools, etc. in addition to the high technology of computers and electronics.

At Wild Earth Preschool, technology and interactive media are used with the 3-5 year olds as tools to intentionally address individual learning goals within a developmentally appropriate framework, to extend learning, and to enrich the curriculum.

The use of passive media such as television, film, videotapes, and audiotapes is discouraged. When used, a member of the teaching staff will mediate to offer discussion and interpretation. The duration will not exceed more than 30 minutes in a day. Other activities will be available to a child who chooses not to engage in the media.

When digital or interactive media is used, it will support creativity, exploration, pretend play, active learning, and/or outdoor learning. Examples might include taking digital photos, videotaping dramatic play, or researching an animal or habitat.

Music, audio, and digital images will not be used as background ambiance in the learning environment, in order to teach children's brain to assign meaning to sensory input. These elements will be used only as part of a learning activity in which a child is actively engaging.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to work together to limit a child's total screen time at school and at home to no more than 2 hours per day, and to develop responsible digital citizenship.

Sample Activity Schedule

Actual daily schedule may vary. Schedules may also vary by season.

Time	Schedule block	Sample activities
8:00-8:30 am	Early Arrival by arrangement Connecting Time, Focus Time, Play time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Living Skills – prep for the day • Outdoor time 8:00-8:30 in conducive weather • Connecting with staff and children
8:30 – 9:00 am	Arrival Play Time, Physical Time, Connecting Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival • Greeting • Nature Play
9:00-11:15 am	Outdoor Learning Nature Play Activity Opportunities Expeditions Mid-morning snack at 9:45 Focus Time, Connecting Time, Physical Time, Play Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary learning in Language and literacy; STEM; Fine Arts; social emotional learning; environmental learning. • Expeditions to Zoo or garden areas, Animal Interactions • Music and Movement • Nature play integrates gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, social/emotional skills. Includes exploration, mud kitchen play, construction, dramatic play, artistic play, collecting, low climbing, balancing, lifting, puddle stomping, etc
11:30am-12:30 pm	Lunch Connecting Time, Time In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good nutrition and healthy lifestyles discussions. • Story-telling and reflection, literacy or math skills • Eating
12:30-1:30 pm	Rest Down Time, Sleep Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-regulation/relaxation skills • Rest, Quiet Time
1:30 – 2:15 pm	Extended Rest for nappers Skills time for non-nappers Down Time, Sleep Time, Focus Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nap • Quiet activities for non-nappers
2:30 – 5:30 pm	Outdoor Learning Mid-afternoon snack Gradual Pick-up Nature Play Activity Opportunities Expeditions near to center Focus Time, Connecting Time, Physical Time, Play Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary learning in Language and literacy; STEM; Fine Arts; social emotional learning; environmental learning. • Expeditions to nature areas near the child care buildings • Music and Movement • Nature play integrates gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, social/emotional skills. Includes exploration, mud kitchen play, construction, dramatic play, artistic play, collecting, low climbing, balancing, lifting, puddle stomping, etc

More Information on Field Trips, Water Activities, and Animals

Field Trips

Wild Earth Preschool is located on the grounds of the Dallas Zoo, which provides a stimulating learning environment and promotes whole-child development through authentic experiences, enrichment, and investigations.

Each daily excursion away from the licensed classrooms and outdoor area into zoo property where children will mix with zoo guests will be considered a field trip, and the following standards will be applied:

Notification:

- Dallas Zoo field trips: Permission for field trips to the Dallas Zoo is provided on the Informed Consent form signed by parents or guardians during enrollment. This consent is granted from the date signed until the end of each academic year in June. It will be renewed for each summer session and each academic year session that the child attends.

Field Trip Ratios:

According to DFPS licensing standards, the preschool will maintain a field trip ratio of 1:6 for 3 year olds and 1:8 ratio for 4 year olds. Ratio is determined by the youngest child in the group. Volunteers or other zoo staff may be used to meet field trip ratio, as long as they have cleared background checks and the licensed classroom ratios of 1 paid caregiver: 15 children are followed. At least two adults will supervise each group, ensuring that they stay within eyesight and earshot of one another and every child.

Field Trip Clothing:

- Each child will wear their Wild Earth Preschool identifying field trip tag, appropriate clothing for the weather and activity, and closed toe shoes. Identification on the tag includes the center name and phone number.
- Educators will wear their zoo education department uniforms.

Field Trip health and safety:

Each educator will carry a list of the children in their supervision, and will conduct name-to-face checks each time they leave a location and arrive in a location, noting the time of each count. They will scan and do head counts frequently throughout an activity.

Each educator will be trained in pediatric CPR and first aid, will carry a communication radio, and will carry the following items:

- emergency medical release form and emergency contact information for each child
- food allergy emergency plan and medications, if applicable
- first aid kit

Field Trip Transportation:

Children, educators, and volunteers will walk on sidewalks to the Dallas Zoo from the education complex.

Water Activities

Wading pools at the preschool center: Wading pools at the licensed area of the preschool will be filled to two feet of water or less, drained and sanitized after each use, and stored in a locked storage shed when not in use.

Wading stream at the zoo: The Lacerte Family Children's Zoo area has a manufactured wading stream that holds less than 2 feet of water in a recirculating, filtered system. The stream covers less than 2,000 square feet of area. The zoo maintains the system with machinery rooms locked up, and water chemicals inaccessible to the children. A trained children's zoo employee has access to and is capable of turning off the pump and filtering system in case of an emergency.

When the stream is used the Early Childhood Manager will ensure that the staff is trained and the following safety regulations are met:

- Educators are actively supervising, with one educator stationed in close proximity to each drain gate, and they can clearly see all parts of the wading area and the bottom of the wading "stream".
- Educators and children are trained to maintain boundaries that avoid drain gate areas
- At least 2 life saving devices will be available
- At least 2 educators are supervising the play, maintaining water play ratios as specified in Minimum Standards 746.2105 (currently 1:6 for 3 year olds, 1:8 for 4 year olds).

Animals

Interacting with animals helps children learn to connect with them and the natural world, and they are an essential part of the Wild Earth Preschool Program. As a part of the Zoo, we will benefit from the varied experiences available, and will support the children as they connect to the animals.

In addition to studying animals in the zoo habitats and surrounding urban wildlife habitats, we have the opportunity to interact with outreach animals that can be used in field trip programming and in the classroom. Some of these animals may be available for the children to carefully touch with the guidance of a trained handler. All animals in the Dallas Zoo collection have been properly vaccinated and are under the care of staff veterinarian.

Discipline and Guidance

Wild Earth Preschool defines discipline as the methods to assist a child in developing self-regulation, the goal of which is for children to learn to maintain composure, self-advocate, develop empathy, learn problem-solving skills, and to choose pro-social behavior. Learning these skills is a gradual and developmental process, and must be modeled by adults who exhibit, demonstrate, and actively teach the skills through methods of positive guidance. Structures of the positive guidance system at Wild Earth Preschool include the following:

- Individualized and consistent guidance appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Using "I notice" statements and encouragement of pro-social behaviors.
- Reminding children of the desired behavior through the display of visual and pictorial classroom procedures and verbal cues.
- Creation of a family classroom culture with a morning meeting and individual commitments to follow the guidelines
- Provision of a safe space and self-selected time to allow a child to self-regulate in the midst of strong emotions
- Redirection to desired behavior with encouragement and problem solving techniques
- Assistance in defining the problem or conflict and generating resolution options
- Experience of the natural consequences, within a safe and pro-social environment, that enable a child to develop responsibility by learning from his/her mistakes.
- Incorporation of the Conscious Discipline approach www.consciousdiscipline.com

In accordance with Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapter L, the following treatments of a child may not be used by staff or by any adult including parents at the child care center:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishments
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, biting, or hitting a child
- Putting anything in the child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing the child in isolation behind a closed or locked door without supervision
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for an inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age

Intervention and Discontinued Care

We train our teachers in strategies to support the inclusion of cultural, gender, and learning differences, and will work with families on an individual basis to resolve concerns that affect the child's success in the program, or recommend appropriate community resources for assistance or transition out of the program. At the discretion of the Early Childhood Manager, the care agreement may be terminated for reasons including but not limited to family cooperation with program policies and the child's behavior affecting the program quality or the safety of child, the group, and/or the teachers.

Communication

Family Orientation or Open House: Prior to enrollment, at least one parent or guardian must attend an orientation to the child care center such as an Open House or virtual program, which will include a presentation about the curriculum and policies and well as directions to our online *Family Handbook*.

Academic Year Calendar: The academic year calendar will be distributed each year. If any changes are made during the year, an email will be sent to all individuals listed as parent/guardian on the communications list to inform them of the change.

Teacher Observations: Teachers will communicate weekly with parents through the Brightwheel app about activities and insights they observe in the children. Some of these observations will relate to Texas Pre-K developmental guidelines.

Weekly activity plan and event communication: A *weekly activity plan* is available to parents on the Brightwheel app. School wide special events and activity notices will be sent as messages or in newsletters on the app.

Parent Teacher Conferences: Twice a year, once in fall and once in spring, Wild Earth Preschool will provide opportunities for parent teacher conferences as a means to communicate about the child's developmental progress and set or evaluate goals. Parents or guardians are welcome to schedule appointments at any time with their child's teacher or the Early Childhood Manager to discuss their child's progress.

Early Childhood Manager Contact Policy: Parents and guardians are invited to call, email, or send a Brightwheel message to the Early Childhood Manager at any time. For extensive conversations or for specific scheduling, an appointment is recommended to ensure an appropriate environment for mutual understanding and quality communication. To schedule an appointment, contact the Early Childhood Manager by phone (469-554-7346) or email (Katie.Grimes@dallaszoo.com).

Photography and Media Release

At times, the zoo staff or other photographers may request permission of the education department to photograph or take video of the children for marketing purposes or to share programmatic strategies. In addition, preschool staff may wish to share print or digital group photos that include multiple children with other Wild Earth Preschool Families for the purpose of communicating classroom activities and friendships. Parents may choose to consent to have their child photographed for these purposes or may choose not to allow it. Preference is indicated on the "Informed Consent" and admission form completed at registration, and may be changed by the parent or guardian at any time by completion of the "Change of Information" form.

Teachers will regularly photograph children for documentation of the learning process and parent communication; these photos will be distributed to parents through the Brightwheel app. The parents may also add family or friends to the app to receive profile photos. There is no consent required for these photos. They are an integral part of documenting the child's progress and are sent only to the family unless the child has a media release on file.

Child Nutrition

Wild Earth Preschool recognizes that good nutrition contributes to good body and brain development, and is committed to advocating for a healthy diet for its children.

Beverages and hydration

Parents will provide their child with a spill proof bottle, labeled with their child's name, that will be refilled with fresh water as needed during the day. They will take this cup home each evening to wash and sanitize it. 1% Milk and 100% juice, when provided, will be served in a separate cup. Juice will be served no more than one time per day, and generally reserved for special occasions.

Snacks

Children in care will be offered something to eat at least every 3 hours.

All children in care will be offered a mid-morning snack and an afternoon snack. Each snack will consist of at least one food group. Crackers will be offered in late afternoon as needed, or as a take-home snack at pick up. Wild Earth Preschool does not have a kitchen area, so snacks will be purchased ready-to-eat from a grocery store and will not be time or heat dependent. Some snack foods, such as fresh fruit, will be kept refrigerated in the classroom or in a refrigerator in the education department for taste or to extend life

Lunch

Lunch will be served at a regularly scheduled time between 11:30 am and 12:30 pm.

Children will bring a lunch each day that is safely packed, low in sugar and fat, and is nutritious.

Refrigeration and microwaves are not available for children's lunches.

Lunches should be packed in an insulated lunch box or lunch bag labeled with the child's name. The following foods should be kept cold: meat, poultry, fish, egg, milk, cheese, yogurt, fresh fruit or vegetables, or opened cans of fruit or pudding. Cold items should be packed in an insulated lunch bag or cooler with 2 frozen gel packs, one under the food and one on top of the food.

Use an insulated container or thermos to keep food like soup, chili, and stew hot. Fill the container with boiling water, let stand for a few minutes, empty, and then put in the piping hot food. Keep the insulated container closed until lunchtime to keep the food hot — 140 °F (73.9 °C) or above.

For children younger than 4 years old, lunches should follow the AAP and licensing guidelines for choking hazards, maintaining a lunch that is free from:

- Whole or chunks of hot dog (slice vertically to prevent circular chunks)
- Whole nuts and seeds
- Chunks of meat or cheese (use slices); Chunks of raw vegetables (slice, shred, or noodle)
- Whole grapes, grape tomatoes, or cherry tomatoes: slice vertically in half
- Hard or sticky candy
- Popcorn
- Chunks of peanut butter (spread it on an item)

Special diets

Medically necessary diets will be accommodated with physician's documentation. Parents may provide their child's snacks if they choose to follow an alternative diet.

Peanut Policy

Wild Earth Preschool reserves the right to implement a peanut-free policy on an as-needed basis for the safety of its students. If it is implemented, all parents will be notified in writing.

Eco-Healthy Celebrations

Celebrations are important! We want to ensure that birthdays and cultural celebrations are as healthy for the environment, and for our children's bodies and minds as they are for their social development.

Wild Earth Preschool will follow the guidelines of Eco-Healthy Child Care, a program of the Children's Environmental Health Network, when planning in-class celebrations. <http://cehn.org/our-work/eco-healthy-child-care/>

- Contact the Early Childhood Manager with a request to provide baked goods. We prefer un-iced muffins, oatmeal cookies, or frozen whole-fruit bars as healthy options. Alternatives must be provided for children with food allergies.
- If available, Children may choose to ride with their classmates on the carousel or on the mini-train on the day they celebrate their birthday. No additional fee is required.
- When goodie bags are offered, please provide options that are eco-healthy and child-healthy, such as mini oranges, playdough, recycled notebooks, eco-friendly soap, etc. in re-usable containers or compostable bags.

Breastfeeding Mothers

In accordance with DFPS Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers, parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their enrolled child while their child is in care. An adult sized chair is provided in each classroom for your convenience. Please speak with the Early Childhood Manager if you have additional requests.

Sign in and Sign out Procedures

Tracking Log

When you arrive, drive through the main parking lot near the forest, connect with a preschool staff member, and sign your child in through the Brightwheel app.

We prefer an arrival by 9:00 am to ensure a smooth transition.

If your child arrives late and the classroom family has begun an expedition, message the class on the Brightwheel app and wait for a reply regarding the class' location. The adult dropping off the child is responsible for meeting the classroom family at their location and supervising the child until the child is signed in.

Greeting Rituals

When a child arrives, the receiving teacher will greet the child by name, look into his or her eyes, and welcome the child to the room. Using methods from the Conscious Discipline approach, the teacher will ask the child how he/she would like to be greeted and show them picture symbols to choose from. When the child chooses a greeting, the teacher and child exchange the ritual.

Likewise, goodbye rituals between a child and the family member that is dropping off provide a healthy and predictable tradition to help ease the transition. We encourage a warm goodbye between you and your child and the inclusion of goodbye rituals.

Morning Health Check

See the Covid-19 Addendum for procedures during the current health emergency. In addition to those procedures, the teacher will do a morning health check for any signs of illness or injury. If the child exhibits signs of illness that would exclude him or her from care, the teacher will ask the parent to make other arrangements for the child's care that day. If the child exhibits a significant injury that was not present the day before, the teacher will ask the child what happened and ask the parent to complete an incident report to document the injury. See "Health and Safety: Illness regarding exclusion from care" for more information.

Pick-up

When picking up your child, make contact with the teacher and sign your child out through the Brightwheel app. Help your child collect their belongings. If you need to visit with your child's teacher about a non-urgent matter, please call the education office to make an appointment so the teacher can give you their full attention at a time when he or she is not supervising children.

We recommend that all families have a back-up care partner and additional people authorized for pick up in case of child illness that requires exclusion from care or if a situation requires that the regularly scheduled pick up will be later than 5:45 pm.

Early or Late Pick-Up

If picking up early, we ask that you support the class in providing an uninterrupted rest time. Please plan to pick up prior to rest time or after rest time, but not during rest time.

If you will be picking up earlier or later than usual, please send a message through the Brightwheel app.

A fee of \$25 will be charged to a parent/guardian whose child is picked up after 5:45 pm. An additional fee of \$1.00 per minute will be added when they are left in our care after the first 10 minutes. Exceptions will be made for verified emergencies.

Authorized Release

Any person collecting your child must be listed as an authorized pick-up on your child's profile and must bring a photo ID. If a photo ID is not available, the parent or guardian will be called and asked to verify the identity through digital photo exchange via text message. Children will be released only to an authorized adult who's ID has been verified and documented.

Health and Safety – see also the COVID-19 Addendum

Wild Earth Preschool values the health and safety of all who are in our care. The teaching staff is trained to take an active role in preventative care, including maintaining the children's good hand-washing routines, maintaining a clean environment, encouraging children's hydration and nourishment throughout the day, providing excellent supervision, and teaching safe responses to weather related risks, such as resting and finding shade in the heat.

Immunizations

In accordance with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services licensing, all children must have their up-to-date immunizations on file with the child care center, and a current health statement must be signed by both a physician and the child's parent or guardian. If your child is not immunized, we must have a notarized certificate on file for abstaining from immunizations.

Children are not required to have tuberculin testing, unless a risk factor exists.

Flu immunizations are also required.

Hearing and Vision Screening

In accordance with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, each child four years of age or older by September 1 of each year must receive a professional screening for vision or hearing. You may have your child screened by your personal pediatrician or other health care professional. Wild Earth Preschool must receive a copy of the screening results. These reports are sent to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services each year as proof of our compliance with the Special Senses and Communication Disorders Act, Texas Health and Safety Code.

Handwashing

Children, teachers, classroom volunteers, and any adult visiting the preschool program will wash hands at key times and when soiled, and will practice good hygiene throughout the day. Hands will be washed when entering the classroom from outdoors, before and after eating, after using the toilet, after touching animals, and after coming in contact with body fluid. In addition, teaching staff will wash hands before and after administering medication, after removing gloves used for cleaning body fluid, and when returning to work after a break.

Environmental Health

Wild Earth Preschool is committed to maintaining a child care facility that is as environmentally healthy as possible by following the guidelines of the Eco-Healthy Child Care Program (EHCC) of the Children's Environmental Health Network. These guidelines include the use of least-toxic cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfectant products. We frequently ventilate the room by opening the windows. The preschool staff thoroughly cleans and disinfects the room, materials, and restroom facilities daily when the children are not present in the classroom.

Pest Management

Wild Earth Preschool uses the principles of Integrated Pest Management and incorporates non-toxic methods to keep our facility and grounds free of pests. If a serious threat remains and pesticide application is the only viable option, parents and staff are notified in advance by the Brightwheel app, and a licensed professional applies the least toxic, effective product at a time when children will have the least exposure to the application area for at least 12 hours. The Zoo maintains a contract with a professional application company with twice-a-week availability for consultation and treatment.

Medication Administration

If your child requires medication while at Wild Earth Preschool, please see the Early Childhood Manager to fill out a Medication Administration form. Medication must be in the original, unopened, labeled bottle, with administration instructions appropriate for the child printed on the label. A physician's orders may also be required. Emergency as-needed medications are carried by staff in waist packs to ensure their immediate availability. Teaching staff is annually trained in safe medication administration.

Heat and Cold Safety

Wild Earth Preschool will follow the Child Care Weather Watch Guidelines for weather, which was sponsored by US Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration, and the Maternal & Child Health Bureau. These guidelines use heat index and wind chill factors when considering adverse weather conditions for heat and cold. https://www.daycare.com/news/daycare_and_weather.html

Air Quality Safety

Wild Earth Preschool will follow the Air Quality Index guidelines produced by the Environmental Protection Agency when considering adverse outdoor conditions for air quality. These guidelines can be found at https://airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=aqi_brochure.index

Minor injury not needing medical attention

Active children sometimes get skinned knees, and if your child receives one or another minor injury such as an insect bite without swelling, splinter, or small cut, the teaching staff will put on gloves, clean the wound with the provided antiseptic, bandage the wound, and/or apply a breakable ice pack. We will provide a description of the injury through the Brightwheel app.

Injury to an area typically covered by clothing

Due to the inherent nature of big-body outdoor play, there may be times when a child may incur injury on the torso, shoulders, hips, or other regions typically covered by clothing. If a member of the teaching staff suspects an injury in an atypical location such as this, the teacher will call the Early Childhood Manager or designee, and the injury will be reviewed in the presence of both staff. This will also be noted on Brightwheel incident message, or, if medical attention is warranted, it will be noted on the "Illness and Injury report" as described below. This procedure will also be followed if a child complains of pain or irritation in an area typically covered by clothing.

Illness or injury requiring medical attention

We are fortunate to have on the premises a paramedic team called AMR. This team can be immediately called to the class at any location in the zoo to help us evaluate a more serious situation and determine if treatment by a health-care professional is needed. One of our staff members will stay with your child during care, and we will call you as soon as possible to let you know of the situation. If AMR or the Early Childhood Manager determines that medical attention is necessary, we will complete an "Incident and Accident" Report for you to sign upon pick-up. This report will be kept in the child's file, and the Early Childhood Manager or designee will notify licensing of the event or illness.

In a medical emergency

AMR (see above) will be the first responder, but EMS (911) will also be called to administer first aid, and the parent/guardian will be contacted as soon as possible. In the event a parent or guardian does not respond to the contact within 5 minutes, we will notify the emergency contact.

The teaching staff will complete an *"Illness and Incident Report"* for the parent to sign upon first contact, and the form will be maintained in the child's record. If EMS is called or if AMR recommends that your child be seen by his or her physician or another medical professional for an incident received in care, we will also notify licensing as soon as possible, but no later than two days after the incident.

Illness requiring exclusion from care:

See the COVID-19 Addendum for policies that override these during the health emergency.

Plan to keep your child at home to rest and get well when they are not feeling well. Your child's health and the well-being of the other children in care are very important to us. Please send a message through the Brightwheel app to notify us if your child will not be attending class. If confidentiality is required, call or email the Early Childhood Manager.

We follow the Texas Department of State Health Services for guidelines on exclusion and readmission to care. Common reasons that we could call to ask you to pick up your child include a fever of over 100 degrees accompanied by other symptoms of illness; repeated vomiting, frequent diarrhea, a persistent cough, and red or infected eyes with discharge. In these cases, your child must stay home the next day and must be free from symptoms for 24 hours, without symptom reducing medication before returning to class.

When making the decision about whether or not your child is feeling well enough to attend school, please consider our activity level and our time outdoors. We are not able to accommodate children who must remain indoors or who cannot participate in our daily excursions in the zoo.

Communicable Diseases

If a child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness such as strep throat, Fifth's Disease, chicken pox, etc. a note is required from the child's physician stating that he or she is no longer contagious before the child may return to school. The Early Childhood Manager or designee will post a notification on every classroom's bulletin board within 48 hours of our knowledge and we will email the parents. We will not provide name of the child who has been diagnosed. This is confidential information.

Lice

Head lice are a common problem, and they can attach to anyone's hair, regardless of cleanliness or socioeconomic status. Although they can be a nuisance, they don't cause serious illness or carry any diseases. Head lice can be treated at home, and the home should also be treated, but it's important to check with the doctor first. State Health Services no longer considers lice to be a reason that children may not attend school. However, they can spread easily and we want to prevent the spread as much as possible.

If your child is found to have live lice or nits (the eggs), we will call you and ask you to pick up your child at your earliest convenience to have time that evening to consult your health professional and begin treatment. Teaching staff will follow a lice treatment plan for classroom furnishings also.

In addition, we will email all parents in affected classrooms to notify them and provide information about symptoms and treatment, maintaining confidentiality with regards to the name of the child.

Teacher and Staff Health and Immunizations:

Full-time teachers and staff in the child care center are tested for TB by a health care professional prior to hire and, according to the DZM policy, annual retesting is required for staff who will be in contact with the zoo's animal collection. Employees must not have an active, untreated TB infection or disease when working with the children. Failure to comply or exemptions due to contraindicated medical conditions or reasons of conscious will be evaluated by DZM Human Resources department, and Wild Earth Preschool will defer to that decision. Records of TB tests are kept in the HR office and in the Preschool's record of the employee's file.

Flu vaccines are required annually.

Information on Safe Sleep

When applicable, all staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at Wild Earth Preschool will follow the safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS). For detailed information, see the DFPS Operational Policy on Infant Safe Sleep, form J-800-2550, copied below. Parents can review the information as education to reduce the risk of SIDS/SUIDS.

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size cribs and for non-full size cribs [§746.2409 and §747.2309].
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices [§746.2415 and §747.2315]. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing [§746.2429 and §747.2329].
- Do not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult [§746.3407(10) and §747.3203(10)].
- If an infant needs extra warmth, use sleep clothing (insert type of sleep clothing that will be used, such as sleepers or footed pajamas) as an alternative to blankets [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Place only one infant in a crib to sleep [§746.2405 and §747.2305].
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2426 and §747.2326].
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes ecigarettes and any type of vaporizers) [§746.3703(d) and §747.3503(d)].
- Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound [§746.2403 and §747.2303].
- If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Awake infants will have supervised "tummy time" several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2428 and §747.2328].

Security and Emergency Plans

In the event of an emergency, the Early Childhood Manager or designee will notify all parents of the nature of the emergency and the location of the children as soon as it is safe to do so. When parents pick up their child, they will sign the child out of care as usual. If a parent wants to leave zoo grounds with their child during an emergency, child care staff may not prevent them from doing so.

The Early Childhood Manager or designee will also call the DFPS child care licensing department at 214-583-4253, 800-582-6036, or the number provided by the agency to notify them of the nature of emergency and steps taken to secure the children's safety.

On-Site Security

The Dallas Zoo contracts with a security company that makes continual safety rounds and is available to the teaching staff by radio. In addition, 24 hour security is provided by an onsite Dallas Police Officer.

Automatic Exterior Locks

External doors to the classrooms have an electronic lock system, so doors remain locked until opened from the inside or with a keycard.

Dallas Zoo Staff Radio Communication

At least one teaching staff member for each group of children will carry a two-way radio for communication. This radio links the classroom to on-site security, onsite medical services (AMR), preschool administration, and all other departments.

Emergency Drills and Evacuation Locations

Fire Drills

Fire drills are practiced once a month. The evacuation location for fire is the education parking lot. Each classroom is equipped with a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector which are both tested monthly. Each classroom also has a fire extinguisher and a flashlight. Two exterior exits are available from each classroom.

Weather Drills (tornado, hurricane, severe thunderstorm)

Severe weather drills are practiced four times a year. For a weather emergency or emergency requiring an alternate shelter, the designated gathering place for the licensed childcare areas is the zoo auditorium. Since tornadoes may form at any time and little ones may take quite a bit of time to walk, children will be moved toward the safe area inside the zoo when a watch is first issued. Regardless of a severe weather watch, if lightening or flash flooding is present, all children and education staff will shelter in an indoor location.

Active Threat Emergencies/Dangerous Person or Animal

Active threat/lock down drills are practiced four times a year. Teaching staff will be notified by radio code and will move the children to the shelter location, close the door, and maintain silence. The door to the exterior will remain closed and locked.

Emergency Procedures while on a Field Trip to the Zoo

When classes take a field trip to the zoo, there are designated safe places in every area of the park. If classes are in the zoo when an emergency alert is given, they will take shelter at the nearest safe place. These are listed in Appendix 1: Safe Places, and Appendix 1A: Safe Places Checklist, in the DZM Emergencies Procedures Manual.

Plan for evacuating zoo property

There may be instances when an evacuation of the zoo becomes necessary. These may include: bomb or terrorist threat, major fire or disaster in the zoo, severe weather warning or other natural disaster, or escape of a dangerous animal. An evacuation of the zoo will be called for by the Zoo Director, Vice President of Operations or the most senior member of leadership on grounds at the time such a decision has to be made. Should an evacuation be necessary, staff will follow the instructions provided on radio channel 1.

Information on Child Maltreatment

Wild Earth Preschool Policy on Child Maltreatment Prevention and Training

Wild Earth Preschool requires that all staff and regular volunteers clear the required DFPS background check requirements prior to hire and every two years.

During all program hours, a minimum of two adults will actively supervise each group of children and will be in close proximity to one another. For short trips to the restroom with the children and other times the teachers may need to split up, the staff will follow the "rule of 3" which guides us to ensure that there are at least 2 children with one staff member or one child with 2 adults. At least one of the adults will be a Wild Earth Preschool teaching staff member. The other may be a teaching staff member, or an approved education staff member or volunteer. Staff will radio the Early Childhood Manager or designee if additional adult assistance is required.

Prior to supervising children, and on an annual basis, teaching staff will be trained on recognizing the signs and symptoms of child maltreatment and how to call the abuse hotline to report suspected abuse. This training will include face-to-face instruction and may also include an online component.

Families seeking assistance will be referred to the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center which offers family advocacy, connection with community resources, therapy, and financial assistance.

Mandated Reporting

In the state of Texas, everyone is a mandated reporter of child abuse. Please remember that suspicion of abuse is all that is necessary to file a report. Your information can be given anonymously. You will be asked to describe your concerns about the child. It will be helpful if you can provide the child's name, age, address, gender, school attending, and names of parents. If you don't have all of that, provide all the information you can. Call the Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 if you suspect abuse, or call 911. Both are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Parent/Guardian Awareness of Child Maltreatment

Raising awareness among all citizens about the signs, symptoms, and effects of child maltreatment is the first step in keeping children safe. The Dallas Children's Advocacy Center provides the following information to help raise awareness among parents, teachers, health professionals and the general public. For more information see www.dcac.org. Throughout the year, our communications will include tips to generate awareness.

How to Protect Your Child

1. Take the time to talk to your child.
 - a. Be calm and confident before discussing this topic with your child.
 - b. Do not scare your child; your tone should be neutral, educational and empowering.
 - c. Let your child know that you are always there for him/her and always want to protect him/her.
 - d. Teach your child that the parts of their body that a bathing suit covers are private parts and that no one is allowed to see or touch them there.
 - e. Allow time for your child to process and to ask you questions.
 - f. Have your child identify 5 safe people they can talk to if someone ever makes them uncomfortable.
 - g. Make talking to your child about personal safety an ongoing dialogue rather than a single conversation.
 - h. It's important not to interrogate children. Ask simple, open-ended questions in a calm manner: "Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable or scared? Has anyone ever asked you to keep a secret?"
2. Familiarize yourself with the policies and practices of organizations where your children spend time.
 - a. Confirm background checks are conducted on all employees and volunteers.
 - b. Ensure policies are in place that prohibit situations where an adult can be alone with your child in one room when no one else is around.
 - c. Talk to your child to find out if the policies are being followed when you are not there.
 - d. Require all staff and volunteers to be trained annually on child safety and on how to make a report.
3. Be vigilant and ASK questions
 - a. Watch for changes in your child's behavior. If your child is reluctant to go certain places or to be with certain people, ask questions.
 - b. Notice their behavior before and after spending time alone with an adult.
 - c. If a child does reveal something concerning, believe the child. Reassure him/her that he/she has done the right thing in telling you and that what happened is absolutely not their fault. Call CPS (800) 252-5400 or local law enforcement to report your concerns.
 - d. Please do not interview children or contact the alleged offender—report your suspicions and let the appropriate authorities investigate.

Types of Child Maltreatment

Physical Abuse

Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent or guardian that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm. Physical abuse also includes failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child.

Definition taken from Texas State Family Code, Section 261.001.

Neglect

The leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent or guardian of the child. Definition taken from Texas State Family Code, Section 261.001.

Emotional Abuse

Inflicting mental or emotional injury to a child, and/or causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

Definition taken from Texas State Family Code, Section 261.001.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of indecency with a child, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault; failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child; compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct; and causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene or pornographic.

Definition taken from Texas State Family Code, Section 261.001.

Signs and Symptoms of Child Maltreatment

Physical Abuse

- Frequent injuries that are unexplained and/or when the child or parent cannot adequately explain injury causes such as: bruises, cuts, black eyes, fractures, burns
- Burns or bruises in an unusual pattern that may indicate the use of an instrument
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Injuries that appear after the child has not been seen for several days
- Evidence of delayed or inappropriate treatment for injuries
- Injuries involving the face, backs of hands, buttocks, genital area, abdomen, back, or sides of the body
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Complaints of soreness or discomfort when moving
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive or self-destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents

Neglect

- Obvious malnourishment or inadequate nutrition
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn and/or dirty clothes
- Need for glasses, dental care, or other unattended medical attention
- Consistent hunger, stealing or begging for food
- Distended stomach, emaciated
- Lack of supervision for long periods of time

- Frequent absence or tardiness from school
- Regularly displays fatigue or listlessness or falls asleep in class
- Reports that no caretaker is at home
- Self-destructive behavior
- Extreme loneliness and need for affection

Emotional Abuse

- Speech disorders
- Delayed physical development
- Substance abuse
- Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies
- Habit disorders (sucking, rocking, biting)
- Antisocial or destructive behaviors
- Delinquent behaviors (especially adolescents)
- Developmentally delayed

Sexual Abuse

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Pain, swelling, or itching in genital area
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Excessive seductiveness, inappropriate sex play, or premature understanding of sex
- Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings
- Significant weight change
- Suicide attempts (especially adolescents)
- Threatened by physical contact or closeness
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults, especially if of a particular gender
- Sudden refusal to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Sexual victimization of other children
- Major change in normal mood or behavior

Enrollment Procedures

Enrollment Qualification

Children must be at least 3 years old by the date of planned admission, and no older than 5 years old by the last date of the session for which the child is enrolled. He or she must also be using the restroom independently by the child's first day of class.

Preference for admission will be given as follows:

- Children currently enrolled
- Siblings of children currently enrolled
- Children of Zoo Staff
- Children of SSA Staff
- Children on the wait list, in order
- Children on the interest list, in order

Admission is subject to availability and program needs.

Interest List/Wait List

New families interested in enrollment will complete an interest list form located on the Dallas Zoo Website and attend an Open House.

After attending an Open House, families may complete a registration form and pay a fee of \$50.00 to be added to the wait list. Preschool administration will contact them when open slots are available. Families on the interest list will be contacted in order of admission preference as well as the date placed on the interest list. In the case of multiple qualifying interest list registrations, the preschool reserves the right to make decisions that best meet the needs of the program or use a lottery to decide enrollment offers. Families will be given 48 hours to respond with intent before the next family on the wait list is called. After expressing an intent to accept the space, families will have one week to complete the application process, pay the registration fee, and enroll your child. Wild Earth Preschool reserves the right to limit the capacity of our classes below the state regulated numbers and make decisions based on the needs of the program.

Inclusive Program

Wild Earth Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, culture, gender or ability. The preschool program is committed to providing a developmentally appropriate education for all learners, and implements the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by providing multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, and multiple means of action and expression.

Admission Process and Fees

Wild Earth Preschool is a nature preschool and licensed child care center, operating as part of the Dallas Zoo. It is open for enrollment of three to five year olds who are using the restroom independently. The preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, economic status, or ability. We seek to create a diverse student body in which all students and families are celebrated and able to thrive. Enrollment is open to all children and families in the Dallas area.

The admission process has 5 steps:

1. Parents or guardians visit the website for general information, read the Family Handbook and frequently asked questions, and submit an enrollment information request.
2. Parents or guardians attend an Open House or virtual program to receive an introduction to the preschool program, address any questions or concerns, and go over the admissions process. Other arrangements may be made in unusual circumstances at the discretion of the Early Childhood Manager.
3. Parents or guardians submit a registration form and a wait list fee. Wait list placement for each session is determined by date of receipt of the waitlist fee beginning March 2020.
4. When wait list families are contacted for enrollment, families submit the completed document, "Is Wild Earth Preschool Right for your Family?" and an enrollment fee to secure the child's place in the session.
5. At an intake meeting administrative staff and the parent/guardian will complete the Family Care Agreement and review the Family Handbook and completed admissions packet. If classes are in session the parent may request a time to visit the classroom and meet the teachers.

Completed admissions packets include:

- Admission Information (6 pages), including:
 - Authorization for emergency medical attention
 - Consent for field trips, water activities, sunscreen, media, etc.
 - Vision and hearing screen information (for children age 4 or older)
 - Vaccination information, verified by a health professional
 - Health care professional's statement or waiver affidavit
- Child Assessment Form (care information about the child)
- Authorization for Dispensing Medication form if needed
- Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan if needed

Change of Information

Please keep contact information, medical information, and family information current by completing a "Change of Information" form and handing it to your child's teacher or by calling or emailing the education office with the information. Include any documentation needed, such as medical recommendations or court orders.

Financial Agreements

For financial planning, an annual tuition chart and schedule of additional fees is provided. The full session tuition amount is listed as one figure. This amount is broken down to a weekly cost and provided to families for their financial planning purposes. Tuition payments remain the same regardless of absences, holidays, vacations, etc. Tuition is billed weekly in advance through a digital Dallas Zoo account.

Discounts and Scholarships

No discounts are offered for the 2020-2021 Academic Year session, unless special arrangements are made with administration.

In the future, we may return to offer a 25% discount in tuition to current employees of Dallas Zoo Management and SSA, and to currently vested volunteers. To be vested, Volunteers must have provided both 6 months AND 100 hours of service to the Dallas Zoo immediately prior to receiving the discount. The discount will continue as long as the volunteer provides 16 hours of service per month.

Limited scholarships may be available in future years for employees of Dallas Zoo Management and SSA. Ask the Early Childhood Manager for more information.

Exiting the Program

Should circumstances arise that require you to withdraw your child from Wild Earth Preschool, written notice is required at least 30 days in advance. Please see the Family Care Agreement for more information. No alterations in tuitions will be made for cancellations or changes that occur during the last 5 weeks of any session.