

Relief Nursery

Therapeutic Early Childhood Program

Parent Handbook



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Welcome to the Therapeutic Early Childhood Program

Relief Nursery's Therapeutic Early Childhood Program provides enriching classroom experiences for young children that promote healthy development in a safe and nurturing environment. We look forward to getting to know your child and your family.

This handbook contains important information about our program. Please reach out to your classroom teacher or the site supervisor if you have any questions.



Section 1: Classroom Routines

Start the Day Right

- **Morning Routine** – Children tend to be more relaxed and confident when they know what to expect. Help your child develop a consistent routine to get ready for school.
- **Sign In** - Whether you are dropping your child off at their classroom or helping them onto the Relief Nursery bus, please sign your child in.
- **Saying Goodbye** – It is not uncommon for a child to feel sad when saying goodbye to their parent. If this is the case for your child, the classroom teacher can help share some ideas for how to make this transition easier for your child.



In order to maintain your child's spot in the early childhood program, regular attendance is required. If your child will be absent, please contact the classroom teacher as soon as possible.



School Bus Transportation

When possible, Relief Nursery provides school bus transportation to children who are unable to attend class without it. There are limited spaces available, and we cannot guarantee transportation.

If your child rides a Relief Nursery bus, please have them ready on time. If your child will be staying home (for example if they are sick), call the Relief Nursery as soon as possible to cancel bus service for the day.

Let us know right away about any changes in your contact information, pick-up or drop-off location, and who has permission to pick up your child. We reconsider family transportation needs every 6 months.

Mealtime

Children develop beliefs and habits related to food when they are young. This can influence how they relate to food throughout their lives. Mealtime is a key component of the Therapeutic Classroom and is designed thoughtfully in order to create a positive experience.



We serve two meals during classroom time. You will be sent a menu each month to let you know what your child will be served. **If your child has any food allergies, please let the classroom teacher know.** We prefer that you not send food to school with your child. If you have a particular need around this, please discuss it with the classroom teacher.

Tooth Brushing

Regular tooth brushing is a great opportunity to teach an important hygiene skill. Children in our program brush their teeth once each class period. Relief Nursery provides the toothbrushes and toothpaste.



Toileting / Diapering

Children are not required to be toilet trained in order to attend the Relief Nursery. We check children's diapers within 90 minutes of their arrival in the classroom. Children wearing diapers or pull-ups are changed immediately when they are wet or soiled. Children who are learning to use the toilet are encouraged to try to use the bathroom with a teacher nearby to provide support as needed.

Teachers always wear gloves when changing children or helping with toileting, and they sanitize changing tables after every use. Staff and children wash their hands every time after changing diapers or using the toilet. No ointment will be used unless you have completed the Child Care Division non-prescription medication form. There is no need to send diapers to school with your child. Relief Nursery provides diapers during the time your child is with us.

The End of the Day

When picking your child up from school, please sign your child out. If someone other than you will be picking up your child, contact the classroom teacher ahead of time. We will not release your child to anyone without your prior approval. Anyone other than you will need to show I.D. at the time of pick up.

Section 2: Curriculum

Curriculum

Relief Nurseries offer child-centered, play-based, curriculum that support children's development in each of the following areas.

Dramatic Play	Movement and Music
Literacy	Art
Early Math	Sensory Experiences
Food / Cooking	Social / Emotional Skills
Fine Motor	Nature Experiences
Health and Safety	



Teachers send a monthly curriculum plan home to all families.



Screen Time and Electronic Toys

Relief Nurseries do not use televisions or computer screens in the classroom. These devices inhibit children's exploration, interactions, and language development. In order to promote social play and enriching experiences, we also avoid the use of electronic toys like LeapPad in the classroom.

Process-Oriented Art Activities

The art activities in our classrooms are focused on the process rather than the end result. Rather than having a particular idea about how a child's art should look, we allow children the freedom to explore materials and try out their own unique ideas. With this kind of art, there is no right or wrong way! The focus is on the experience.

Art can be messy! Send your child to school in clothing that is okay to get dirty.



Outside Time

Spending time outside is vitally important both for emotional wellbeing and for promoting development. Outdoor time is part of the daily schedule.

Outside time promotes:

- Physical skills such as running, climbing, jumping, throwing
- Exploration of the natural world
- Experimentation with a variety of materials
- A sense of freedom and adventure, which builds confidence and stimulates curiosity



Please send your child to school in clothes that appropriate for the weather and are okay to get dirty. *If you need clothing for your child (e.g. a warm coat, socks, etc.), let your classroom teacher know. We have a clothing closet on site.*



Field Trips

One way that we give children new and enriching experiences is by taking them on well-planned, age-appropriate field trips. You will be notified of field trips at least one week in advance. Parents are always welcome to join us on field trips!

Anti-bias Curriculum

Even before age five, children are already developing beliefs about skin color, culture and language, gender, disabilities or other identities or experiences. Children may pick up biased messages from various sources, including the media and from interactions and experiences. At Relief Nursery, we incorporate an anti-bias curriculum into our classrooms to help children develop self-awareness, confidence, and a sense of family and cultural pride. It helps them gain comfort with and an appreciation for human differences. It also helps children start to recognize what is fair and unfair.

For more info about anti-bias curriculum, see
www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2019/understanding-anti-bias.

Play and Learning

Research tells us that children learn best through play. Your child's teacher will spend time playing with your child and will create opportunities to explore many ideas through conversation, books, planned activities, and free play.

Rather than using tools like flash cards and worksheets, our classrooms use an activity-based approach that helps children learn concepts while having fun.



Child Goals

Your child's teacher will determine classroom goals for your child. These will be focused on social-emotional and communication skills. Goals are reviewed monthly to track progress, and your teacher will have conversations with you about your child's development and what your child is learning at school and at home.



Social Emotional Learning

At the Relief Nursery, we focus on curriculum that builds children's social skills, such as joining play, expressing their ideas, taking turns, and asking for help. We help children learn to solve the day-to-day social difficulties they encounter with positive conflict resolution skills.

We also support the exploration of feelings, the development of empathy, and opportunities to learn and practice self-regulation strategies. Research shows that strong social-emotional skills are a predictor of children's success in kindergarten and beyond.



Guidance and Discipline

A preventative focus on discipline relies on creating interactions and environments that meet each child's needs, support their emotions, and provide opportunities for skill building. Children who feel safe and connected and are engaged in interesting activities, are much less likely to have challenging behaviors. We help children be successful by having clear expectations and pre-teaching before activities.

In spite of our best efforts, though, not all challenging behaviors will be prevented. When responding to challenging behavior, we begin by ensuring safety. We try to understand what led up to the behavior, and we respond in a way that allows the child to feel supported and to learn new skills.

We believe that discipline should never be experienced as punishment. The purpose of discipline is to teach. The purpose of punishment is to shame or frighten a child into behaving a certain way. Relief Nursery staff will never spank, yell at, isolate, shame or humiliate children. We will never restrain a child except in the case of imminent danger (e.g. picking up a child who is running into the parking lot).



Section 4: The Classroom Team

Who will be in the Classroom?

Relief Nursery takes a team-based approach. Every classroom has two teachers as well as other people who may provide support to the classroom, including supervisors, special education consultants, child counselors, and health screeners. This team collaborates to make sure your child has the best possible experience and developmental support.

Volunteers / Interns

Volunteers provide support for Relief Nursery classrooms by reading to children, playing with them, and helping set up curriculum materials. Volunteers have all passed a rigorous background check and have been provided training in the therapeutic approach used in Relief Nursery classrooms.

Open Door Policy / Classroom Visits

YOU are part of the classroom team, too! You are welcome to drop in for a brief unannounced visit any time. If you would like to come in for a longer visit or join the classroom for a meal, please schedule this ahead of time with the classroom teacher.

Section 5: Health and Safety

Hand Washing and Sanitizing

Staff and children wash their hands:

- Before and after eating, preparing food, or administering medication
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing their nose, wiping a child's nose
- After changing a diaper, using the bathroom, or assisting a child in the bathroom
- After coming in from outside, handling garbage, or handling items that might be contaminated with urine, fecal matter, saliva or mucus





Sunscreen

With your signed permission, we will apply sunscreen to your child anytime they will be spending 30 minutes or more in strong sunlight. We provide sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher unless you prefer to send your own. If you send sunscreen, the bottle will be labeled with your child's name and will be used only for your child. Aerosol sunscreens are not allowed. We do not use sunscreen on children younger than six months. If your child's skin is broken or we observe an allergic reaction, we will discontinue use and notify you.

Child Illness

Children must stay at home if they have any of the symptoms listed here. Please notify the classroom teacher right away if you will be keeping your child home from school.

If a child arrives at class with any of these symptoms, you will be notified to pick up your child. If we cannot reach you, your emergency contact person will be contacted.

- Oral temperature over 99.6 during the last 24 hours
- Sore, red throat (even without a fever)
- Cold with hacking cough (even without a fever)
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Non-clear discharge from the nose
- Yellow discharge from the eyes
- Pink coloration in the whites of the eyes
- Unidentified or contagious rash
- Untreated wheezing

Notification of Communicable Diseases

If anyone (including staff, children and parents) enters the classroom and is later found to have had a communicable disease (such as measles, chicken pox, etc.), a letter will be sent to all families whose children attended that day notifying them of possible exposure.

Children with Special Health Needs

If your child has a unique health need requiring our staff to receive additional training, we will consult with the health care professionals involved. For example, staff might be trained by a nurse to administer medication. No child will be denied services because of a special health need as long as the staff are able to adequately meet that child's needs and maintain a therapeutic environment for all of the children.



Head Lice

Head lice is common among children. It is also very contagious! We check every child for nits and lice as they enter the classroom or board a Relief Nursery bus. If we notice that your child has nits or lice, they will not be transported to the Relief Nursery. If your child arrives at the Nursery with lice, we will contact you so that the child can be picked up. Children with head lice may not return to class until they are nit-free. Ask your child's teacher about effective treatment for head lice.

Child Injury

You will be notified if your child experiences an injury. In many situations, children only need a hug or a Band-Aid, and then they return to playing. If necessary, we will administer first aid. All classroom staff are training in first aid and CPR, and fully stocked first aid kits are kept in each classroom. In the case of a serious injury, we will call 911.

Emergency Plan

The Relief Nursery practices regular emergency drills and has an emergency evacuation plan in case of a fire, earthquake or other hazardous situations. This plan is available to you at the front desk and on our website if you would like specific details. In the case of an evacuation, you will be notified and given directions where to pick up your child.

School Closure Due To Weather

In most cases, the Relief Nursery follows the school district's decision to keep schools open or to close them. Please call the Relief Nursery front desk in the morning to confirm if there is a change in schedule due to weather.

Child Abuse Reporting

Relief Nursery staff are legally required to report all concerns or disclosures of possible abuse and neglect to the Oregon Department of Human Services. As much as possible, we work closely with parents to provide support and develop positive steps forward even after a report has been made. Our intention is never to create additional stress for families, but always to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. If your child will be coming to the classroom with a new injury, it is very helpful if you let the classroom teacher know ahead of time what caused the injury.





Section 6: Support for Your Family

Home Visits

As a parent, you are the most important person in your child's life. We believe that the best way to support children is to work closely with their whole family. Monthly home visits are an opportunity for you and your child's classroom teacher to get to know each other and to work together to nurture your child's development.



During these visits, we will talk about your child's goals, your family goals, and challenges you may be facing. We can talk about your parenting successes and difficulties, and we can share information about child development. Our staff are also knowledgeable about community resources and can help connect you to other services that may be beneficial.

Confidentiality

Relief Nursery respects your right to privacy, and we keep the information you share with us confidential. Information about your family will not be shared outside the Nursery without your signed permission, unless we receive a subpoena or a court order requesting the records.



Support Services

In addition to home visits and the therapeutic classroom, we offer many other kinds of supports for families. Ask your classroom teacher if you would like more information about any of these services:

- Clothes Closet and Food Pantry
- Family Events
- Parenting Education and Support
- Developmental Screenings and Special Education
- Child and Family Counseling
- Addiction Recovery Support



Special Education Services

We work with parents to complete screenings that give us information about your child's development in the areas of language, physical skills, problem solving, and social/emotional development. Special education services are integrated into our classrooms for the children who qualify.

Counseling Services

Counseling services are available, at no cost, for Relief Nursery children and families who have OHP. Our counselors specialize in play therapy, which is a developmentally appropriate way for young children to express and process difficult experiences and emotions, and to learn new skills. If you are interested in these services or if you have concerns about your child, talk with your classroom teacher or the site supervisor.



Parenting Education

Parenting education classes and groups offer an opportunity to connect with other parents, learn about child development, and talk through parenting challenges. Some of the topics that are discussed include strengthening the parent-child relationship, healthy communication, preventing challenging behaviors, and supporting emotions. Childcare, dinner and limited transportation are provided.

Accessing Success

Peer support staff work one-on-one with parents who are in recovery or who are experiencing addiction challenges. They can provide rides to community recovery meetings and help people connect with services. We also offer a support group called Parents for Recovery. Childcare, dinner and limited transportation are provided. Peer support staff also support parents whose lives have been affected by addiction in family members. If you are interested, ask your child's teacher to refer you to Accessing Success.