



***GISD***  
***Parent Handbook***  
***&***  
***Operation***  
***Policies***

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## Welcome Letter

Dear Parents:

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder is delighted to provide you with a copy of our Parent Handbook.

At Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder, we are committed to helping parents balance work and family responsibilities, while providing the very best care for children. We understand that your child's development and education is very important to you. Our goal is to support you as a busy parent and as your child's first and most important teacher.

Childhood is a magical time of discovery that sets the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement. We recognize the growing physical, intellectual, social and emotional competence of children. They are eager to explore their world and discover how the adult world works; children thrive on challenges, friendships, clubs and responsibility. They want to create, build, act out new dramatic possibilities, explore, and most importantly, not to be given more of the same or be treated like "little kids." Our program reinforces and nurtures a child's drive to learn with new challenges and opportunities to get out into the world.

At Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder, we help children prepare for success in school and in life. We welcome you to our family as you and your child embark on a wonderful journey.

## Mission Statement

To provide a loving environment which meets the needs of parents by providing a fun, safe learning environment where children can fulfill their entire potential by participating in academic activities, purposeful play, and art- enriched experiences that ensure children are prepared for success in school and life while striving for excellence in all areas.

# The Educational Program

## Our Curriculum

The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. Learning is not just repeating what someone else says. It requires active thinking and experimenting in order to find out how things work and the opportunity to learn firsthand about the world we live in.

The most important goal of our curriculum is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners. We are teaching them how to learn, not just in school, but also in all aspects of their lives. We are allowing them to learn at their own pace and in the ways that are best for them. We are giving them good habits and attitudes, particularly a positive sense of themselves that will make a difference throughout their lives.

Creating a learning environment and implementing a good daily routine are only a part of the reason our curriculum is successful. Another key factor is the interaction that occurs between staff and children. As children play and work, staff observes how children use materials. Staff attentively listens and talks with children to find out what they are thinking and trying to accomplish. In doing so, we can try to help them become aware of their actions and challenge them to think further. We want children to reflect on what they have done. We encourage them to discover, experiment and to find new ways to play with the same material as there is no “right” or “wrong” way to play with a toy. Our goal is to help children to be creative, to solve problems, and to think for themselves.

Learning is a constant. Both classroom and outdoor areas are important parts of the curriculum. Therefore, careful planning ensures children’s learning experiences are maximized in these environments. The activities we plan for children, the way we organize the environment, select supplies and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children, are all designed to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and help them reach their maximum potential.

Our curriculum and the goals we set focus on the main areas of child development. Daily activities focus on the whole child and promote growth in these areas of development:

- **Social:** to help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and work as a team.
- **Emotional:** to help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control and have a positive attitude toward life.
- **Cognitive:** to help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success; help children acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- **Physical:** to help children increase their large and small muscle motor skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

We believe children should have fun! After all, even the experts agree that preschool age children learn most through play. These carefree years are so short, and soon the children will be exposed to a much more structured form of learning. How then, do we encourage a child's love of learning? By making learning fun! Each month a theme is presented which is based on topics that interest children. During the month, many activities take place to help promote basic skills (letter, number, color and shape recognition; fine and large motor skills; socialization; etc.) which are connected, as much as possible, to that month's theme. A daily routine and/or schedule are posted in every classroom. Many of the curriculum materials we have seem more like toys to the children, yet while the children are playing with them, they are learning important concepts. We will use a custom curriculum and have included the Pre-K TEKS in our program.

### Indoor Play

Indoor play constitutes the majority of the time the children are in the program. We provide a variety of age-appropriate toys for your child to use and since the ages of the children we care for vary, all the toys are safe even for our youngest child in the group. Toys are not allowed from home, please. This reduces misunderstandings, damages or loss of a child's favorite toy. The toys we keep indoors are rotated from time to time to prevent boredom, to supplement a unit of study, etc.

### Outdoor Play

According to state law, children are to participate in outdoor activities on a daily basis with the exception of days when we experience really inclement weather. Weather permitting we will spend time outdoors everyday (ranging from a walk when it is fairly cool or to more extended period of time as the weather warms up.) Infants will have the opportunity to participate in outdoor play, when the weather is fairly mild. Please dress your child appropriately for the current weather and in play clothes to maximize the benefits of their experiences. A decision about outside play will be made after consulting wind chills, heat index, and ozone levels. Please note that Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder is a licensed to provide care for children in a facility operated by Gainesville ISD. As such, the active play space in our play grounds does not meet Licensing standards specified in subchapter 746.4601.

## **Parents as Partners**

Our curriculum works best when teachers and parents work together. Each of us has something valuable to contribute.

Only you have in-depth knowledge of your child. You know best your child's interests, fears, joys, patterns, and past. You are most familiar with the world your child is trying to understand. You know about the relationships between the members of your family, and you have shared many of your child's experiences.

This in depth knowledge makes you central to your child's learning process and a very valuable resource for us as teachers. If you share with us what is happening with your child at home, we can better understand your child. We can deal with both positive and difficult events through reassuring stories, soothing activities, imaginative dramatic play, and extra love and attention.

We strive to nurture each child's unique qualities and potential while supporting families through strong partnerships.

Parents are partners in every aspect of curriculum: helping to set goals and priorities, planning, evaluating, and sustaining the learning through coordinated experiences at home. Parents are always welcome at Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder. You are welcome to participate anytime. Please see the director for suggestions on different activities. If at any time a staff member can assist you or answer concerns or questions regarding your child, please feel free to ask. If you require a longer conference period an appointment can be made at the earliest time possible. Please keep in mind children in the early childhood program take naps early in the afternoon.

Parents are welcome to review a copy of the minimum standards and the child-care center's most recent licensing inspection report at any time. The most recent inspection will always be posted as well as how to contact the local Licensing Office, the Child Abuse hotline, and the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service website.

- ✓ Information on Licensing standards or procedures can be obtained by calling 1-800-862-5252 or visiting [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)
- ✓ You can contact our local office at 940-381-3447
- ✓ To report abuse and/or neglect please call 1-800-252-5400

## Parental Communication

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder feels that open communication with parents is important for the welfare of the child. Parents or teachers can request meetings at any time. Both the director and teachers welcome parents' thoughts and suggestions. Parents will be notified in person, by telephone and/or in writing if:

- Any changes are made to the operational policies or enrollment agreement.
- Any changes to tuition or fees
- Medication was administered to a child (*Authorization for Medication Form*)
- There was an injury to a child that required medical attention by a health-care professional (*Telephone and Injury / Illness Form*)
- Discipline or a behavior situation arose.
- Has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder.
- A child had been involved in any situation that placed the child at risk.
- A child had less serious injuries such as a minor cut, scratch and bites from other children that required first-aid treatment.
- If any child or employee has contracted a communicable disease that requires reporting to the Texas Department of Communicable Diseases.
- When any child in Lil' Leopards has an outbreak of lice or other infestation according to the Texas Department of Health in 25TAC\*97.7(*in person, telephone and/or flyers*).

We have many ways of communicating with our parents. Listed below are number of ways the teachers, parents, and director can be in communication together.

- **Initial meeting with parents:** When you enroll your child the director or teacher in charge will show you through the center and answer any questions you may have at that time. You may wish to share any concerns about your child with the director, tell what you expect from the program etc. Please tell us if child takes in medication, behaves in any certain way, or has any special traits the teacher needs to be aware of.
- **Teacher – Parent conferences:** These conferences are very useful for the teachers and the parents. They are a great way to access how each child is doing in the center. The conferences can be arranged by a parent or teacher at any given time.
- **School Open House-** All parents are invited to attend the annual open house to tour rooms, meet with all teachers and other parents during informative, leisure discussions.
- **Parent information board-**The parent board, locate on the wall in the office, is a great place to look for important information pertaining to the center such as licensing information.
- **Weekly lesson plans-**Each class room has a weekly lesson plan posted on the wall, right inside the door. The lesson plan contains information, such as the art activity, the sciences activity, the group time activity, and the physical activity that is planned for each day.
- **Daily sheets-** Each child in the infant, toddler or two's classrooms will come home with a daily sheet. The daily sheets will inform you of their food intake, elimination, sleep pattern, and general information about how their day went.
- **Daily check in / checkout-** This time is a very busy time for the teachers. If you need some time to talk to the teachers feel free to set up an appointment with your child's teacher, the Director or owner to talk longer.

### Grievance Procedures

- Parents are encouraged to discuss specific concerns related to classroom issues with their child's teacher.
- If the parent and teacher are unable to reach a resolution, either may request a meeting with the teacher and director.
- If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved from this meeting, the matter may be referred to, Kitie Hermes, Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder owner.
- Concerns related to non-specific classroom issues (e.g. safety, curriculum, etc.) will be referred to the center director.

# Policies and Procedures

## Admission

Admission is based on a full time, first come, and first serve basis for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years. We offer part-time care on a limited basis and only when space is available. Cost of part time is the \$30 per day. No child will be denied enrollment on the basis of his/her race or religion. We do retain the right to deny enrollment if space is not available for a particular child's age group.

## Enrollment Procedures

The following procedures are all required before a child can be in attendance at this Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder center.

1. Admission form completely filled out
2. Photo release form signed
3. Physician statement signed (for children who are not enrolled in the school district)
4. Tuition agreement form signed
5. Sunscreen policy signed
6. Current Shot record (for children who are not enrolled in the school district)
7. Handbook acknowledgement signed

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder does not require updated admission form annually so, if you need to update, please email [lilleopards.learningladder@gmail.com](mailto:lilleopards.learningladder@gmail.com).

## Immunization Requirements

If a child is enrolled in any early childhood program, Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder must be provided with a copy of their current shot records, before a child can start. A copy of the record must be provided to the Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder.

Please note we do not require our staff to obtain current vaccinations.

## Hearing and Vision Screening Requirements

Texas Health and Safety Code requires that all children enrolled in a Department of Family and Protective Services licensed child-care center in Texas, that are the age of four by September 1<sup>st</sup>, must be screened or have a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems. You can have your child screened at your physicians' office at a visit. Please provide us with a copy of the results for your child's file at time of admission.

## Student Participation

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder is an independent contractor with the Gainesville Independent School Districts to provide child care services for their employees. Because Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder is not part of the district curriculum or instructional day, and due to staffing and budgetary restrictions certain restrictions apply to student participation.

All students must be physically, emotionally, socially and mentally capable of handling our daily routine and teacher to child ratio in all activities.

### Confidentiality

All information concerning an individual child and his/her activities in the program are confidential. Written records of individual children are kept and can only be obtained by the director, parent or state office.

### Hours & Days of Operation

Learning Ladder is normally open Monday through Friday. Hours of operation on normal days of operation are from 7:00 AM until 5:30 PM.

### Closure Days

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder is closed on the following holidays.

- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder does not prorate fees for days missed due to a holiday, inclement weather, illness, or close due to natural event beyond our control. If a holiday falls on a weekend day, Learning Ladder reserves the right to be closed in observation of the holiday on the Friday preceding the holiday, or the Monday following the holiday. If we choose to observe the holiday a Friday preceding holiday, or a Monday following the holiday, we will give parents advance notice by posting at the entrance of the classrooms

### Inclement Weather

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder generally follows the local school district if closing for weather. Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder management can choose to open on time, late, or close early if management chooses. Notification will be announced on radio station KGAF 1580 AM or KGAF 92.4 FM. For early closure, families will be notified through e-mail and/or text message about such closures. In general, tuition will remain the same, up to five inclement weather closures per year.

### Arrival/Departure

Please accompany your child into the building. Each child shall have direct contact with a teacher or assistant upon arrival to assure that an adult is aware of the child's presence continuously. The parent is required to sign the child in, noting the time arrived. A sign in/out pad, pens, and a clock are all located in the classrooms. This provides us with a written record of the child's attendance, hours in our program and persons who bring and/or pick-up the child.

Children will only be released to a parent or a person designated by the parent. If a child is to be released to any other individual than to a parent, a valid driver's license will need to be shown and a copy will be made and placed in the child's file.

If your child is picked up after the center is closed, you will be charged a late pick up fee. This fee is explained more in the Fee section.

## **Fees**

Regular fees are:

- |               |           |        |
|---------------|-----------|--------|
| • Infant      | \$140.00  | Weekly |
| • Toddler     | \$140.00  | Weekly |
| • Two's       | \$130.00  | Weekly |
| • Pre-K       | \$120.00  | Weekly |
| • After Pre-K | \$20/\$10 | Daily  |
| • Afterschool | \$20/\$10 | Daily  |

At the time of enrollment, parents are required to sign a tuition agreement. Tuition is due on the Monday of every week unless other arrangements have been made with the Owner or Director. When tuition becomes more than two weeks late, you will be required to find alternative care until your account is brought current. Tuition is not prorated due to absences. If your child attends LLLL three or more days, on a regular basis, you will be required to pay the full weekly tuition rate if your child is absent due to illness, inclement weather, a vacation, a holiday, or an emergency beyond our control.

You are encouraged to make payments in the form of a check, cash, or money order at the campus. Administration may not always have the proper change for your payment if cash is used. For auto draft, inquire about the "CASH Ap". We apologize but at this time we are unable to accept credit card payments.

### Discounts

If a family has multiple children enrolled at LLLL, a \$10.00/ week discount is offered per week, per family.

### Late Pickup Fees

Late pick up fees will be charged if a student is picked up after center operating hours. The operating hours for Learning Ladder are 7:00a.m. until 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

If you pick your child up after 5:30 p.m. you will be charged a fee of \$1/per min for each child. You will be required to sign a late pick up form at the time you pick up your children. The form will contain the amount you will be required to pay for your late pick up.

Phone calls to notify of late pick up, before the center closes, will not exempt a late fee charge. Accounts will be billed.

### Returned check fees

There will be a \$35.00 service charge for all returned checks, in addition to a \$15.00 late payment fee. If the client takes care of the check before it is returned to the center; the account will not be billed a \$15.00 late payment fee. When the center receives a returned check from a client, we will no longer accept checks as a method of payment from that client.

## Withdrawal Policy

If a parent decides to withdraw from the program, a two week notice is required. Any parent failing to do so, will be charged their normal tuition rate for two weeks. All balances will be sent to collections after 30 days of the last day the child attends the program.

## Discipline & Guidance

Discipline and Guidance at Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder will be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child.
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
- Only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction will be used.
- Praise, encouragement and daily reminders of expected behavior as well as redirection will be utilized.
- As a last resort, brief supervised separation or time out from the group, appropriate for the child's age and development, will be used and limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There will be no harsh, cruel or unusual treatment at Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder. This means:

- No corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment.
- Punishment associated with food or toileting.
- Pinching, shaking or biting a child.
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument.
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth.
- Humiliating, ridiculing, or yelling at a child.
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door close
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

We do not think of discipline as punishment. Our goal is inner discipline, the result of an evolving process occurring within the child. Through appropriate adult/child interaction, anticipatory guidance, well established guidelines for appropriate behavior and active listening to children's responses, teachers get to know the children individually and discern the additional limits and adjustments they need. Over a period of time we expect that children will internalize the concept of self-control and acquire some measure of inner discipline. When a problem arises, these are the steps our staff takes toward reaching these goals:

1. Staff will work with the child, discussing the problem, suggesting and supporting behavior changes, explaining and redirecting.
2. If a pattern of negative behavior persists, the director will talk with the parent(s) in order to obtain assistance and suggestions for developing effective approaches with the child. A behavior plan may also be initiated.

3. If all reasonable approaches are exhausted, the pattern of negative behaviors continues, and/or the child's actions are a threat to the well-being and safety of other children and/or staff, parents may be asked to remove a child from the child care program.

### Supplies Brought by Parents

Here are a few items you will need to bring for your child and others we recommend:

- Breakfast and lunch, if child is going to be at Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder during mealtime.
- At least one extra set of clothing labeled with child's name.
- To avoid things being lost or broken, please do not allow children to bring toys from home.

#### Infant

- Diapers and wipes
- Formula, or breast milk
- Food
- Milk
- Tylenol for teething infants
- Extra clothes
- Extra bottles labeled with the first name and last initial
- Blanket

#### Toddler

- Socks and tennis shoes
- Sippy cup labeled with the first name and last initial
- Changes of clothes that are weather appropriate
- Labeled blanket and small pillow
- Diapers and wipes
- Food

#### Two years old

- Tennis shoes and socks
- Sippy cup labeled with the first name and last initial
- Labeled blanket and nap pillow
- Lots of, extra, weather appropriate clothes labeled
- Diapers and wipe
- Food

**\* Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder does keep a central supply of diapers and wipes in stock. In cases of emergency, if your child runs out of supplies, we will supply your child with supplies from our stock.**

## Preschooler

- Play clothes
- Tennis shoes and socks
- Labeled blanket and small pillow
- Extra set of weather appropriate clothes labeled
- Food

## Clothing

Please dress your child in play-clothes that are washable and comfortable for indoor and outdoor activities. Your child needs to bring appropriate outer clothing such as coats, mittens, hats labeled with their name. We recommend you dress your child with shoes that adequately protect their feet and are not slick-soled (sneakers are a good choice). We also recommend you provide at least one extra set of clothing (including socks) to be kept in the child's cubbie for emergencies. Smaller children may need two sets, especially for accidents when learning to use the toilet.

## Naps

All children under the age of five are required by state law to have a rest time. We will provide a safe, quiet place for your child to rest. Please supply Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder with your child's favorite blanket. Please take the blankets home on Friday to launder them for the following week.

### **\*\*Infants**

Infants, 12 months and younger, will be assigned a crib for their rest times and will always be placed on their backs to sleep, unless there is a signed sleep position medical waiver on file. In that case, a notice will be posted on the infant's crib. Infants will not sleep on pillows, have toys in their cribs or have their heads covered with blankets

### **\*\*Preschool Children**

Preschool children will be assigned a cot or mat for rest time. Children who wake up before the rest will be guided in finding a quiet time activity to engage in so as not to disturb any sleeping children.

### **\*\*School Age Children**

School Age Children are required to have a quiet period if they attend the program for longer than five hours a day.

## Birthdays

Learning Ladder has the following practice pertaining to the celebration of birthdays: if only some children are being invited to a birthday party, we ask families to mail invitations from home and if all students in the class are invited, invitations for a birthday party may be distributed at school.

To celebrate birthdays, some parents may choose to send a "special treat" to school to be shared at some point during the school day. Please bring a store bought item, with the ingredients label attached, so that the staff can assure that the ingredients are safe for all

children in the class. We ask that families keep this in mind when providing birthday treats.

### Lost & Found

Lost and found items are collected with the hope of finding owners! Lost and found items will be placed in a prominent place. We encourage you and your child to check for all belongings. At the end of the 30 days, all unclaimed items are donated to local charities.

### Moving children up in classrooms

When moving children from class to class we will notify the parents and provide the information of what the parents and children can expect from the new class. Parent-teacher talks can also be held. Class changes are not always made by a change in age (birthday) but rather when developmental changes and advances occur and the child is comfortable developmentally and emotionally with the changes.

## Health and Safety

### Precautionary Practices

Annually, staff receives training on emergency procedures regarding strangers in the building, bad weather, environmental hazards, etc. Both staff and children practice fire and tornado drills on a monthly basis.

### Emergency Preparedness Plan

If the time arises that we would need to evacuate the children from the building or relocate, we will follow the steps below.

- Move children to a safe place:
  - Playground area of the GISD Learning Ladder campus,
  - Temple Baptist Church at 1811 E California St., ; 940.665.9789 or 940.284.3222; contact is Melinda Butler (secretary) or Brady Martin (pastor); contacted 9/27/18
  - Chalmers Elementary at 1745 FM 3092;
- In the event of an evacuation, find your child's caregiver to sign them out.
- If the children need to be relocated, we will transport them by available vehicles.
- All employees in charge of the children will bring their class rolls with them. They will use their class roles to account for each child as they enter/exit the building.
- Management will take our Emergency Contact Number binder, and authorization for emergency medical care.
- Management will contact parents, local authorities, and licensing with a cell phone. In an emergency you can reach us at 940-634-2164 (Director) or 940-284-5621 (Owner).
- In the event of a lockdown, the children will stay in their classrooms. You will be unable to enter the school or pick your child up during a lock down. You will be notified once the lock down has ended, and you can pick your child up.
- Once a lockdown has been lifted, release procedures will resume as normal.
- Quiet activities, food, and water will be provided during a lock down. During an

evacuation quiet activities, food, and water will be provided.

- Management will then notify all parents where to pick up their child.
- Children under 18 months will be evacuated by using emergency cribs.
- Children 18-24 months will be evacuated by lining up and holding on to a rope.
- Children over the age of 24 months will be evacuated by lining up in and walking in a straight line.
- Children with limited mobility or otherwise needed assistance will be given a designated caregiver to help them evacuate safely.

### Medical Emergencies

If a child has a medical emergency, the child will be given First Aid or CPR as needed and/or as indicated by medical emergency services. If a critical illness or injury requires the immediate attention of a physician, Learning Ladder staff will contact 911. The physician identified in the child's record will be contacted and the parent will be notified immediately.

### Learning to use the Toilet

When you feel your child is ready to start to use the toilet independently, we ask that you begin teaching your child at home. At Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder, we will provide support and encouragement for what you have implemented. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the toilet, more so than at your home.

Therefore, we will continue to use diapers or pull-ups until your child can and consistently announces the need to use the bathroom and can control him/ herself for a few minutes beyond that announcement. When the child has reached this point, training pants / pull-ups may be used. We also recommend that panties or underwear not be used until your child has naptime and bedtime control established. We also recommend dressing children in "user-friendly" clothing as much as possible as they will want to dress on their own and clothing with too many "gadgets" makes it harder for the child use the toilet within a timely manner. We understand this is a trying time for both the child and parents. We as a team will get through it.

### Illness and Exclusion

If a child becomes ill while at Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child as soon as possible. The child will be cared for apart from the other children, under appropriate supervision until the parent arrives.

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder will not admit a child if an illness prevents them from participating comfortably in activities, including outdoor play. Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder cannot provide care for a child whose illness may compromise the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in the program. The Lil' Leopard Learning Ladder reserves the right to deny care if the child exhibits any of the following:

- Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, Rectal temperature of 101.4 degrees or greater, or Armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater – accompanied by

behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.

- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes.
- Pink eye or eye discharge.
- Child must be fever free for 24 hours in order to return to daycare if fever had gotten to 102.0.

Children diagnosed by a health-care professional with a communicable disease, must provide medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious. Communicable disease that exclude a child from care are defined by the Texas Department of Health in 25TAC\*97.7

### Medication

Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder will administer medication to children if:

- Medications prescribed by a physician licensed to practice in the State of Texas must be provided by the parent in a container with the prescription label affixed. That label must have the student's name, drug name, and direction concerning dosage and schedule. Parents need to fill out a "Parent Request for School to Administer Medication" form. Forms are valid for six months.
- OTC (over the counter) medications will be not be given unless they are accompanied by a request from a physician and the parent provides the medication. (This means Tylenol, aspirin, OTC cold preparations, etc.)
- Homeopathic or herbal preparations will be treated as OTC medications.
- Medications are to be stored in a locked cabinet or container in a designated area. The exception to this is an asthma inhaler or an anaphylactic injector.
- Management staff will administer medications. Management will keep a log indicating times, dates, and dosage of medication given.
- Parents must fill out a medication form stating the exact time that the medication is due. Learning Ladder will follow the following dosage policy:
  - If the medication is to be administered once a day, it is to be administered at home.
  - If the medication is to be administered twice a day, it is to be administered at home.
  - If the medication is to be administered three times a day, the morning dose and the evening dose is to be administered at home. Learning Ladder will give the midday dose.
  - If the medication is to be administered four times a day, the morning dose and the two evening doses are to be administered at home. Learning Ladder will give the midday dose.

### Sun Screen and Insect Repellent

If you wish for your child to wear sunscreen please supply it with their name, and make the teacher aware of it. It is our policy that child care staff will apply sunscreen throughout the day, twenty minutes prior to going outside, to all of the children at Learning Ladder. You will be required to sign a sun screen form at the time of admission.

If you wish for your child to wear insect repellent, please supply it with their name, and make the teacher aware of it. It is our policy that child care staff will apply insect repellent before going outside, throughout the day.

### Meals & Meal Service Practices

In packing your child's lunch or sending treats to school, please check ensure all ingredients are listed in case other students that may partake in the treats have allergies .

A daily snack will be served each morning and afternoon. The snack will be one serving from the fruit, vegetable, milk, grain or meat group. No child will be forced to eat, but we do encourage each child to try one or two bites of everything. Sometimes they are surprised by what they like! Snack menus will be posted weekly on the parent bulletin board. All children at the Learning Ladder during a mealtime will need to bring their own breakfast and/or lunch. If your child's meal requires refrigeration, we request you provide an ice pack. The Learning Ladder will provide refrigeration for formula, breast milk and milk for children

Breakfast will be served before 8:00. The children will be learning the curriculum starting at 8:00am, and we ask that you have your child fed and nourished so that they can begin their day before 8:00am.

### Breastfeeding

If you are breastfeeding your child or want to provide breast milk you are welcome to do so. We have a comfortable place for you to come and nurse. Please provide us with labeled and dated breast milk. We will warm the milk in warm water.

### Photo Release

You will be required to sign a photo release at the time of admission. Any photos taken at Learning Ladder will only be used for the purpose of Learning Ladder such as; on the children's cubbies, art work, or the centers website. We will never use the photos for social media websites.

### Child Abuse Prevention Policy

The mission of Lil' Ladder Learning Ladder is to nurture all children entrusted to our care in a warm and loving environment. In keeping with that purpose, this policy seeks to assure that our center is continually working toward providing an environment safe from physical and sexual abuse for those participating in, receiving and providing childcare services. All employees shall seek to provide open lines of communication with parents. We will operate with an open door policy allowing parent access to programs at any time.

Texas law says anyone who thinks a child, or person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to DFPS. Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony.

All Lil' Leopards Learning Ladder staff attends annual training in prevention techniques for and the recognition of symptoms of abuse and neglect as well as the responsibility and

procedure for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.

The four types of Maltreatment are:

- **Physical Abuse** is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.
  - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
    - Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanation
    - Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
    - Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite
    - Cigarette burns on any part of the body
    - Lack of reaction to pain
    - Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
    - Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
    - Fear of going home or seeing parents
    - Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
    - Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs
- **Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.
  - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
    - Obvious malnourishment
    - Lack of personal cleanliness
    - Torn or dirty clothing
    - Stealing or begging for food
    - Child unattended for long periods of time
    - Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
    - Frequent tardiness or absence from school
- **Sexual Abuse** includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.
  - Warning Signs/Symptoms:
    - Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
    - Evidence of injury to the genital area
    - Pregnancy in a young girl
    - Difficulty in sitting or walking
    - Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
    - Sexual comments, behaviors or play
    - Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
    - Sexual victimization of other children
- **Emotional Abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It

includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scape goating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

- Warning Signs/Symptoms:
  - Over compliance
  - Low self-esteem
  - Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
  - Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
  - Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
  - Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

Texas law says anyone who thinks a child, or person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to DFPS. Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against caregivers who make reports in good faith.

To make a report:

- Call the Abuse Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide at 1-800-252- 5400.
- Make your report through the secure web site [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org). A response will be received within 24 hours.
- Email reports are not accepted.

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) manages community-based programs that prevent delinquency, abuse, neglect and exploitation of Texas children; helps communities enhance services provided through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; assists communities in identifying prevention and early intervention needs, and supports the development of, and modifications to, new and existing programs designed to prevent or reduce poor outcomes for children, youth and their families.

A few of these community organizations in the Wise County area are:

- Department of Family and Protective Services
  - [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)
- Family Connection
  - <http://ccdounseling.com/family-connection/>
  - Jennifer Mountain, LCSW 940-627-5328 x3
- Wise County Christian Counseling
  - Offers counseling on a sliding scale
  - <http://www.wiseccc.org/>
- Wise Hope Shelter & Crisis Center
  - [www.wisehope.org](http://www.wisehope.org)

These organizations are here to help you when you are in need. If you need help contacting any of these organizations please see your center director.

### Gang-free Zone

All of our childcare centers are gang-free zones. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of our centers is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the centers location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. You may contact your local municipality or court house for information about obtaining a copy of a map if you choose to do so.

### Suspension and Expulsion

If payment isn't made within two weeks services will be immediately suspended until balance has been paid in full.

Behavioral issues will be addressed independently through parent/teacher conference through individual plan to attempt to resolve the issue. Children will be given three write-ups before immediate expulsion. If other children have been put in harms way, immediate expulsion may occur.

Please be advised that any inappropriate parental behavior may result in the expulsion of your child.

### Safe Sleep

Infants under the age of 12 months must sleep in cribs and cannot sleep in any restrictive device. The cribs must be bare with the exception of a sheet, including animals, blankets, sleep positioning devices, pillows, etc. Children will be placed on their backs.

### Policy Updates

Policies are reviewed and updated annually if needed.