



Kennedy Child Study Center

where every child matters

PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK 2016-2017



Kennedy Child Study Center:
Where Every Child Matters

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**KENNEDY CHILD STUDY CENTER
PRESCHOOL PROGRAM: PARENT HANDBOOK**

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Dear Parents...

WELCOME TO KENNEDY!

As your child embarks on a new year of growth and learning, we embrace the opportunity to become part of your world and celebrate the magic of childhood together. Our policies and procedures are meant to provide a safe and stable environment for both you and your child. Please keep this manual in a convenient place so that you can refer to it as needed throughout the school year. It contains important information about your child's early childhood program. The **CONTACT SHEET** has all the specific contact information you may need during the school year, as well as the school calendar, so please hold on to it!

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE KENNEDY CHILD STUDY CENTER

1. OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Kennedy Child Study Center (KCSC) is dedicated to assisting children who exhibit significant difficulty in critical areas of early childhood development. These areas include cognition and learning, mobility, speech and communication, and social relations.

We accomplish our mission through a coordinated system of evaluation and diagnosis, multi-faceted therapy, specialized preschool education, and partnership with other community organizations. KCSC provides direct services to children, as well as support to parents and caregivers as they seek to provide a rich family life in which their children can thrive.

In addition to the services listed above, we strive to communicate the needs of our students to the general public, train professionals from a variety of disciplines for work in the area of developmental services, develop new programs and facilities, and encourage positive public policies that benefit children with special needs.

The Kennedy Child Study Center is an affiliate of Catholic Charities. Our Center was established in 1958 by the Archdiocese of New York, with a grant provided by Rose F. and Joseph P. Kennedy. In the years since our establishment we have grown from a small primary school to a modern institution serving over 800 children and their families annually in Manhattan and the Bronx.

2. OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

This handbook has been prepared as a reference for parents and guardians (you!) who have children enrolled in the KCSC Preschool Program. Parents are essential partners in the education of their children, and we want to engage with parents in the educational, social and physical needs of their young children. Classroom philosophy focuses on expectations of the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core. You can learn more about the Common Core by visiting this link: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/pdfdocs/nyslsprek.pdf

We believe that children should learn to love school in a child-centered environment where active play and social relationships are key components.

KCSC has an open door policy regarding parents and guardians. We encourage parents/guardians to visit the school and observe and participate in classroom activities. If you as a parent/guardian have concerns about any aspect of your child's development, our team of professionals will find time to discuss the concern and make recommendations as appropriate.

Each classroom is staffed with a full time certified special education teacher and two full time certified teacher assistants (TA's). Related services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling) are provided by licensed New York State therapists as mandated by each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). A Family Support Coordinator (FSC) is always available to each family to provide support regarding education and community resources.

Our teachers develop classroom activities that reinforce individual IEP goals and help children increase their social awareness of their peer group and other adults in the school environment. Teachers and therapists realize that every child learns differently, and they use teaching methods that encourage each child to participate regardless of language skills or social ability. While following Common Core guidelines, our staff uses a flexible approach that can evolve as your child learns and develops. At Kennedy, every child matters!

3. PROGRAM GOALS SPECIFIC TO THE KCSC PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core is organized into five broad developmental domains. Though distinct, they are closely related. Together they provide the structure for the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, and provide the framework for us to prepare each child for kindergarten.

A brief description of each domain appears below:

- **Approaches to Learning** – How children become involved in learning and acquire knowledge. This includes curiosity, concentration, creativity, persistence, and problem solving.
- **Physical Development and Health** – Children's physical health and ability to independently engage in daily activities. These activities include eating, dressing and using the toilet.
- **Social and Emotional Development** – The emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children's experiences in the home, school, and larger community.
- **Communication, Language, and Literacy** – How children understand, create, and communicate meaning of the world around them.
- **Cognition and Knowledge of the World** – How children integrate all areas of development. A child's ability to understand the world and apply what they know forms the foundation for the reading, writing and math skills they will need in kindergarten and beyond.

The children's daily schedule incorporates these learning domains. While classroom schedules will vary from day to day, children will engage in large and small group activities, structured play time, art, music, cooking, physical movement and outdoor play (weather permitting).

PRESCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. ATTENDANCE POLICY

DEAR PARENTS: Attending school every day is very important for your child's growth and development, and affects their ability to succeed in school and in life. Your child attends the Kennedy Child Study Center because they are mandated by the NYC Department of Education to receive services every day according to their Individual Education Plan (IEP). When planning family vacations or other trips, remember to schedule around the school calendar so that your child does not miss school.

If your child is going to be absent for one day, please take the following steps:

1. Call the school and state your child's name, the name of your child's teacher, and the reason for the absence;
2. Call the bus company and inform them that they will not need to pick up your child. To resume busing, you will need to call the bus company to let them know your child is ready to return to school
3. As per New York State Education Department rules, please provide a written note explaining why your child was absent.

*NOTE: Contact information for the school and the bus company are on the **CONTACT SHEET**.*

A doctor's note is required if your child had a contagious disease or is returning from a stay at the hospital. The doctor's note must state which day the child can return to preschool.

If your child is absent for more than 3 days, a note must be sent to the school citing a legal excuse for the absence. After 5 days, without a legal excuse, KCSC is required to notify your child's school district. The school district will attempt to contact you within 15 days of our notice. If you have not established a legal excuse for absence, your child's services may be terminated.

If your child has been mandated for a 12 month program, they are expected to be enrolled for the entire 6 week Summer Program. The program operates in July and the first two weeks of August. The actual calendar dates will be provided to you by April of the school year. Failure to attend the mandated Summer Program may jeopardize your child's placement in the Fall Program.

REMEMBER: It is very important for your child to attend school on a daily basis so they can progress, reach their goals, and become accustomed to routines and schedules. Children who are frequently absent miss valuable therapy and classroom time.

2. ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

The majority of students who attend KCSC are mandated to receive busing through the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE), Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT). **Kennedy Child Study Center does not hire the bus company or the drivers.** We encourage you to report any concerns you may have about your child's transportation to us so we can help you resolve it as soon as possible. However, because the bus company is hired through the NYC DOE, parents are required to speak directly to staff at the bus company to register a complaint. Contact information for your child's bus company is included on the **CONTACT SHEET**.

We have formal arrival and dismissal procedures, and take daily attendance of students who arrive and depart on the bus. If your child rides the bus and will not be in school, please call the school and leave a message on the school answering machine, and call the bus company using the **CONTACT SHEET** at the beginning of this packet.

If there is no one at home to receive your child, and we have made every attempt to reach someone on your emergency contact list, the bus company has been instructed by the NYCDOE to bring your child to the local police station. **PLEASE** help us avoid this unnecessary trauma by keeping the school updated with any change in contact information.

3. EMERGENCY CONTACTS

When you registered your child, you provided us with a list of 3 emergency contacts. **These emergency contacts are the only people other than you who are allowed to pick up your child from school or receive your child from the bus.**

The following guidelines apply to emergency contacts:

1. You must provide written permission for any person you designate as an emergency contact. This should be done when you register your child.
2. Emergency contacts must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
3. Emergency contacts must be willing to pick up or receive children on an as-needed basis. For example, in the event of unforeseen circumstances (dangerous weather conditions, no heat or air conditioning, etc.), KCSC may need to close early and would require that you or your emergency contact pick up your child from school or the bus earlier than the scheduled time.
4. You must inform people that you have listed them as an emergency contact. Administrators and classroom teaching staff have the right to check whether a listed emergency contact is aware that they are listed as an emergency contact, and are willing to fulfill the related responsibilities.
5. **All emergency contacts will be asked to show appropriate picture identification (driver's license, state ID, etc.) when picking up your child.**

6. We will ask you to update your emergency information (home phone, cell, email) and list of emergency contacts at least three times per year. We request that you contact your Family Service Coordinator (FSC) with any contact changes as they occur.
7. An individual whose name does not appear on the emergency contact list will not be allowed to pick up your child unless you have made a prior arrangement in writing. Again, you should inform your Family Support Coordinator immediately of any changes in emergency contact information or other important information.
8. If there is anyone you have identified who **should not** have access to your child, please note that on the emergency contact form AND call the school to speak directly to your Family Support Coordinator.

4. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

A. Related Services

If your child receives occupational or physical therapy, it is legally mandated that we have a current prescription that reflects the IEP mandates. As per your child's IEP, therapy sessions (like speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling) are scheduled for your child throughout the week. When your child is absent from school on a day that he or she is scheduled to receive a therapy session, we cannot guarantee that our therapeutic staff will be able to do a "make up" session. That being said, we will make every effort to meet your child's IEP mandates.

B. Illness

A child **must not** be brought to preschool when he or she is sick. Children with coughs, colds, nasal discharge or a fever of 101° or higher should be kept home until symptoms disappear. A child who has had a fever may return to school once the fever has been below 101° for at least 24 hours. Please call the school to alert us if your child has a contagious illness aside from the common cold or stomach virus. These guidelines help keep everyone healthy!

Should your child become ill during the day, the nurse or staff member will call you or your emergency contact person to come pick up your child.

Please be advised that the preschool nurse is available from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. The Nurse or a NYCDOH MAT (Medication Administration Trained) staff member are the only individuals authorized to administer medication to your child at any time. Guidelines regulating the administration of both prescription and over the counter medications can be found in the section below.

Children with significant medical or dietary needs will have a written Health Care Plan developed and monitored by our school nurse.

C. Administration of Medication

As per current New York State Department of Health regulations, if it is necessary for your child to receive medication during the time he or she is in our program, either on a daily basis or for an acute illness, the following procedures must be followed:

- A signed, up-to-date prescription from the physician indicating the need for the medication must be on file.
- A signed, up-to-date permission slip from you (the parent/guardian) authorizing the nurse to administer the medication must be on file.
- Medication must be delivered to the preschool nurse by the parent, guardian or another authorized individual who has signed consent from the parent/guardian. Children are **NOT** permitted, under any circumstances, to bring in medication of any kind to school.
- Medication must be in the original prescription bottle which shows the child's name, dosage and times for administration.

Over the counter (OTC) medications, such as Tylenol, Motrin, cough syrup, etc., require written authorization for use from you, the parent/guardian, and from your child's pediatrician. Any OTC medications must be delivered to the nurse in the **unopened, original packaging**. The form authorizing the administration of OTC medications must be signed annually and is kept in your child's file.

If it is necessary for your child to receive medication at any time after admission, **Medication Administration Forms** are available in the nurse's office.

D. Mealtime and Nutrition

KCSC participates in the federally assisted National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program as a Provision II School, meaning that every child who attends KCSC receives free breakfast and free lunch every day, regardless of income eligibility. Because your child will receive both breakfast and lunch, please be mindful of what your child eats before he or she comes to school.

Our menus are created by a licensed nutritionist and meet all of the federal guidelines regarding meal patterns and nutrition standards for Pre-K students by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Menus, in both English and Spanish, will be sent home to you monthly.

Breakfast is served every day at 9:30am and lunch is served at 12:00pm. Children will be encouraged to try new foods, regulate how much they eat, and assist with setting the table and cleaning up, all in a supportive, family style mealtime environment.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance

program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) KCSC may not discriminate against any students by refusing to provide them with free breakfast and/or lunch. Students with religious, medical, or other dietary restrictions are offered alternate meals that meet their requirements. Parents may request permission to send their child to school with specially prepared food that meets the child's dietary requirements.

5. CHILD SAFETY

All children are entitled to live and go to school in a safe and nurturing environment. Staff and clinical consultants at the Kennedy Child Study Center treat each student with respect and respond to their needs in a calm and supportive manner.

All staff and clinical consultants at KCSC are trained to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment, as mandated by New York State Public Health Law. If our staff and/or clinical consultants suspect that a child has been subjected to child abuse, neglect or maltreatment, they are required by law to contact the Child Abuse Hotline (800-635-1522).

KCSC will make every effort to maintain confidentiality in all such cases and is committed to supporting students, parents/guardians and staff members throughout the reporting process, while working cooperatively with Child Protective Services (CPS) and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

If you have any concerns about your child; if your child has been injured while outside of school; if you or your child need assistance in any way; or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Family Support Coordinator at your specific school site. Communication with our school staff is encouraged. All undocumented injuries, sustained absences from school, verbal reports made by students, noticeable changes in a student's behavior and/or appearance, etc., must be reported and investigated. If your child is injured during the school day, you will receive a phone call and/or written documentation of the incident as quickly as possible. Your child's wellbeing is our highest concern.

Fire, evacuation and lockdown drills are conducted throughout the school year. The preschool has an emergency fire and evacuation plan on file. If we need to vacate the building during an emergency, you will be notified of your child's location as soon as possible. **Your attention to ensuring we have up to date emergency contact information is essential.**

In addition to the drills noted above, KCSC has a written Health and Safety Plan, which is reviewed with staff on an annual basis. This plan includes: a Lost Child Plan, an Emergency Evacuation Plan, and a Medical Emergency Plan. If you would like to review a copy of the Health and Safety Plan, please contact the Educational Director. You will find their information on the **CONTACT SHEET**. It is our goal to keep your child safe at school and to communicate with you about any concerns you may have.

6. MEDICAID SERVICE COORDINATION

At KCSC, we understand the importance of support outside the classroom. Our Medicaid Service Coordination program provides eligible families, parents and caregivers with support, training and information on topics such as autism and the transition into the NYC public school system.

Social workers and Medicaid Service Coordinators provide information, referrals and coordination of services in many areas, including:

- Parent education
- Child nutrition
- Housing and health care
- Access to legal and other social services in the community
- Advocacy for appropriate resources and services

Prior approval from the New York State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is necessary for Medicaid Service Coordination Services.

If you are interested in receiving Medicaid Service Coordination for your child, email info@kenchild.org or contact your school's Family Support Coordinator for more information.

7. CLOSING FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

If the New York City Department of Education closes due to inclement weather, the Kennedy Child Study Center will be closed as well. The NYC DOE website will provide up to date information on school closures, as will local TV and radio stations. The NYC DOE website is: <http://schools.nyc.gov>. Please note that, **since all our children are transported by school bus, KCSC may choose to close even if the NYC DOE remains open** depending on transportation/safety concerns.

In the event of a school closure, parents/guardians will receive an automated message over the telephone. Parents/guardians can also opt to receive closure information via text message and email. **In order for the system to work, it is imperative that we have your updated emergency contact information.**

You can also learn about school closures by calling our main office using the numbers listed on the **CONTACT SHEET**. You will hear a recorded message in English and Spanish if school is cancelled.

8. VISITATION POLICY

A. Parents/Guardians/Authorized Persons

As a parent/guardian/authorized person, we welcome you to visit the program in order to address the care and education of your child. We ask that you keep the following requirements in mind:

- You will be asked to show a picture ID at the reception area. Once we get to know you, this will not be needed each time you visit the school.
- If you wish to simply see/observe your child in class, you can do so by making an appointment in advance or by dropping by and checking in at the reception desk.
- If you wish to speak with any staff member regarding specific care or educational issues, you are required to **make an appointment** so that your concerns may be addressed more thoroughly.
- Please note: **teachers cannot leave their classrooms for meetings when the program is in**

session, i.e. between 9:00 am – 2:30 pm, unless a prior appointment has been made and appropriate coverage is arranged.

B. Other Visitors

All other visitors to one of our programs must call in advance and schedule an appointment with whomever they wish to visit. To ensure the safety and security of all children in the building, visitors are required to:

- Sign in with the receptionist;
- Wear a Visitor's Pass to identify them while in the building;
- Have an escort with them at all times while in the building;
- Sign out at the reception/security desk when leaving at the completion of their visit.

Program administrators will ensure that:

- The receptionist/security guard has a current list of anyone identified by you as not able to have contact with your child.
- The receptionist/security guard will be informed in advance of all scheduled appointments.
- The educational supervisor will be contacted by the teacher if help/coverage is needed during a meeting with a parent/guardian/visitor.

All visitors will use appropriate and acceptable language and respectful behavior towards teachers, administrators, staff, students and other visitors. If a visit is deemed a distraction by the teacher or education supervisor, the visitor will be asked to end the visit and will be escorted out of the building.

9. PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

We look forward to your active involvement and support of your child's education. Communication and cooperation between preschool and home help to establish a warm and nurturing environment and further our efforts to provide an enriched experience for your child. Our website, www.kenchild.org, contains lots of resources and information that will help you keep up-to-date on school activities, developments in early childhood education and other news. You can also follow us on Facebook by visiting www.facebook.com/kennedychildstudycenter.

Parent-teacher conferences will be formally scheduled twice a year (or as needed/requested) to discuss your child's progress and issues of mutual interest or concern. As per NYCDOE policy, we update your child's progress three times a year for children who attend our 10 month program (September to June), and four times a year for children who attend our 12 month program (September to August), by sending home a short narrative report of your child's achievements. Your child's IEP is updated annually, or more often if a review is requested during the year.

KCSC hosts a variety of family events, parent workshops, and parent support groups to encourage involvement in your child's education program. We have a bilingual Family Service Department who are available to support you throughout the year and to help with individual needs. You will be receiving newsletters providing information about specific approaches and activities to help your children. We will also include information about available resources and community services.

10. CLOTHING AND BELONGINGS

In order to be comfortable and able to participate fully in class activities, your child should be dressed appropriately, including shoes. Dress him or her casually and according to the season. Keep in mind that there are indoor and outdoor play activities that include working with paint, water and sand.

It is our goal to help your children with toilet training and to work with you through this process. If your child is not yet trained you are required to supply diapers. You may send them daily, weekly, or monthly.

An extra, complete set of clothing, including underwear, socks, shirt, pants/skirt, sneakers and sweater, should be brought to school in a marked bag. This will be kept in the child's cubby for use as needed. **Label all personal items;** it helps to prevent loss. Although we will do our best to ensure that your personal items are safeguarded, KCSC cannot be responsible for items brought to our program.

Please do not send electronic games, cell phones, expensive items like jewelry, or special toys to school. Children have a hard time sharing these items and they are easily broken and/or lost. Any special items brought to preschool are restricted to planned show-and-tell events. Your child's teacher will inform you of any such events.

11. CLASS TRIPS

Class field trips are a part of your child's educational experience. Teachers will notify you in writing about any special scheduled trips. Parents are welcome to accompany their child on a class trip and volunteers are appreciated. Permission slips must be signed before your child will be permitted to participate in a class trip.

Since we are a community program, we sometimes take children on neighborhood walks to encourage language and appropriate public behavior. These require general permission from you. This Community Trip permission form is included in your registration packet. Community Trip permission slips must be signed annually.

Throughout the school year we have special programs scheduled for the children. We welcome and encourage you to participate. These may include cooking classes, art activities, yoga, Zumba, gardening or visits from therapy animals.

12. CALENDAR

Our preschool program operates 12 months a year. We will send home two calendars, one for the summer months of July and August (if your child has been approved by the preschool district to attend the 12 month preschool year) and a separate one for the September to June school year. Please keep this calendar handy for your reference and planning. Any changes to the calendar will be communicated in writing.

13. FERPA POLICY AND STUDENT RECORDS

The Kennedy Child Study Center respects the privacy of its children and students and protects the confidentiality of their education records. KCSC adheres to the guidelines outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

We maintain a file on each child enrolled at KCSC. This file contains all the information reviewed with you at your preschool district CPSE meeting. Your child's file is confidential and only certain people are able to access it for educational or administrative purposes. This includes your child's current teaching and therapeutic team, administrators and clerical staff. We must have written permission from you, the parent/guardian, in order to release any information from a student's educational record.

You have the right to contact us to review your child's file at any time. Parents/Guardians may request that the student's educational records be amended if you believe those records to be inaccurate. You should clearly identify the part of the record you want changed and specify why it is inaccurate. This request must be made to your preschool district chairperson. If the preschool district decides not to amend the record as requested, you may request a fair hearing from the NYCDOE. KCSC staff can assist you with contact information should you need to contact the district office.

14. BIRTHDAYS

Children will be recognized in class on their birthdays. If you do not celebrate birthdays at home, please inform your child's teacher. If you wish to bring or send in a special birthday treat, talk to your child's teacher or consider the ideas below:

- Bring in a special birthday crown, or party hats for the entire class
- Donate a new book to the classroom library, with a picture of your child inside the cover
- Bring in craft supplies like markers, stickers or glitter glue so the class can make birthday cards

If you would like to bring food, we ask that you bring healthy choices like fruit, or child-sized desserts like mini cupcakes. You can talk to your child's teacher for advice on birthday treats that will be good for all the students.

15. CELEBRATION OF HOLIDAYS

The children and staff at Kennedy come from diverse backgrounds. Not everyone celebrates the same holidays, and not everyone celebrates a given holiday in the same way. We invite families to come into school to show the class how their family celebrates a particular holiday. Helping children understand the diverse nature of our school community is one of the goals of celebrating holidays at school. If you do not want your child to participate in holiday celebrations, please inform your child's teacher.

16. BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE POLICY

At the Kennedy Child Study Center, we believe that every child, regardless of current ability, is capable of further growth and achievement. Our staff is trained to guide children's behavior by word and example. Staff realizes that children may not immediately understand or follow all the rules. Until children learn what is expected of them, they will occasionally exhibit challenging behavior. Furthermore, staff understand that children who struggle with language or other skills often use "temper tantrums" and other tactics to communicate their needs, because they do not know how else to express themselves.

We view discipline as part of good teaching, and disciplinary problems are viewed as "errors in learning." Instead of thinking that a child is choosing to behave badly, appropriate behavior is viewed as a skill that still needs to be taught, whether it is related to social and emotional interactions or communication. When a child acts out, our school psychologist, along with classroom teachers and teaching aides, consider where the behavior is coming from. Once we identify the problem, we can begin teaching the child about appropriate reactions. Part of our responsibility is teaching children how to create and maintain healthy relationships. With this in mind, our teachers aim to establish nurturing and responsive relationships built on mutual respect and trust with every child that enters our program.

We hope this handbook will be useful as we embark on an exciting year of growth and learning with your child! On behalf of all of us at the Kennedy Child Study Center: WELCOME!