

Country Care

Licensed Type II Home

Daycare



2008-2009

School Year

Parent Handbook

Table of Contents

1.	Welcome Letter	1
2.	Parking for Drop-off & Pick-up	2
3.	Safety during Pickup time	2
4.	Our Philosophy on Quality Care	3
5.	Number of Children in Our Care	4
6.	Pre-Enrollment Visits	5
7.	Parent Conferences	5
8.	Tips for Smooth Transition Times	6
9.	Tuition and Hours of Care	7
10.	Payment Terms	8
11.	Holidays, Vacation and Sick Days	9
12.	If I Become Sick	10
13.	If Your Child Becomes Sick	11
14.	Administration of Medications	12
15.	Meals and Snacks	13
16.	Food Allergies	14
17.	Naps	15
18.	Potty Training	15
19.	Supplies	16
20.	Bringing Toys to Daycare/Show & Tell	16
21.	Visits and Calls During Care Hours	17
22.	Pick-Up Policy	18
23.	Discipline Policy	19
24.	Birthdays & Other Celebrations	20
25.	Gift Exchanges	20
26.	Weapons and Firearms	21
27.	Smoking and Alcohol Usage	21
28.	Child Abuse	22
29.	Termination of Care	23
30.	Summary	24

Welcome!

Welcome to our Licensed Type II Home Daycare! We are Juetta and Gene Potter, and are pleased that you have chosen Country Care as your childcare facility. I (Juetta) am the primary provider, and my husband (Gene) is my assistant and backup provider. We are looking forward to working with you and your child(ren) to provide the best possible daycare experience.

I decided to provide childcare for other children in 1996 when I had a problem finding childcare for my daughters Beth and Celine, who are now 15 and 11. I began as a “baby-sitter” watching only a couple of children and mostly letting them play and watch TV. Since then, my husband and I have gone through extensive training, licensing, and home remodeling, to create what is now known as Country Care Daycare. In addition, we have recently added a new member to the family, Austin, who was born April 29, 2006. So, in order to make room for him in our home, we moved our daycare into its own building. I am no longer a “baby-sitter”, but a “childcare provider” or “daycare professional”. I am currently attending training to become a “childcare associate” which would qualify me as a director of a larger center, should I ever want to pursue that route. We are also in the STARS for KIDS NOW program, with our first STAR on its way, and working toward at least a 3 Star Center!

We truly hope your childcare experience will be a positive one. With that in mind, we make it our goal to provide your children with the best care possible. This handbook is intended to clarify our philosophy and principles, and describes the conditions under which we agree to provide care, governed by state regulations and guidelines.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have at any time. Welcome to Country Care!

Sincerely,
Juetta Potter, Director/Owner

PARKING:

Please park in the space provided when picking up or dropping off a child trying to stay out of the traffic flow area. School buses circle through our driveway to our facility about four times a day, around 6:45 a.m., 10:10 a.m., 1:45 p.m., and 3:55 p.m. Pulling in front of the gate or in the middle of the drive makes it impossible for the bus to circle, and also for multiple vehicles to come and go, causing others to possibly be late for work. There is enough room for at least three vehicles to park at the same time. This also prevents you from becoming blocked when someone else pulls in, causing you to have to wait for them to leave before you can also leave.

SAFETY DURING PICKUP TIME:

When you drop off or pick up your child(ren) while **children outside playing – they must ENTER & EXIT THRU THE BUILDING!** **Please enter the building, sign your child in or out, leave or collect your child’s belongings, then deposit or receive your child through the playground exit door.** This is for the protection of your children.

Also, once you and your child(ren) are outside the building, please have your child(ren) get directly into the vehicle, and do not allow them to run around the area outside the safety of the playground area. This is for the well being of your child(ren), the peace of mind of all concerned, and to prevent a possible accident. Parents come and go at different times throughout the day and a small child can be difficult to see when you are the driver of a vehicle.

OUR PHILOSOPHY OF QUALITY CARE:

We will strive to provide a safe, comfortable, stimulating, fun, educational environment in my home with a semi-structured day plan. Activities will include free playtime, structured playtime, large motor skills playtime, small motor skills activities, story time and theater activities, arts and crafts, music and dance activities, and other educational yet fun activities. We will also provide nutritious meals and snacks, and encourage good personal hygiene skills and manners.

The television will rarely be on during regular care hours, and then only to watch educational programs or activities which I have personally prescreened to be appropriate for even the youngest viewers.

Through a mixture of guided and undirected creative play, children in my care will have the opportunity to learn about color, shapes, textures, numbers, letters, animals, seasons, feelings, senses, nutrition, personal hygiene, manners, basic science and math concepts, and creative concepts such as “pretend” play, art, music, drama, and dance.

These may sound like lofty goals for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, but children can learn all of these things and more through creative play. We do not believe in pushing any child to learn at an accelerated rate, and will not make a child feel pressured to achieve any developmental milestones. By providing the right kind of fun safe environment, we believe that children will learn at their own appropriate pace.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN OUR CARE:

We follow the Commonwealth of Kentucky's regulations for a Type II Licensed Home Daycare, which allows me to care for up to twelve children at any one time, with the assistance of my partner if any of the children are under three years of age, and there are more than six children present.

Our home daycare has a preschool room and an infant/toddler room, with a gate between the two so that younger children can be out of the pathway of older children. However, I do let toddlers play with the preschoolers with the gate open for periods through the day to help them to learn and interact with the older children, and to give the older children the opportunity of teaching and helping with the toddlers. Infants are only allowed for very short periods to be in the preschool room, and then only with me holding them. The children have the opportunity to observe feeding and diapering, and are allowed to talk to the infants, but touching is discouraged, except for a light touch to toes or fingers.

ASSISTANT PROVIDERS:

We have one other person, besides my husband, Gene, as a substitute provider, in the event that Gene or I need to be gone for one reason or another. At the present time, this is Alecia (Penny) Abney, who is our neighbor and a terrific person who is great with children. She has been through training the same as Gene, and myself in order to be qualified as a substitute provider. We all attend continuing education training annually, as well.

PRE-ENROLLMENT VISITS:

We believe that children, providers, and parents do best when everyone participates in “get-to-know-you” sessions prior to the first day of care. This helps children get used to the provider and allows parents plenty of time to ask questions of the provider. It also helps everyone feel more comfortable with the situation. This benefits the child by allowing us to approach the first day of care with ease, which helps reduce stress for everyone.

Children benefit from a stable, long-term care environment. My hope is that these visits will help reduce the number of misunderstandings that can inevitably arise, so we can develop a good working relationship and avoid the need for unnecessary termination of care.

I will work with you to schedule as many pre-enrollment visits as possible without cost to you. These visits should only last about an hour or so, depending upon the number of questions you have. I would prefer that one of the first visits be without children present to limit distractions. After that, though, I would prefer to gradually increase my interaction with your child, taking cues from their comfort level.

PARENT CONFERENCES:

Parent conferences will be scheduled periodically with the parent(s) and/or guardian(s). This will allow you to meet with me in a relaxed environment without the distractions of other children and parents, to discuss things such as your child’s development, discipline strategies, and needs. I would also welcome your feedback on my effectiveness as an educator and care provider, as well as other issues and concerns that may arise. By keeping the lines of communication open, I hope to foster a more stable and enjoyable working relationship with the families I serve.

TIPS FOR SMOOTH TRANSITIONS AT DROP-OFF & PICK-UP

Transition times can be stressful for some children. In the morning they may not want to say good-bye to you and at pick up time they may not want to go because they are involved with a fun activity. This is a natural occurrence and may vary with your child's age and developmental stage.

To ease the situation we encourage parents to take a minute to help their child feel comfortable and to adjust by offering positive statements. A parent who shows reluctance to depart only makes the transition harder for their child. Although parents should never sneak out without saying "good-bye" to their child, a brief good-bye usually works best. Crying will usually stop a few minutes after you depart.

Whether you plan to stay for a while during transition times or you prefer to keep transition times short, it is important that you establish a consistent routine and stick with it. You are always welcome to stay and chat about your child's day, but please do this in the kitchen, away from the doorway so that your child doesn't get upset expecting you to leave immediately. Your child can then continue to play with the other children while we chat.

If your child misbehaves during transition times, please correct their behavior. My house rules apply from the time they walk in until the time they walk out and get into your vehicle. This is a time of testing when two different authority figures are present (parent and provider), and this situation will be tested at one time or another to see if the rules still apply. I will remind your child if inappropriate behaviors are being displayed. Please be prepared to back me up. If your rules or desires are being tested, I am ready to back you up as well.

Children of all ages adjust to transitions differently. Most do not like to be too rushed, or to wait too long once they are ready to depart. This is especially true during colder months, when children may get uncomfortably warm once dressed in a coat, mittens and a hat.

When leaving, please **DO NOT ALLOW CHILDREN TO RUN OUT TO YOUR CAR WHILE YOU ARE STILL INSIDE!** Also, do not allow your children to play on anything that is not inside the designated play ground. Children should be escorted directly to their vehicles, and not be allowed to run though the yard or driveway. Our safety rule is "No one outside without a parent or guardian with them." There may be other cars on the driveway and a serious incident could occur.

TUITION AND HOURS OF CARE

Our hours are from Monday through Friday from 6:00 am to 5:00 pm. However, special arrangements will be considered for care on second and third shifts, depending on the situation. We will also schedule weekend care BY APPOINTMENT ONLY on an “every other weekend” basis. Please refer to memo outlining the dates that can be found beside the sign in sheet by the door.

2003/04 TUITION RATES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Fulltime (five days, up to 10 hours per day):

All Children \$95 per week with a 10% discount for advance payment (\$85.00)

Part time (less than five days, up to 9 hours per day):

4 days or less \$73 per week (\$65 with 10% discount)
Before & after school care \$73 per week (\$65 with 10% discount)
Before & after school + Fridays \$84 per week (\$75 with 10% discount)
After school care only \$67 per week (\$60 with 10% discount)

Drop-off (must be enrolled as drop-off, space permitting*):

Less than 24 hour notice \$30 per day per child
24 hour notice \$25 per day per child

* No space is guaranteed for drop off service, openings based on per day basis. However, the center must have a file on hand for child to be able to accept drop off.

OTHER CHARGES:

Overtime (scheduled*) \$5 per hour (over 9 hours daily)
Late Pickup fee** **\$5 per 15 minutes (Please pick up your child on time when expected)**
Late Payment fee*** \$5 per day (this includes weekends)
Returned check fee \$15 (limit 2, after that-CASH ONLY)

***Payment is due **every Friday prior to care**, unless other arrangements have been made ahead of time. **The childcare fee will be incurred EACH WEEK without regard to your child's attendance** unless you sign up for Drop-Off Service.

****PICKING UP YOUR CHILD LATE will result in a LATE CHARGE OF \$5.00 FOR EVERY 15 MINUTES.** (Late means past your designated time chosen for pickup on the “Parent/Provider Agreement”. In case of **unavoidable** circumstances, exceptions may be made.

*Overtime is scheduled ahead of time, **not later than at drop-off time that day.** This is different from Late Pickup, which is when you are expected at a certain time, but do not show up.

PAYMENT TERMS:

Unless other arrangements are made in advance, charges for the next week's care will be due on Friday. This will enable us to purchase food and supplies over the weekend for the coming week.

Payment may be made in cash, check, or money order. In the unlikely event of a returned check, we require a \$15 service charge in addition to the repayment of any extra bank charges we may incur as a result of the inconvenience. After two such cases, subsequent payments will need to be made in cash.

In order to provide our family with a stable financial situation, we cannot offer any discounts for days your child is not in our care, such as when you are on vacation, days when your child is ill, or other days when you choose not to bring your child.

Although we realize daycare is a major expense for most working parents, we also rely on this business to support our own family. Since we will be holding your child's space for you to use at will, we need to charge for fulltime care whether you use it or not. Rare exceptions may be made at our discretion for extreme circumstances.

If you request, you may receive a written receipt for each individual payment of tuition. In January of each year, we will provide you with a summary of all fees paid for the previous calendar year. We will also provide you with a proper tax form (W-10) showing our taxpayer ID number and the full amount of any charges for the previous calendar year so you may claim this expense on your taxes.

HOLIDAYS, VACATION AND SICK-DAYS:

Although we will do our very best to be available every business day, it is conceivable that we may be forced to close occasionally due to vacation, illness, or other emergency. If you cannot ever tolerate rare, but possible lapses in care, you should consider placing you child in a large Center, or make other arrangements for backup coverage. We realize your need for reliable daycare and will make every attempt to be available as scheduled. We will attempt to give as much notice as possible whenever we must close our home center to care for any reason.

In order to spend quality time with our own family, we will be closed on the following major holidays:

Memorial Day
July 4th
Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after
Christmas Day
New Years Day

We will take a two-week vacation, which will include the week in which July 4th falls in the summer. The exact dates for this vacation will be decided and given to you in a memo no later than April 1st of each year so that you will have as much time as possible to arrange alternate care for your child(ren).

Because we understand that you must pay someone for your child's care during this vacation period, we do not charge for this two-week period.

In the event that I should become ill and not be able to provide care, my husband or my alternate substitute will be filling in until I am well enough to work again.

In order to provide our family with a reliable income, we cannot offer a discount for days when your child is unable to attend due to his/her illness or vacation.

IF I BECOME ILL:

We will do our best to prevent the spread of illnesses through good hygiene and housekeeping, but total avoidance of illness is impossible.

We will not close the daycare if I am mildly ill due to a cold. I will, however, notify you as soon as symptoms appear in myself or any of the children, so that you can decide whether or not to have your child in care that day.

If I should become ill with more than a standard cold, such as flu or other fever, Gene will take over care until I have been fever-free for 24 hours. Again, you will be notified as to the situation so you can determine whether or not you wish to have your child in care that day.

Regrettably, we cannot offer any discount for days that you choose not to bring your child.

IF YOUR CHILD BECOMES ILL:

Although we are not trained medical professionals, we have been educated in the recognition of infectious childhood diseases and I will attempt to alert you at the first sign of any illness.

In order to protect the health of all children in our care, I will call you at work and request that you pick up your child within one hour if he or she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100 degrees F for more than 1 hour
- Excessive diarrhea for 2 consecutive diapers or toiletings
- Vomiting in excess of typical infant spit-ups
- Conjunctivitis (“pink eye”)
- Persistent complaints of ear or stomach pain
- Bleeding other than minor cuts and scrapes
- Excessive greenish nasal discharge (possible infection)
- Head lice

In the event your child is sent home due to one of the above conditions, he or she will not be allowed to return until they have been symptom-free for a full 24 hours, or until accompanied by a signed note from your child’s doctor. This policy is intended to help prevent the unnecessary infection of the other children in our care. Although it may seem inconvenient when your child is sent home, you will appreciate knowing your child’s exposure is minimized when other children become ill.

We will not send a child home with a common cold, unless accompanied by a fever or other severe symptoms. However, many times when young children are ill, they may not exhibit “classic” signs of the illness (fever, vomiting, etc.) but will be excessively fussy and/or require constant cuddling and attention. While I believe in providing as much cuddling as desired, if a child is ill and requires my undivided attention, this distracts from my ability to provide quality care to all the children in the group. Therefore, if your child reaches a point when he/she requires constant attention, will not play, cries continuously, whines and wants to be held constantly, etc., then your child will need to stay home.

You should expect that any time a new child is introduced to the group, colds and other minor illnesses are likely to occur until everyone's immune systems have adjusted to the new exposures. Also, advise me whenever a member of your family has an illness so that I can be alert to the possibility of symptoms developing in the childcare group.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINES:

Since we are not licensed medical professionals, we will not administer any type of medication, including prescription and over-the-counter medications, without a signed consent form. This form can be filled out when you drop our child off and must include:

- The child's name, age and current weight
- The name and phone number of child's doctor
- The name of the medication
- The dosage amount and frequency
- Possible side effects
- Reason for needing the medication
- Instructions for proper storage and preparation of the medication

All prescription medications must have been prescribed recently, and be clearly labeled with the pharmacy information.

Also, the medication must be in a clearly labeled childproof container.

Although we are trained in infant and child CPR, basic first aid, and recognition of communicable childhood diseases, we do not pretend to be doctors, and will not under any circumstances provide any medications, including vitamins. You must provide any and all medications for your child.

MEALS AND SNACKS:

We will provide all meals and snacks, with the exception of infant formula or breast milk. You are welcome to provide your child's favorite wholesome foods, but please plan to bring enough to share with all of the children. Also, please notify me a day or two ahead of time when you intend to bring foods, so that I can plan the day's menu accordingly. When you bring foods, please inform me of any ingredients such as nuts or citrus fruits, which may cause allergic reactions.

The meal schedule is listed below. Children who are here during those times will be served. Children who choose not to eat during these times will not be served again until the next scheduled meal time (with the exception of infants, who I believe in feeding on demand). If your child will be arriving after a scheduled mealtime, please arrange to feed him/her prior to arrival. This allows me more time to focus on the daily activities, and eliminates problems caused by children arriving with "Happy Meals" in hand.

Our Meal Schedule: (for toddlers and older)

Breakfast:	8:00 to 8:30 am
AM Snack:	10:00 to 10:15 am
Lunch:	12:00 to 12:30 pm
PM Snack (1)	3:00 to 3:15 pm
PM Snack (2)	4:00 to 4:15 pm
Supper	6:30 to 7:00 pm
Late Snack	8:30 to 9:00 pm

*Supper and Late Snack are only included during pre-arranged evening care hours. Please feel free to discuss your child's need for food outside these times, such as for medical reasons.

As detailed in the supplies section of this handbook, you are responsible for providing your infant's formula or breast milk, however, we will provide jar foods or other "strained" foods as needed. You may bring baby foods at your discretion.

Our weekly menu will be posted on the bulletin board beside the chalkboard. We reserve the right to substitute foods if there is something on the menu we are temporary out of. Substitutions may include, but not to be limited to:

Apple slices for Applesauce
Bologna for Hot dogs or vice versa
Ham for roast beef or vice versa
Sliced bread for buns
Toast for Bagels
French-fries for tater tots or vice versa
Salmon for tuna
Peaches for pears or vice versa

If you have questions or concerns about the menu, please feel free to discuss them with me.

All foods will be cut into safe-size pieces and served in child-sized portions. Children are requested to try one bite of any food served, unless the child has an allergy or sensitivity to that food. If, after trying a bite, the child does not like that food, he/she will not be asked to eat any more of it at that meal. It is proven that children often like foods they did not initially want to try, once they have been exposed to it a few times.

Children may have second helpings of any foods upon request, but only after they have finished all foods on their plate. It is my experience that children will eat when they are hungry, and will get all of the nutrients they need when consistently presented with a variety of health choices.

FOOD ALLERGIES:

To avoid triggering allergic reactions, the following foods will not be served to children under 12 months of age, unless you specifically approve them for your child:

- Citrus fruits and juices
- Tomato products
- Nuts, including peanut butter
- Eggs
- Honey
- Dairy products

Please alert us to any suspected food sensitivities or allergies so that we may attempt to accommodate your child's dietary needs.

NAPS:

We will offer infants a morning nap, generally between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and noon, or as needed. All children will be offered an afternoon nap after lunch, generally between the hours of 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

All children will be expected to sleep or rest quietly during this time, so that the children who need to sleep can do so. Nap times will start story time and/or quiet songs to encourage children to fall asleep.

As outlined in the Supplies section, we ask that you supply a pillowcase (we have pillows) and a crib sheet for your child's mat for rest time. If your child has a favorite blanket or other comfort object, you are certainly welcome to bring these. They will be kept in the child's cubby and only be allowed to be out at rest time.

Each child will have their own regular sleeping space such as a crib, playpen, or mat, and each child's linens will be washed each weekend, or as needed.

Please do not request that your child be exempt from naptime. In a group care situation, this would not be in your child's best interest.

Also, please try to refrain from dropping off or picking up your child during the scheduled nap times as this potentially disrupts the entire group. We will attempt to accommodate occasional deviations from this policy, such as for emergencies and other necessary events.

POTTY TRAINING:

The decision of when to assist your child with potty training is a personal one, and should be made based on your child's signs of emotional and physical readiness. I will be happy to offer you verbal assistance and can recommend several good books on the subject. However, please do not request that I begin training your child until he/she has experienced prolonged toileting success in your own home.

Your child will need to remain in diapers or "Pull-Ups" during daycare hours until he/she has shown the ability to remain accident-free in your home for a period of at least two weeks. This is for several reasons: children often appear to be trained in a (calmer, quieter) home situation, but are not yet able to "listen" to their body's signals when presented with the distractions of a group care environment. Asking me to allow your child to go without diapers or pull-ups before he or she is truly ready would cause unnecessary stress on your child, our staff, and our center.

SUPPLIES:

You will be responsible for providing your child's

- Diapers
- Diaper wipes
- Sterilized bottles & nipples including (optional) bottle liners
- Infant formula or breast milk
- All prescription & over-the-counter medications
- Spare clothes appropriate for the season
- A pillow case for your child's pillow at rest time
- A crib sheet for your child's mat or crib at rest time
- One roll of paper towels & one box of tissues per month

We have a sufficient supply of sippie cups for all the children in care. If you would like to bring your child a drink in their own cup, this is OK, but ***PLEASE DO NOT BRING CARBONATED BEVERAGES*** in your child's cups. They end up getting turned over at one point or another, and cause a sticky mess. This caused unneeded extra work for us.

Country Care will provide all other food and supplies. Of course, donations of all sorts of materials are always welcome!

BRINGING TOYS TO DAYCARE:

Country Care has sufficient toys and activities for all age children in care. It is requested that children **DO NOT BRING THEIR OWN TOYS**. This tends to cause problems between children, and makes our job harder at pick-up time trying to locate belongings that are mixed in with other toys.

SHOW & TELL

However, we will have a "Show and Tell" time on Fridays so that children may bring a small item to show to the other children. The children must understand that the show and tell items must be kept in their cubby until show and tell time, and then put back in their cubby and left there until time to go home. **Children may also bring a special blanket or stuffed animal to rest with at rest time, as long as the same procedure is followed.**

VISITS AND PHONE CALLS DURING REGULAR CARE HOURS

Parents or guardians are welcome to drop by unannounced at any time during the hours their children are in care. Please be aware, however, that children often do not really benefit from these visits. Many children will cry or act “clingy” during pick-up and drop-off times, but will quickly adjust and start playing happily once Mom or Dad are out of sight. Having such irregular additional visits often serves only to interrupt the child’s comfortable routine, and can lead to increased distress during regular transition times.

Since I am frequently very busy attending to the children’s’ needs, it is difficult for me to answer the phone during regular care hours, however I do attempt to do so, but must make any call as brief as possible. Please limit phone calls to your children while they are in my care since, like unannounced visits, these calls can disrupt your child’s routine and lead to increased stress for everyone involved, especially your child.

I will not allow your child to talk to anyone on the phone who calls and asks for them other than the parent(s) or guardian(s) that I am familiar with and whose voices I recognize. This is for the protection of your child. Please inform other family members of this policy so no one will be offended by being told they cannot talk to a child. However, on a special occasion, such as a birthday, if I am notified in advance by the parent or guardian that a particular individual will be calling to wish the child “Happy Birthday”, an exception to this policy may be made.

PICK-UP BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE CHILD’S PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN:

We will not under any circumstances release your child into the custody of anyone other than his or her parent or legal guardian, unless that person is listed on the pick-up authorization section of the enrollment form. Even then, I would request to be notified by the parent in advance, either during drop-off, or by phone, that someone out of the ordinary would be picking up the child. This is for the safety of the child, as well as the peace of mind of the parents/guardians.

In the event of an emergency, I will attempt to contact you and/or your spouse, or the child’s other legal guardian, or other adult listed on your emergency contact form. In any case, if I am not familiar with the person, I will require a valid photo ID card from an authorized government agency (such as a drivers license) as proof of identification before I will release the child into their custody.

Please advise anyone who may pick up your child not to take offense at this policy. It is simply the only way I can assure the protection of you, your child, and all other parties involved.

Anyone picking up a child must have an appropriate car seat in his or her vehicle or I will refuse to release the child to his or her care. I simply cannot in good conscience allow a child to travel without a proper safety restraint.

Also, if your family is experiencing a divorce or other legal situation, which would affect who is allowed to pick up your child, please let me know immediately. You will also need to provide court orders or other proper legal documents indicating who is no longer allowed custody of your child. Unless these papers are provided, I will have no choice but to release your child into the custody of anyone currently on your list.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

We do not believe in spanking, slapping, smacking, yelling or hitting of any kind. This type of discipline will not be used in our home center, regardless of your practices in your own home. Instead, we prefer the following discipline methods to handle any dangerous or hurtful offenses:

For children under the age of about 18 months, I find it most effective to remove the child from the situation, and redirect their attention elsewhere. Although I will most likely explain to the child that the offending behavior was inappropriate, child of this age are rarely able to fully understand what they have done. Fortunately, at this age their attention span is also usually shorter than with older children, so simply showing them a different toy or activity usually does the job.

For children of about age 2 and over, I will alert the child to the offense by saying firmly “NO”, explaining why the behavior is unacceptable, and offering the child the choice to behave. If the child chooses not to behave appropriately, I will first explain to the child why their behavior is not acceptable, then I will place the child in the “time-out” chair which is located beside the book shelves, under observation for a period of about 1 minute per year of age.

At the end of the time-out, I will ask the child if he or she understands why they had a time-out, ask if they understand why they shouldn't do whatever it was they did, then ask if they are ready to play nicely again. I will also encourage children to apologize to the other child(ren) involved, when developmentally appropriate. This method not only stops the offending behavior, but also teaches the child consequence, responsibility, and empathy in a positive manner.

Dangerous and hurtful offenses include hitting, biting, kicking, pushing, hair pulling, throwing things, climbing on an inappropriate structure, willful destruction of property, tantrum throwing, running while indoors, and not following reasonable requests. These relatively minor offenses will be handled as described above, depending upon the child's age and developmental stage.

To a point, kids will be kids – but only as long as the emotional and physical safety of all of the children in my care is protected. In the rare instance that I feel any child in my care has a serious discipline problem, I will request a conference with the parent(s). If an understanding cannot be reached, I reserve the right to terminate our contract with as much notice as possible in order to guarantee the comfort and safety of the other children in my care.

BIRTHDAYS AND OTHER HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Please feel free to bring a special treat to share with all of the children in my care on your child's birthday, but this is certainly not necessary. Please give me at least one week's notice of your plans so that I may prepare the children to expect this change to the usual routine. Your child will no doubt enjoy this special day regardless of a celebration (or lack thereof) at daycare, so please do not feel obligated to plan anything elaborate.

As for other festivities, including religious holidays, I will always give you plenty of notice prior to the celebration of any cultural or religious occasions. I welcome the opportunity to include your family's favorite holiday traditions in my lesson plans, but would appreciate as much advance notice as possible so that I can thoroughly prepare. Also, I will attempt to notify you of related lesson plans so that you may choose to discuss them with your child from your own perspective.

The families we care for come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds and beliefs, so we would prefer to refer your child's questions on these subjects to your authority. Please feel free to discuss with me any preferences you have in my handling of these topics where your children are concerned.

GIFT EXCHANGES:

Due to different religious and cultural practices, gifts will only be exchanged if all of the families we serve would like to participate. Typically, the children enjoy exchanging small, inexpensive gifts during the December holiday period and we enjoy giving each child a small present before the holiday break.

WEAPONS AND FIREARMS:

At no time will we allow any weapons or firearms of any kind in our home daycare center. This includes, but is not limited to: guns, knives, pocket-knives, swords, stun-guns, pepper spray, mace, num-chucks or other martial arts accessories, lassos or hand-cuffs, smoke bombs, etc. This policy also includes all toy guns and other toy weapons such as plastic swords.

If your child is found to have a gun, any weapon, or dangerous substance in his or her possession while in my home, you will receive an immediate call from me informing you that you need to pick up your child immediately. We will require written assurance from you that your child will not ever bring any guns or other weapons to our center before we will be able to accept your child for care again. If this is not provided, the terms of this contract will be voided immediately, and you will forfeit any deposits.

If your child arrives with an inappropriate toy, it will be stored in their cubby until the end of the day, and returned with a note asking you not to send it with your child in the future. Toy guns and swords may be fine for pretend play at home, but they are not suitable for a group care environment.

SMOKING AND ALCOHOL USAGE:

Smoking or any other tobacco usage will not be allowed in the presence of the children in my care, or in the daycare area of our home at any time.

Also, alcoholic beverages will not be served or consumed by myself or anyone else in my household during regular care hours. Any alcoholic beverages stored on the premises will be kept in a locked cabinet at all times.

If at any time a parent or guardian attempts to pick up a child from my home while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, I will attempt to arrange alternate transportation for your child to your home. If this is not possible, we are legally bound to release the child to your custody and alert the police of the situation.

CHILD ABUSE:

Unfortunately, this is a topic that must be addressed in today's society. It should go without saying that we will not knowingly allow any form of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse of any child in my care at any time. This includes the time that the children are in their own home. On the surface, this may sound like an invasion of privacy, but we cannot ethically or legally turn a blind eye toward such abuse.

We have been trained in the recognition of all forms of child abuse, and will do everything in our power to prevent any instances from occurring. If we notice any signs of abuse at any time, we will alert that child's parent(s) immediately both verbally and in writing, along with a full description of the symptoms. (Bruising, sores, sudden extreme behavioral changes, etc.) We will document this same information for myself, and if necessary, alert the proper authorities after first attempting to handle the situation discretely.

You may get notes about your child having bruises or scrapes without needing to fear that we suspect you of abusing your child. Be assured, if we think your child has been abused, we will let you know! The notes we send home are just to alert you in general of any instances that may come up, and also to protect us from mistaken accusations of abuse.

We would prefer not to have to deal with this issue, but I think it is best that we handle it openly and honestly to avoid any possible misunderstandings. We both want what is best for our children. Please feel free to discuss this or any other issues with me at any time.

TERMINATION OF CARE:

Our contract may be terminated at any time for any reason, by either party with proper notice. According to the contract, proper notice will consist of written or verbal notice to the provider not less than two weeks prior to the child's last day of care. If you choose to terminate care with less than proper notice, you agree to pay tuition for the remainder of the two- week period.

If at any time, after consultation with the parent or guardian, I feel that you or your child pose a safety risk to myself or any of the children in my care, I will give you as much written notice as possible that care is terminated. This action will be reserved for extreme cases only, and I will first attempt to resolve any issues with you before resorting to termination of care.

SUMMARY:

As a state licensed and regulated entity, we at Country Care have certain policies and procedures that we must follow, that are not under our control, in order to be in compliance with state regulations. **ALL** of the sections outlined in this handbook are based on these policies and procedures, and must be followed in order for Country Care to continue to operate as a Licensed Daycare. If we did not follow these policies and procedures we would lose our license. Also, we must be flexible, as Licensing and Regulations are continually changing. These changes are not in our control, but in the control of the State, for the continued protection and safety of all children in child care facilities.

Children are tender, curious, wonderful beings who need a safe and enriching environment to grow and thrive. We will do our best to ensure the safety, comfort, health, and happiness of all children in our care at all times and will present them with the opportunity to learn at their own pace.

In order to meet our goals, we will attempt to gain as much continuing education and training as possible. I will also strive to keep the lines of communication open between myself and the families we serve. Please feel free to discuss your needs for improved childcare with me at all times.

