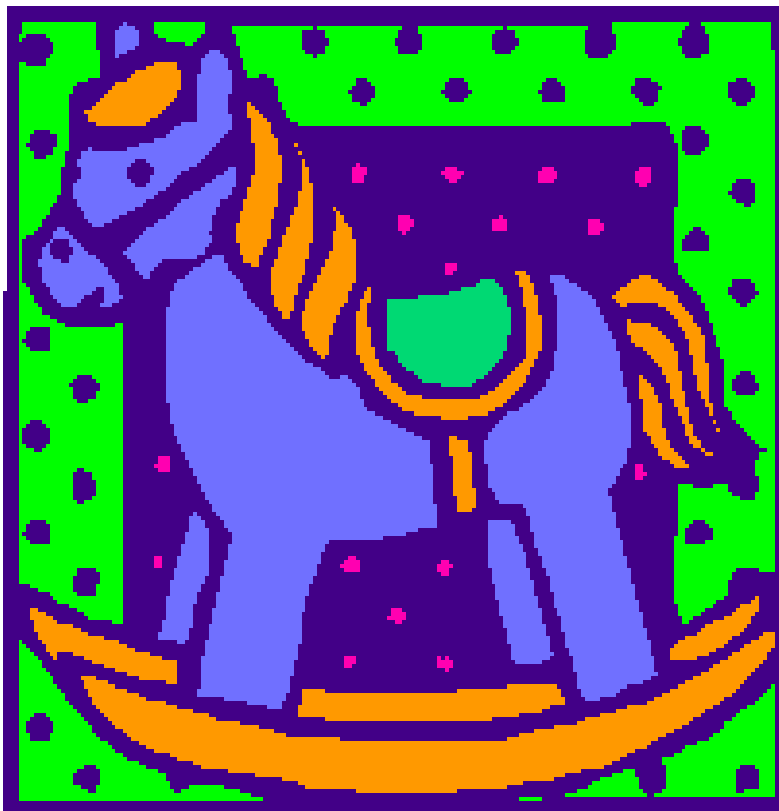


# *Rocking Horse Academy*



## *Parent Handbook*

*Revised January 2016*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Epictetas once said, "Only the educated are free." One of the many factors that make our nation great is our commitment to an education. Unfortunately, today's society fails to provide a quality education for a very important part of our population, our babies.

Research proves over 75% of a child's language skills are developed by the age of three, but our public school systems do not provide education until the age of five.

At Rocking Horse Academy, we believe learning begins at birth. With focused curriculum and consistent, sequenced learning, we give our children the best possible foundation upon which to build their life-long love of knowledge and learning. Therefore, we are committed to employing only the best teachers who share our vision.

Our children are to be nurtured and taught every minute of every day. We are not a day care; we are a school. Every staff member and parent is part of a team to provide that care and to plan that curriculum.

As owners, we are committed to supporting our staff with all of the tools and materials needed to teach our children.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Rocking Horse Academy is a child development center teaching children ages six weeks to five years old. Our philosophy is "every child can learn." We focus on actively developing the child's motor skills, social development, gross motor skills, and academic learning.

Our program is geared towards the individual needs of each child. Rocking Horse Academy's curriculum will prepare the child for entering elementary school with the appropriate knowledge base, encourage appropriate social behaviors, and provide a healthy, physical and nutritional program for life-long fitness.

The infant program focuses on early brain development and emotional well-being. The pre-school curriculum enhances readiness skills to be utilized throughout the lifetime of the individual.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Our mission is to educate all our students in a safe, loving environment so they might grow up to live productive and successful lives.*

## **GOVERNING BODIES**

The Owner and Board of Directors of Rocking Horse Academy, formed in 2001, establish policies.

The Owner and Director supervise all staff and handle the daily management of the Center.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Rocking Horse Academy is a year-round school, open from 6:30am – 6:30pm, Monday through Friday, with the exception of specified holidays. We offer all-day education and care for children ages six weeks through five years of age. We also provide a stimulating after school program for children through the age of eleven. Our part-time program offers Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, or Tuesday and Thursday full days as availability becomes open within each classroom. Due to the limited occupancy of our infant room, the part-time program is not available until after twelve months of age. Drop-in care is also available based on vacancies; all enrollment forms must be completed in advance. If you need a drop-in spot, please call the office to make arrangements. Payment for drop-in care is to be made upon pickup that same day. Please check the current fee schedule for rates.

Children receive a healthful morning and afternoon snack with 100% juice or milk. Each child may bring his/her own nutritious lunch. Please do not send juice boxes or sugary drinks with lunch; Rocking Horse Academy provides whole milk for the younger students and 2% for the older students. Parents will need to provide a water bottle daily filled with fresh water. Water will be offered at every snack, meal and throughout the day. Please use thermoses for hot/warm items and cold packs to keep things cool. We will warm food in the microwave as needed. Rocking Horse Academy also offers a hot lunch, following the USFDA nutritional guidelines, for the children. Please check with our front office manager for current prices.

Rocking Horse Academy also offers "after hours" care for extra programs like Parent Date Night and Shop 'til You Drop days. We have an extensive summer camp program, tailored to meet the variety of interests our children are seeking; and full day care for school aged children during HCISD in-services and holidays.

## **ENROLLMENT**

Children are enrolled without regard for race, color, religious belief, national origin, or gender, and will not be excluded from participation, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination during any program or activity. As a general rule, when a space becomes available in a specific age grouping, the first child on the waiting list of the appropriate age will be enrolled. However, Rocking Horse Academy administration reserves the right to assign the available spaces, to give special consideration to extenuating circumstances (i.e. current student, siblings, full vs. part time). Rocking Horse Academy is a full time, twelve-month program. **Placements in our classes cannot be held for children who withdraw for the summer months.**

Requests for changes in part-time programs will be handled on a first-come first-serve basis. Changes will only occur if there is availability in the program requested. If there is no availability, the child will remain in his/her current program and will be given priority on our waiting list.

Children with special needs will be considered on an individual basis and will be accepted as long as we are assured we can fully meet the child's needs and the needs of other children in the group with reasonable accommodation. In all cases, the child must be able to participate and substantially benefit from our program without risk to him/herself or to other children. If we have no immediate vacancies, a waiting list is maintained for future enrollment.

Prior to enrollment, we will ask parents/guardians to fill out a number of forms. Some of these, like the Child's Enrollment Record and the Health and Immunization Records, are required by the state agency that monitors and licenses child care centers. Other forms are specifically designed for the use of Rocking Horse Academy. These forms will help the primary teacher gather needed information to help your child adjust to out-of-home care. All forms, health statement and shot records must be turned in prior to the child's first day.

## **WAITING LIST**

When classes become and/or remain full, Rocking Horse Academy retains a waiting list divided by age and classrooms. An application form, as well as a nonrefundable application fee must be submitted to the office in order for a child to be placed on the waiting list. Applications will be filed in each age group; according to the date the application and fee are received. Once enrolled, the application fee will be applied to the child's one-time registration fee.

## **HOURS OF OPERATION**

Rocking Horse Academy is a year-round school, open promptly 6:30am – 6:30pm, Monday through Friday with the exception of specified holidays and teacher training days.

Our educational program begins each day no later than 8:30am. We encourage parents to have their children in their classes by this time in order to fully benefit from our activities. We ask parents ***not*** to drop-off or pick-up their children during lunch and nap times 10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., unless they have an unavoidable scheduled doctor's appointment. This can be very disruptive to your child and to the other students in class. Our security-coded pad will be turned off between 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Anyone wishing to enter the building between these hours will be buzzed in.

**We also ask parents to not bring food in the mornings after 7:15 a.m.** All food must be consumed by 7:30 a.m. Breakfast is very important, but our teachers can not monitor children eating breakfast with a classroom filled with other children. Too often, other children want to take the food and disputes erupt.

### **BEFORE YOUR CHILD ATTENDS SCHOOL**

A child's introduction to school influences his/her overall adjustment. The following suggestions can help make your child's school experience a happy one:

- Talk about the school in advance. Respond to your child's questions about school with simple, straightforward enthusiastic answers.
- Visit the school and become acquainted with policies and procedures.
- Bring your child by the school prior to his/her first day, to become acquainted with the surroundings, and to meet his/her teacher.

### **ADJUSTING TO SCHOOL**

- Encourage your child to go through routines and interact with other children but do not insist.
- Your child is adjusting to many new people and things right now. He/she may become fatigued more easily the first few days. You may need to adjust your schedule to accommodate his/her needs. Classrooms for ages 1-5 years old nap from 12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Keeping your child on this schedule even when not at school will help with the adjustment.
- Once in a while, a child cries or says he/she doesn't want to go to school. This should be discussed with the teacher who may have some helpful insights. Your child's teacher will be sensitive and quick to give whatever helps your child adjust. Soon, children who may have cried when left in the morning may resist leaving school, their friends, or an interesting activity at the end of the day.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN – SCHOOL COMMUNICATION**

Good communication is vital to a successful experience. A variety of methods are used to keep you informed about the school and your child's learning experience. A newsletter and a parent's bulletin board are available at the Academy. Our quarterly newsletter and weekly menus are posted on our website [www.rockinghorseacademy.com](http://www.rockinghorseacademy.com) We maintain a Facebook page where we post current activities and emergency information.

Conferences are held once a year, and as needed, with the teachers to discuss your child's progress, accomplishments, and difficulties at home or at the school. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please notify your child's teacher, his/her supervisor, or an administrative staff member. Open lines of communication will enable us to provide you with the service you expect and value.

We have computerized enrollment records to ensure the information we have about your family is up-to-date and accurate. **Please help keep our contact records current.** *If any of the following information should change, please notify us so we may update your records:*

- 1) Phone numbers where you can be reached during the day. **It is vital that we have correct phone numbers: cell and work.**
- 2) Addresses at home and at work. Email addresses for both parents
- 3.)Names of authorized persons who may be contacted in case of your child's illness or injury.
- 4) Any change in your child's home schedule or routine.
- 5) Names of persons authorized to pick up your child in the event you cannot.

Please let us know of any changes in your child's daily routine. **All information is strictly confidential.** It is important that we build and establish open lines of communication at all times.

### **DOOR ACCESS**

We have a security access control system to ensure the safety and security of our children and staff at all times. An ACCESS CODE will be issued to each family to allow easy access for drop-off and pick-up. If the front office staff does not recognize anyone by name, he/she is required to ask for identification. Please be patient and understanding during this procedure; it is for you and your child's safety. All visitors must sign in and show identification.

Our security-coded pad will be turned off between 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Anyone wishing to enter the building between these hours will be buzzed in.

Rocking Horse Academy is a “gang-free zone.” As a school, fire arms (concealed or open-carry) are not allowed, unless worn by an officer of the law required to wear a gun.

### **CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE**

As stated above, a parent/guardian is required to accompany his/her child(ren) to and from the classroom. *Please sign in and out of the classroom log each day.* Teachers must know exactly who is in their care at all times. Notify the teachers in person when dropping off or when taking your child from the classroom or playground. **Please do not send a sibling in to retrieve your child unless they are old enough to drive and are an authorized person to pick them up and take them home.**

### **PROCEDURES FOR BRINGING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL EACH DAY**

Our responsibility begins when you place your child in the care of a Rocking Horse Academy employee. Parents must accompany the child to the classroom. Each classroom has an individual attendance log. This log is kept with the class as the students move from area to area within the school campus and off campus filed trips. Teachers refer to the log each time the group moves to another location, thus enabling them to know exactly which children are present at all times. **Signing-in and signing out is required of all families.** *Please do not take your child from the playground without communicating with the teacher and without signing out. Also, please do not allow your child to run ahead of you when departing. They should remain with you at all times.* This is a state licensing requirement for the safety and protection of everyone.

Accompany your child to the classroom. Your child should never be dropped off at the front door. A classroom teacher will greet your child and help him/her make the transition from home to school. This provides for a smooth, safe transition for you and your child, as well as providing an opportunity for you to communicate with the Academy's staff.

The teacher is required to conduct a brief health screening. The purpose of a health check is to keep children at school, not to find reasons to send them home. The health check is used to determine if any symptoms of oncoming illness are present upon arrival. The check will include a quick look at the child's general physical condition and touch, to feel for a temperature. Once the health check is complete, you are free to tell your child goodbye and leave the building, unless your child is ill. Parents are asked to stay with their child until the health check is completed.

If there is a new staff member or substitute teacher, help them by introducing yourself and your child. They will learn your names as quickly as possible.

## **PARENT - TEACHER COMMUNICATION**

Young children are integrally connected to their families. Programs cannot adequately meet the needs of children unless they also recognize the importance of the child's family and develop strategies to work effectively with families. All communication between our staff and families is based on the concept that parents are and should be the principal influence in children's lives. It is important that teachers and families communicate frequently about child-rearing practices in the home and at the school in order to minimize potential conflicts and confusion for children. Verbal and written systems are established for sharing day-to-day happenings that may affect children. Changes in a child's physical or emotional state should be reported regularly to the teachers.

Conferences will be held once a year, and at other times as needed, to discuss children's progress, accomplishments, and difficulties at home and at school. Parents are informed about the program and the curriculum, and about policy or regulatory changes, and other critical issues that could potentially affect the program and/or the early childhood profession through newsletters, newspaper articles, bulletin boards, and other appropriate means.

If you wish to call your child's teacher during the day, please try to restrict calls to 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. during nap. Otherwise, our teachers are supervising and teaching the children and not free to talk. You can leave a message for the teacher to call you back during a break, or if there is an emergency, please call an administrator.

## **TEACHERS**

Qualified teachers at Rocking Horse Academy are selected and placed in classrooms based on their experience, education, and abilities to identify the individual strengths of each child. They will work to enhance these skills and develop new ones. The teacher's function is to be a guide and facilitator, nurturing your child's developmental needs. The teacher will observe and document your child's abilities, plan activities in the play areas throughout the classroom, encourage your child to practice old skills and try new ones, as well as communicate with the parent on a continual basis about his/her child's accomplishments. You will find and receive a copy of your child's monthly/weekly lesson plans prepared by the curriculum team in your child's classroom along with the class daily schedule.

Teachers received 24 hours of training annually. Rocking Horse Academy will be closed on those training days. Every year our teachers must renew their training on Blood-born Pathogens, SIDS, and Abuse/Neglect in addition to curriculum development, behavior/classroom management, and other appropriate subjects.

Each classroom is staffed with a minimum of two teachers (some have three) per shift, keeping the teacher-pupil ratio low. Experienced and qualified teachers staff classes of all ages. Our staff is trained in first aid and Infant/Toddler CPR. Staff employees have had, or are subject to criminal background checks and FBI fingerprinting.

Infants (6 weeks to 12 months)	1 : 4
Toddlers (12 months - 17 months)	1: 5 or 2: 13
Toddlers (18 months - 23 months)	1 : 9
Transitions (24 months - 35 months)	1 : 9
Preschool (3 - 5 years)	1 : 12

### **ACCREDITATION**

Rocking Horse Academy is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). That also means we are recognized by Texas Education Agency as an accredited school. SACS accreditation holds its school to a rigorous standard that exceeds state licensing. We must meet all safety environmental standards, quality staffing standards, and academic standards.

### **CURRICULUM**

The Rocking Horse Academy theme/literature-based curriculum is developed with preparation for elementary school in mind. With the teacher acting as a guide and facilitator of learning, students spend time researching and manipulating hands-on age-appropriate activities and materials that pursue their own interests in the context of life in the community and the world. Our program is based on the idea that students learn best when they help to direct their own learning. The students and teachers discuss and explore a variety of aspects pertaining to the pre-determined themes. We also use the state TAKS as an ultimate goal for developing our curriculum.

Recognizing that each child is unique and learns differently, teachers use a variety of methods to teach reading, including both phonetics and whole language, and other areas of academia. Children will be given the opportunity to choose from a selection of tables and/or centers designed and setup with activities with various social, academic, artistic and creative goals in mind. The academic day is divided up into blocks of 20 to 40 minutes to study language, math, science, computers, music, art, physical education, Spanish, sign language and more.

Our program is based on researched knowledge of child development and assessment of individual needs and interests. The learning environment and activities for the children reflect our program's philosophy and goals. The use of media, such as televisions, films, and videotapes is limited to developmentally appropriate programming that has been previewed by adults prior to use. Our computer lab and DVD's are used as part of the curriculum for ages 2+. Children under the age of 2 are not allowed to watch TV, computers, or any form of media. Another option for activity is always available; no child is required to view the program. The staff discusses what is viewed with the children to develop critical thinking and viewing skills. Media are used as special events, rather than as regular, daily routines.



The staff is also trained to be flexible enough to change planned or routine activities according to the needs or interests of children, and/or to cope with changes in weather or other situations that affect routines without unduly alarming children.

Learning centers are areas in a school or classroom that define a special focus or that afford a specific opportunity not otherwise possible. Centers often planned for young children may include a discovery center, dramatic play centers including a home living center, a block/building center, learning, language and readiness materials center; and art center; book center; music center; and a center for large muscle activities. Learning centers provide endless opportunities for learning. Here are just some of the skills your children develop through play:

### Manipulative

Children learn to:

- ✓ Work cooperatively in small groups
- ✓ Develop self-control
- ✓ Demonstrate perseverance and self-discipline
- ✓ Experience pride in accomplishment
- ✓ Sort and match objects by attributes such as color, size, texture and shape
- ✓ Understand number concepts related to sequencing, serration and classification
- ✓ Develop emergent reading skills such as directionality and matching like objects
- ✓ Develop fine motor control
- ✓ Develop eye-hand coordination
- ✓ Develop visual discrimination skills
- ✓ Refine sense of touch

### Dramatic Play

Children learn to:

- ✓ Interact with others
- ✓ Express individuality and creativity
- ✓ Play cooperatively with others
- ✓ Understand the social expectations and attitudes of others
- ✓ Anticipate how to act in new situations
- ✓ Address fears and worries
- ✓ Demonstrate empathy for others
- ✓ Identify and plan play episodes with others
- ✓ Draw on past information and experience to solve problems
- ✓ Identify solutions to problems that arise during play
- ✓ Classify props according to common characteristics
- ✓ Arrange object according to size
- ✓ Persevere at a task
- ✓ Improve small muscle control
- ✓ Use eye-hand coordination
- ✓ Use visual discrimination skills

## Science and Discovery

Children learn to:

- ✓ Appreciate nature
- ✓ Care for living things
- ✓ Explore the environment
- ✓ Increase vocabulary
- ✓ Develop an understanding of basic math concepts
- ✓ Refine eye-hand coordination
- ✓ Develop visual skills
- ✓ Solve problems
- ✓ Predict events

## Music and Movement

Children learn to:

- ✓ Participate in a group
- ✓ Develop social skills by playing cooperative musical games
- ✓ Express anger; fear, joy and other emotions through music and movement
- ✓ Recognize that music and dance express moods and feelings
- ✓ Enhance self-concept by sharing the music and dance of each child's culture
- ✓ Refine listening skills by noticing changes in tempo or pitch
- ✓ Increase awareness of different movements or body positions
- ✓ Develop creativity and imagination
- ✓ Understand new words and concepts
- ✓ Explore cause and effect
- ✓ Explore the many ways the body can move
- ✓ Develop large motor skills
- ✓ Improve balance, coordination and rhythm
- ✓ Improve small motor skills

## Sensory

Children learn to:

- ✓ Play cooperatively with others
- ✓ Explore social roles
- ✓ Develop pride
- ✓ See a task through to completion
- ✓ Observe materials to see how they compare and contrast
- ✓ Understand cause and effect relationships
- ✓ Observe conservation of volume
- ✓ Develop problem-solving skills
- ✓ Develop creativity
- ✓ Strengthen fine motor control
- ✓ Develop eye-hand coordination
- ✓ Improve coordination skills

### Art Center

Children learn to:

- ✓ Express feelings
- ✓ Channel frustration and anger in a socially acceptable way
- ✓ Assert individuality
- ✓ Experience pride
- ✓ Share and cooperate with others
- ✓ Enhance creativity
- ✓ Develop and understanding of cause and effect
- ✓ Label shapes and objects
- ✓ Solve problems
- ✓ Develop planning skills
- ✓ Develop small muscle skills
- ✓ Refine eye-hand coordination

### Block Center

Children learn to:

- ✓ Work independently and in a group
- ✓ Express needs, concerns and fears in socially acceptable ways
- ✓ Share and cooperate with others
- ✓ Demonstrate pride in accomplishments
- ✓ Develop an understanding of the concepts of length, height, weight and area
- ✓ Classify and sort objects by size, shape and function
- ✓ Make use of physical principles
- ✓ Predict cause and effect relationships
- ✓ Solve problems related to construction
- ✓ Organize in sequence
- ✓ Use addition, subtraction and fraction
- ✓ Use large muscle skills; develop eye-hand coordination
- ✓ Control the placement of objects

### Book Center

Children learn to:

- ✓ Develop concern for others
- ✓ Try out different roles
- ✓ Share time and materials with others, while enhancing self-esteem

The children develop an:

- ✓ Understanding of symbols
- ✓ Increased vocabulary
- ✓ Ability to predict events
- ✓ Ability to recognize objects, colors and shapes, and understand sequence.

This helps them in applying knowledge to:

- ✓ New situations
- ✓ Develop storytelling abilities
- ✓ Strengthen eye muscle and coordinate eye and hand movements
- ✓ Refine visual discrimination skills.

The Rocking Horse Academy staff is constantly learning new ways to challenge and encourage young children by attending continuing education courses. Individualized Staff Development Plans are implemented each year to encourage staff to grow in all curriculum areas.

## **LESSON PLANS AND HOMEWORK**

Teachers have been asked to provide each family with a copy of lesson plans and “homework”- activities to work on at home that reinforce what we are learning in school. *If you do not receive these, please notify a director.* Try to enhance your child’s learning experience by pointing out things at home that relate to the lesson taught at school. (e.g. Allow your child to get the mail out of the box and remind him/her about the community helper-mail delivery person who brought the mail to your house. Find food items or decorative items in certain shapes/colors or have your child count the number of peas on the dinner plate.)

## **CONTRACT AND DEPOSITS**

Upon enrollment, parents are required to give a deposit and sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the “Parent’s Handbook” and agreeing to the terms and policies set forth. Specifically, the acknowledgement includes an agreement to give the school a thirty-day written notice of their intent to withdraw their child from the program. ***If a thirty-day notice is not given, the deposit is nonrefundable.*** If a thirty-day notice ***is*** given, the deposit is applied to the last two weeks of tuition. If a parent has paid tuition in advance and given a thirty-day withdrawal notice in writing, the deposit will be refunded.

## **TUITION**

Tuition is charged every two weeks. Unless otherwise arranged, tuition is due every other Monday. Payments should be made to the front office manager or dropped in the payment box located in the lobby. Checks should be made payable to Rocking Horse Academy (RHA.) Please put your child(ren’s) name on the bottom of your check. Any additional charges you may incur each week, *such as lunch charges*, will be added to your account and are due by the following Monday morning or as communicated by management.

As a service, invoices will be available via email after 4:00 pm the Friday before tuition is due. We do everything we can to be accurate, but we are human. Mistakes can be made. Check your invoice for accuracy. Account questions and concerns should be completed on the appropriate form and filed with the accounts manager. We regularly audit our accounts for accounting errors. If an error has been made, you will still be responsible for the correct tuition amount. Please be careful in reviewing your account to avoid any costly errors. Tuition is still due on Monday even if we experience technical difficulties and cannot send invoices on Fridays. No allowances will be given for late payment if parents do not receive an invoice.

Both parents/guardians are legally liable for the full payment of tuition unless we have a court order stating otherwise. We cannot become involved in financial disputes between parents or guardians.

Tuition may be paid by cash, check, online Click and Pay (with the invoices), or EFT draft from your bank. RHA does not accept credit cards or debit cards.

*Please note, tuition must be paid in full without deduction for absences. Parent's Day Out children who miss a scheduled day due to illness or vacation, may not attend on an unscheduled date without prior approval from the Director. When possible, we will accommodate children on unscheduled days, as long as the classroom will be in ratio, and additional staff is not required due to extra children. This is due to our staffing and other operational expenses arranged on the basis of fixed enrollment levels and must be met on a continuing basis. Few of the operating costs of the facility are eliminated when a particular child is absent. We are confident you will*

*understand our need for financial stability, and we appreciate your cooperation. For rates, please refer to the current tuition schedule.*

### ***Rate Increases***

Rates may be increased as the cost of living goes up. There is not set time period between rate increases (e.g. every year). We will notify parents in writing a minimum of 30 days in advance of an increase. There will be notices posted in the lobby, written memos in the classrooms and emails sent with invoices.

### ***Late Payment Fee***

Please pay on time to avoid late fees. We cannot extend credit to any family enrolled at the Academy. Late payments will be charged \$15 for the first day (Wednesdays) and \$5 per day until tuition is paid in full. *If tuition has not been paid or arrangements made with the accounts manager by the Monday following a tuition due date, your child may not attend classes.* Tuition is late if not paid in full by 6:30 p.m. every other Tuesday following the Monday Tuition Date. If your child is absent, please make arrangements to get your tuition to us on time.

### ***Non-Sufficient Funds Policy***

NSF tuition is handled in the following manner:

- Parents will be notified of their check being returned to Rocking Horse Academy by their bank.
- Parents will be required to make restitution on the returned check, plus fees, upon receipt of notification from RHA. *If tuition and fees have not been paid by the following business day, your child may not attend school until the account has been paid in full.*
- Restitution plus a NSF processing charge will need to be paid by cashier's check, cash or money order. (See current rate sheet for the amount of NSF fees.)
- All tuition payments will need to be paid by cashier's check, cash or money order if there are two returned checks during the period of one year.

### ***Collections***

If you leave Rocking Horse Academy with a past due account, or if you fail to make payment for the services provided, Rocking Horse Academy will proceed as follows:

- A certified letter will be mailed to your home notifying you of the past due account. Payment is due upon receipt of the letter.
- The account will be referred to an attorney or collection agency for collection. All three credit bureaus will be notified of the delinquent account.
- Suit will be filed in small claims court, and court costs and attorney fees will be added.
- Criminal charges may be filed for "Theft of Services" if accounts remain unpaid.
- *Past due balances on accounts will be charged monthly at an interest rate of 10% until the balance, late fees and interest are paid in full.*

### **FEES**

#### ***Registration/Start up Fee***

A registration fee is due at the time your child is accepted. This fee is used to help cover the administrative cost of enrolling each child (children's files, software, computer entry of data, etc.). This fee cannot be refunded. (Please refer to the current rate sheet for fee amounts.)

### ***Supply/Materials Fee***

Throughout the school year, Rocking Horse Academy purchases equipment and materials for the school. We continually restock, replace or add to - educational toys, software, books, and other materials to help create fun and exciting activities for your children. A supply fee will be collected from every student each year in September and January to help cover some of these costs. New students enrolled after September will pay a prorated supply fee. (Please refer to the current rate sheet for fee amounts.) All students, regardless of enrollment status will pay the same supply fee.

### ***Late Pick Up***

If you are going to be later than our closing time due to unforeseen difficulties, please notify the school as soon as you realize you cannot make it by closing time. Please be considerate of our staff. They need to leave on time to return to their own obligations and families. You will be charged \$15.00 at 6:35p.m. plus \$1.00 for every minute thereafter to cover the additional overtime and administrative costs. Fees are due no later than the next scheduled tuition date to assure your child may continue attending class.

Any parent abusing this policy by picking up his/her child late more than two times within a 30-day period will be charged the \$15 fee at 6:35 and \$2 per minute for each subsequent minute thereafter. This applies to the 3<sup>rd</sup> late pickup up and all that follow within a 30 day period.

### ***Drop in rates for all children (based on availability)***

We gladly accept drop-ins on a space available basis. Please call the office to make arrangements and to check our current rates.

### ***HCISD Holiday or Staff development drop-in fees for current school-aged enrollees (Corral Kids)***

Arrangements can be made for full day care for school aged children during the HCISD staff workdays or holidays by signing up on a first come first serve basis. Please check with the front office manager for our current rates. The regular drop-in rate applies to non-enrolled students. If longer term care is needed for a lengthier holiday, a weekly fee at the pre-school rate will take effect in lieu of the after school or daily rate.

### ***HCISD Holiday or Staff development drop-in fees for non-enrolled school age children***

Arrangements can be made for all-day care for school age children during the HCISD staff work days or holidays by signing up on a first-come first-serve basis. Please check with the front-office manager for our current rates. If longer-term care is needed for a lengthier holiday, a weekly fee at the pre-school rate will take effect in lieu of the daily rate.

### **LEGAL FEES**

If at any time you request any documents from RHA for use in court cases or any other needs, we will charge a fee to research and copy those files. In addition, we will also charge fees for staff time when we are asked to participate in court hearings. Feel free to ask for a copy of those current fees from any administrative staff.

### **NON-ATTENDANCE**

Please notify Rocking Horse Academy if your child will not be attending due to vacations, illness, etc. Due to financial obligations of the Center, no tuition payments or parts thereof will be refunded because of absences or withdrawals.

It is very important to notify Rocking Horse Academy if your school-aged child is not attending the after-school program for any reason. All reasonable attempts will be made to locate your child if they are not at the designated spot at the school for pick-up, but RHA will not be responsible for children who do not come to the correct pick-up point or bus in a timely fashion. Parents will be responsible for picking up their child if he/she misses the bus.

## **YOUR CHILD(REN)'S CLOTHING**

Busy, creative, educational activities can be messy regardless of the age of your child. We use aprons, shirts, or smocks to cover clothing during art projects, as well as using washable paints, although we cannot guarantee spills or stains can be avoided. Please dress your child in play clothing that is washable and durable so that he/she can enjoy our activities without fear of staining an outfit. If you have a special appointment directly after the school day, your child's teacher will be happy to change your child's clothing prior to pick-up. RHA is not responsible for tears or stains.

Shoes must be worn in school. For your child's safety, we ask that children not wear flip-flops, sandals, crocs, or "jellies" at the Academy. Sturdy shoes, including tennis shoes, more suitable for climbing and running will better protect your child from injury.

Please be sure that you maintain at least one emergency outfit in your child's classroom in case he/she has an accident or spills something on him/her. To avoid being called during the workday, this is very important. And as the weather changes, be sure to have a jacket on hand if a cold front comes through. Dress appropriately for all weather. We do play outside whether it's hot or cold. We will lessen the time on extreme temperature days.

Be sure to **label everything** with your child's name. Many of us shop at the same box stores and buy the same outfits. Also, it's tough to know what your child is wearing that day if one parent drops off and another parent picks up that evening. Read the label to be sure you are not walking off with another child's jacket or sweater.

Corral Kids dress code: RHA follows the same guidelines as Hays CISD.

## **DIAPERS**

Diapering and toileting are routine tasks incorporated into the program as a means of furthering children's learning while developing self-help and social skills. Personal care routines are established by each child's own bodily functions and rhythms. Staff members respond to children in ways to enhance their self-perceptions and sense of identity. These routine tasks are handled in a relaxed and positive manner on an individual basis. Vigorous attention is given to proper sanitizing of diapering and toileting areas, as well as consistent hand washing (for both children and staff), to prevent spread of infection. Staff members in the Infant, Toddler, and Transition programs will document daily eliminations for parents' information.

Toilet learning is an important part of your child's independence and self-awareness, as well as physical development. This skill can only occur when there are definite signs of your

child's interest and developmental ability, which is dependent on his/her developmental pace. Toilet learning is a cooperative and consistent effort between home and the Academy, in order to provide maximum levels of success.

Children who are in the beginning stages of toilet learning will be taken to the toilet regularly to assist in establishing the conceptual development of elimination into the toilet. More advanced children will be offered frequent opportunities for toilet training, particularly after meals and before rest periods. Feedback will be provided on toilet training progress on a daily basis.

If your child is toilet training, he/she will need a weekly supply of diapers each Monday. Disposable pull-ups or cloth underwear worn in conjunction with plastic pants, are required for sanitation purposes.

You are asked to help keep the supply of diapers refreshed. Our teachers make every attempt to communicate orally and on your communication sheets when the number is running low. If your child runs out of diapers or wipes, we will charge your account a fee to cover usage until you bring in more.

### **PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

**We ask children not to bring toys to school unless the teacher has designated a “Show and Tell Day”.** We find personal toys are often hard for young children to share, and toys that are lost and broken can ruin the day for both the child and the teacher. **Toy guns and swords are not allowed at school at any time.**

### **PARENT VISITS**

Parents are welcome to visit their children as often as they would like. Windows are available to observe your child within the classroom setting. Observing your child's reactions to other children, adults and to the things he/she finds to do in school may be helpful to you in planning for guidance at home. We would also love to have you join us for school activities such as field trips, class parties, and other special events. If you would like to have lunch with your child, it is necessary for you to do so at the scheduled lunchtime.

Please keep in mind; your visits may be somewhat confusing to your child. When he/she sees you, he/she will probably think it is time to leave. It may be helpful to explain to your child, you are just visiting and will go back to work, for example, “When your class sits down for a snack”.

### **OUTDOOR PLAY**

We believe in order for children to be healthy, they need fresh air and exercise. The licensing agency concurs and requires us to provide outdoor time for children everyday, weather permitting. Parents are advised to be aware of daily conditions so that appropriate outdoor wear is sent to the Academy with your child. If your child experiences frequent ear infections, please be sure to send adequate covering for his/her ears. Children will be taken outdoors in hot and cold weather. Teachers and administration will monitor the conditions and limit the time children are outside, to assure the children are neither too hot (but this IS Texas), nor too cold.

Parents are highly encouraged to send sunscreen to the Academy to help prevent sunburn. In addition, we ask that parents apply an application of sunscreen in the morning before school.



Sunscreen will be applied to children's exposed skin prior to going outside after nap, with written consent from parents or guardians. As with other medications, sunscreen must be labeled with the child's first and last name.

It is our policy if a child is too sick to go outdoors, the child is too sick to be at the Academy. This is in compliance with minimum standards 746.3601. We cannot honor requests to keep a child inside while his/her class is outdoors. This request is unfair to the teachers in other classrooms, who would have to care for your child in addition to their regular class. We must also be sure not to violate the teacher-child ratio in other classrooms.

### **ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Stretch and Grow is a private company that offers physical fitness classes to child care centers. They come once a week to provide fitness training and nutritional guidance to our PreK classrooms. This service is included in the tuition. Stretch n Grow also offers parent-paid classes for Preschool children in sports, dance, gymnastics, boot camp, and cheer. Please see an administrator if you are interested in enrolling in any of these extra programs.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

We enjoy seeing children have the opportunity to learn about our community by providing exciting recreational and educational field trips. These activities are conducted occasionally for pre-school children. In all cases, we need your signed authorization for each trip. Teachers are required to prepare and submit field trip plans to the Director prior to each trip. You will be notified in advance of all scheduled trips. If you do not wish for your child to participate in a trip, he/she may remain at the Academy, where it may be necessary for him/her to stay with another group. If a child should arrive at the Academy after his/her class has departed for a scheduled field trip, he/she may be reassigned to another classroom until the regular class returns. Temporary classroom assignments will be based on availability and compliance with teacher-child ratios. For safety and security reasons, parents may not take children to join the field trip group already away from the Academy.

A licensed, insured vehicle equipped with seat belts will be provided for field trips requiring transportation. All children will remain seated and snugly buckled with individual seat belts for the duration of the trip. Each vehicle will have an emergency information card for each child, cellular phone or two-way radio, first aid kit, as well as flares and fire extinguisher available for emergency uses. Children will enter and exit the vehicle at curbside. Children will not be left alone on or near the vehicle. Attendance records will be maintained and checked upon reaching the field trip destination throughout the trip, and returning to the Academy. Each trip will have proper adult supervision of staff and parent chaperones.

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

We view each child as a special and unique person, deserving of our respect, care, and guidance. We use positive methods of guiding and relating to children. Learning to be a part of social group is an important learning experience for preschool children. It is often difficult for young children to balance their own needs with those of the group. For this reason, teachers of young children view guidance as a time to remain positive and supportive of the young child. Helping the children learn to assume responsibility for their actions is nurtured and encouraged.

Guidance will be consistent, based on individual needs, and direct the children toward an acceptable expression of their feelings. The goal of guidance for each child is to help learn self-control.

With this in mind, the guidance techniques teachers will use include redirecting and offering choices to children, guiding children in problem-solving methods, accepting the children's feelings while encouraging them to use words when expressing emotions, giving them a chance to try again, helping children see the consequences of their actions, as well as modifying the environment or routine to better meet the children's needs. Only after trying other techniques will the child be asked to remove him/herself from the area and/or activity where he/she can still be supervised until he/she is ready to return peacefully to the activities.

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY CONTINUED**

There will be no physical or demeaning punishments. If the usual guidance techniques are unsuccessful, the teachers will request a conference with the parents, to discuss the situation and help set goals for the child's behavior. Should the child's continued negative behavior put himself, his peers, or his teachers at risk from physical harm or, if the child damages school property, we reserve the right to ask the parents to withdraw the child from the school. While we understand the developmental tendencies of many children to experiment with inappropriate language to shock others, withdrawal may also be requested for those children who are verbally abusive, including the repeated use of inappropriate language, which other families consider offensive.

### **DISMISSAL POLICY**

Every effort will be made to resolve differences. However, the Academy may require parents to withdraw children from the school when:

Behavior aspects of a child:

- Any child who is not yet ready for the group experience, or whose needs cannot be met in a group setting (i.e. cannot get along with other children, unable to follow-class/school rules and teacher instructions, and/or requires one-on-one attention from his/her teacher for the majority of the day).
- A child continually places the safety of him/herself, other children or staff members at risk.
- A child with behavior problems so severe he/she cannot be accommodated within the scope of the regular program and regular staff-child ratios.
- Upon the advice of a physician.

Parental disregard for Academy policy:

- Failure to pay tuition according to the terms of agreement.
- Consistent disregard for hours of operation.
- Failure to treat staff and/or children with respect.
- Failure to cooperate with the Academy's staff in the best interest of the child, as determined by the Director and administrative staff members.

In the event of any of the previous mentioned occurrences, the following procedure will be followed:

- Parents will be notified of the problem by the teacher or office staff as soon as possible.
- Parents and teacher(s), or administration will set up a conference for discussion of a continued problem.
- A follow-up conference will be scheduled in two weeks.
- If significant improvement is not observed, parents will be asked to seek professional counseling to aid in a solution.
- After a reasonable time, if a solution cannot be reached, the Director may require you to withdraw.

When withdrawal is deemed necessary, the Director will attempt to provide parents two weeks notice of termination of care. If Rocking Horse Academy feels it necessary, we reserve the right to terminate care immediately.

### **BIRTHDAY AND OTHER SPECIAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS**

Sharing a birthday is a special time for children. We will celebrate each child's birthday in the classroom. Special music time, story time, snack time, and art activities will be planned. If there are multiple birthdays within the same month, the teacher can choose a day within that month to celebrate several birthdays at one time. We would be happy for you to share in this special time. *(If you wish to bring treats for a special occasion, we ask that you adhere to our healthful foods policy and that you use your creativity to provide children with nutritious food and drink.)*

If you do have a party at home, please only send invitations to school if all of the children in the class are invited. It is extremely difficult for young children to understand why they are not being included. Therefore, we ask that you not bring presents to the birthday celebration at school.

Rocking Horse Academy will celebrate four parties during the school year. These will include the Fall Festival, Winter Wonderland, Valentine's Day, and a Spring Egg Hunt. We would like for each family to contribute to at least one party. One parent will be asked to be in charge of organizing the food and drinks for each party. The parents in charge will contact other parents on his/her list of parent helpers to bring drinks, paper goods, food, donations, etc. The teachers will plan the activities for the parties. There is no need for the parents to attend the parties, unless they so desire, but we will also need extra helping hands for the Spring Egg Hunt. Children not normally attending school on party days may come during the scheduled time of the activities. Children get excited when they know their parents are helping with a party for their classroom.

The after-school children will celebrate parties after school for the same holidays. A note with detailed information will be left on the communication board, and/or with your child's belongings regarding these celebrations and possible donations.

### **SNACKS AND MEALS**

All children should eat breakfast **before** arriving at school when possible. Breakfast may be brought from home to eat in our classroom no later than 7:15 a.m.; however, it **must be consumed prior to 7:30 a.m. All food will be picked up at 7:30 a.m.** As more children arrive, it becomes difficult to manage those still eating. Other children try to take the food away from, and this creates conflict and unsanitary situations.

Two nutritious snacks are served, one in the mid-morning and one in the mid-afternoon. Each snack consists of at least 4 oz. of fruit juice, milk, fresh fruit with water, fresh vegetables, bread or cereal, and/or meat. Children are required to bring a water bottle to school each day filled with fresh water. This will be served during snacks, meals, and available other times of the day upon demand.

We are committed to good nutrition as an integral part of the early childhood experience. Not only do children benefit physically, but they are also learning the importance of good nutrition. Our snack menus adhere to the minimum daily requirement standards and we have limited sweets and sweetened foods in our menus. All meals meet the USFDA Nutritional Guidelines. They are planned to taste good to children so they eat more. Please check with our front office manager for current rates.

Parents can provide a meal from home. Please do not send a beverage with added sugars such as carbonated beverages, fruit punch, juice boxes, or sweetened flavored milks. Candy is not allowed at RHA, so please refrain from packing any candy in the lunchbox. Teachers may temporarily withhold chips or a dessert (cookies, cake) to encourage the child to eat more of the main part of the lunch and the chopped vegetables first before eating the snack foods or desserts.

Occasionally, a family will bring cupcakes or cookies to the classroom to celebrate a child's birthday. We do allow that, but encourage parents to offer nutritional snacks over sugary ones.

*INFANTS: RHA does provide a comfortable place for breast-feeding mothers to semi-privately feed her child in our infant classroom. We offer a glider in the back of the classroom protected by a ½ wall. Parents have the right to breast feed their child or to provide breast milk for the infant while in our care. We will properly store the breast milk in our infant room refrigerator or freezer as directed by the parent.*

If your child has dietary restrictions or allergies, we must have written notification in your child's file. In some cases, the Director may ask for a doctor's statement. Parents are asked to provide an alternate snack or beverage that meets the dietary guidelines for your child.

## **NAP POLICY**

For rest time, each child will be furnished a cot of his/her own. A crib sheet, pillow and or and/or any comfort items will be provided by parents and need to be clearly labeled. Linens/bedding will be sent home on Fridays to launder. Please remember to return bedding on Mondays. Even if your child does not sleep, he/she will be asked to lie quietly and rest during naptime. Dimmed lights and soft music may be played, and the teachers and teacher assistants will pat backs to help the children relax. There is always constant adult supervision during rest time. Parents can help ease their child's transition from school to home and back by adhering to the nap schedule during weekends, holidays, and vacations.

## **HEALTH POLICY**

This health policy has been developed to meet the standards for day care centers set by the State Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. The purpose is to provide the parent with information on the procedures and guidelines used by the center to implement its health policy. For further information, please contact the Rocking Horse Academy office at (512) 405-3700.

## **Medical Requirements**

Your child must have proof of a physical exam including immunizations, upon admission to the Academy. All immunizations must be up to date at time of enrollment. A copy of your child's physical exam and health records will be kept on file and reviewed periodically by state

examiners. RHA reserves the right to decline an enrollment application for children who are not immunized. State minimum standards also require that all children who reach the age of 4 by September 1 must be screened for hearing and vision within 120 days of enrollment.

It is your responsibility to notify the Academy when your child receives new immunizations and to furnish proof of them to the Academy.

### Health Check

Children will receive a health inspection upon arrival at the Academy each day. This health check will be performed by one of the Academy's teachers. The purpose of the health check is to determine whether or not a child is healthy enough to stay at the school. Any additional information about the child's health parents could share with the teacher at this time would be greatly appreciated.

### Health Policy Guidelines

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be given a rest mat and may be placed in an office or teacher lounge area until you can pick him/her up. It is important to have alternate arrangements made for the care of your child during illness. The staff cannot allow a sick child to stay at school.

You are asked to keep your child home until all symptoms of illness have passed and the child is no longer contagious. Rocking Horse Academy's guidelines are to keep the child at home for twenty-four hours after fever and other symptoms disappear.

- Notices of contagious illnesses such as flu, chicken pox, etc. appearing in class, will be posted in each classroom.
- A current record of a child's physical is required for all children registered at the Center. Immunization records must be kept up-to-date and documented in the Center's office.
- If your child will be absent or late arriving, please call the office.
- At the back of this handbook is a guide to childhood diseases, as well as a list of immunizations required by the Texas Department of Health.

### **GUIDELINES FOR SENDING A CHILD HOME**

The teacher and administration at Rocking, Horse Academy will use the following guidelines to make a joint determination whether or not to send a child home.

1. If a child has an auxiliary (underarm) temperature of 100° or higher, the parent will be asked to take the child home. Temperatures will be taken if the child feels warm to the touch. The temperature is taken auxiliary. There is a 15–30 minute wait, and the temperature is rechecked. If there is a fever, the parent is contacted. *The child may return to school when they are fever free for 24 hours (without medication), or with a doctor's note.*
2. If a child has one or more of the following, the parent will be asked to take the child home, and follow the guidelines in the section on returning a child to the Academy.
  - a. Chicken Pox  
Watery blisters appearing on scalp, face or body.
  - b. Diarrhea  
One loose, watery bowel movement with one or more additional symptoms (fever of 100° or

higher (auxiliary), abdominal pains, lethargy, vomiting, unable to console), or two loose, watery bowel movements with no additional symptoms. Upon return to the Academy, if within a twenty-four hour time period, the diarrhea returns, the child will be sent home again. *The child may return to school when they are 24 hours symptom free (without medication) or with a doctor's note.*

c. Giardia

Intermittent soft, unformed bowel movements during at least a two-week period, usually including abdominal cramps, unusual odor, and color.

d. Eye Infections

Red eyes, discharge from tear ducts, swollen eyelids and/or bumps on eyelids, crusted or matted eyes.

e. Streptococcal infections

Fever and sore throat.

f. Rashes

Unexplained rash on all or part of the body.

g. Ringworm

Itchy, scaly patches on scalp or body. Usually ring-shaped. Margins may be red and slightly raised.

h. Pin Worm

Itchy rectum. Child appears uncomfortable and has difficulty sleeping.

i. Impetigo

Any infected wound or small blister that become crusted or contain pus.

j. Ear Infections

Pain in ear, fever of at least 100° (auxiliary), fussiness, pulling on ear.

k. Nasal Discharge

Any nasal discharge that is not clear. Fever of 100° (auxiliary), irritable or lethargic, not able to participate in daily activities.

l. Lice

Itching or scratching of scalp, white pinpoint eggs (nits) that will not flick off.

m. Viral Hepatitis (Type A)

Gradual onset of slight fever, feeling tired, stomachache, nausea or vomiting followed by jaundice. Young children may have a mild case of diarrhea without jaundice. Because of the seriousness of this disease, if any member of the child's family contracts this illness, the school needs to be notified immediately so appropriate precautions can be taken. We will ask that the child who has been exposed, receive a gamma globulin injection.

n. Vomiting

One vomiting episode, with one or more additional symptoms (fever of 100° auxiliary, or higher, abdominal pains, lethargy, unable to console). Two vomiting episodes, with no additional symptoms within twenty-four hours.

3. A teacher can send a child home if his behavior indicates he/she is too ill to participate in the day's activities.

4. **Parents must pick up their child within 90 minutes of notification\*\* or arrange to have an alternative person pick up your child. Once we discover that a child is ill or infested, (when possible) we will attempt to isolate or remove the child from the classroom to help minimize the exposure to other children; however, we are not staffed to give individual care for extended periods of time. Failure to comply will result in an additional fee of \$1/per minute for every minute after the 90 MINUTES.** (The 90-minute

period begins after we have called all primary numbers given by the parents. We will leave voice mail or messages when that is an option. Our teachers will record the times that they dialed each number and will record what response was received or what action was taken: spoke with parent, left a message with a person along with that person's name, left a voice mail message, no answer, or number is not a working number message received.) The teacher will record time of the final call and the 90-minute period will begin. If a message is left and the parent does not call us back within 15 minutes, we will begin calling any emergency numbers provided, but 75 minutes will be the time allowed without penalty fees being enforced.

5. Please understand that when a teacher calls and informs you that your child is ill and must be picked up, *she/he is upholding state licensing guidelines*. We do this for the protection of all of our children. We understand that you have work to do and that it is very frustrating when your child becomes ill, but we are here to care for and protect all children. If you have questions or concerns, an administrator will be happy to take care of them for you; your teachers are just upholding the policy of the state and of the school.
6. Obviously, it is VITAL that we have current contact information for you or alternates that are easily reached. It is the PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY TO BE CERTAIN WE HAVE CURRENT NUMBERS IN OUR ADMINISTRATION'S PERMANENT FILE AND IN OUR CLASSROOM'S FILE. We will try every number and every email you provide. We will document every attempt in writing for you. If you would like to give us additional numbers, please feel free to stop by the front desk.
7. If you have any concerns or questions, please see the Owner or the Director

### **GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING A CHILD TO SCHOOL**

The following guidelines should be used to determine whether or not to send a child back to the Academy.

1. Children sent home because of fever may return twenty-four hours after the temperature has returned to normal without Tylenol or other fever suppressants. Families will be asked to sign acknowledgment of this policy.
2. Children sent home because of any one of the following communicable diseases might return when:
  - a. Chicken Pox  
Sores are dried up or crusted, and no new blisters are appearing (approximately six or seven days).
  - b. Diarrhea  
Symptoms are gone for twenty-four hours, and child has a normal bowel movement without medication such as Kaopectate.
  - c. Giardia
    1. Stool analyses must be done to identify Giardia, and a copy of a negative result must be filed in the Academy's office.

2. If test is positive, the child may return after twenty-four hours of medical treatment, but must finish the course of the medication. We ask families observe for Giardia symptoms in all family members, if one member has a confirmed case.
  3. If there are several cases in one classroom, all children may be asked to be tested.
- d. Eye Infections
1. When parents see the first symptoms of discharge, they are advised to keep the tear ducts clean and open. Warm compresses often work.
  2. With any eye infection, the child may return to school after twenty-four hours on medication, discharge has cleared up, and redness is gone.
  3. If the eye is red and swollen with no discharge and the cause is allergy, a written diagnosis from the pediatrician should be given to the Academy's office.
- e. Streptococcal Infections  
Twenty-four hours after antibiotic has been administered, no fever is present, and the child is able to participate fully in activities.
- f. Rashes  
The child is free of symptoms, or there is a written statement from the doctor stating the child is not contagious.
- g. Ringworm  
After medication is administered and sores are covered.
- h. Pin Worms  
May return the day after treatment begins. Fingernails must be cut.
- i. Impetigo  
After treatment begins and sores are covered unless they are dry.
- j. Ear Infections  
After fever is gone and the child is comfortable and on medication.
- k. Nasal Discharge  
Mucus is clear.
- l. Lice  
After treatment and nits are removed.
- m. Viral Hepatitis  
With doctor's written approval.
- n. Vomiting  
Twenty-four hours after last vomiting episode, and no other symptoms exist.

Children may return earlier ONLY if we have a doctor's note verifying that the child is not contagious or does not pose a health risk to other children. If your child has been sent home the day before, do not bring him/her back to school before the 24 hours is up AND they are



symptom free WITHOUT medication. We will not and cannot accept them. Clear this with an administrator before proceeding to the classroom. An administrator will verify the exception and approve admission of the child based on documentation.

Again, our teachers are just upholding the policies of the school and state. If you have questions or concerns, see an administrator. Please do not put the teacher in that position.

**EMPLOYEE IMMUNIZATIONS** Rocking Horse Academy encourages employees to maintain up-to-date immunizations and regular flu shots.

### **COMMUNICATION OF ILLNESSES AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES**

It is vital that the school be notified when your child has developed a contagious illness, so we may notify other parents and watch the rest of the children for symptoms. When contagious illnesses are identified among children who attend the Academy, a notice will be posted indicating the type of illness, symptoms to look for, and other information of interest to parents, such as the incubation period for various diseases. We do this as much in advance as possible, so you can plan for alternative care for your child should he/she becomes ill. Names of ill children are confidential. Only the type of illness or disease and related information are shared. The Academy will notify the local health department when specific communicable diseases have been diagnosed, as required by law.

If your child is ill during hours not in attendance, please let us know so that we can be aware of the types of illnesses being spread within a group. If your child has been exposed to the illness of a family member or friend, again, notify us so we may watch for symptoms.

### **ALLERGIES**

We need an up-to-date evaluation on any allergies and symptoms.

### **MEDICATION**

When you bring medication to Rocking Horse Academy for your child, you will be asked to complete a Medication Authorization Form. Parents must sign and date the medication form before any medication can be administered. Parents must also specify date, time, and amount to be given. The TX Dept. of Protective Services requires all medications to be in their original containers, have current expiration dates, and in the case of a prescription, have been prescribed solely for the child receiving the medication. The label on the prescription must include the child's name, date, specific instructions on dosage, times to be given, and physician's name.

Any medication, which would ordinarily be a prescription, but is a sample given to the patient by the doctor, cannot be administered unless it is accompanied by a signed note from the prescribing physician, stating the type and name of the medication, the times and amounts to be given, and the date.

All non-prescription medications must be labeled with the child's name and the date the medication was brought to the Academy. Non-prescription medication must be in the original container. The Academy will administer it according to label directions, if approved in writing by health personnel or the child's parent. **If the dosage instructions on the medication bottle do not apply to the child's age and weight, we will require written instructions from the child's pediatrician. (Example: under 2 years. consult physician).**

All medication is to be given directly to the front office staff so it may be logged and stored properly. Medications will be stored in a secure location within the infirmary, and refrigerated if necessary. It is not safe to keep medications in a child's cubby or diaper bag.

All medication will be administered, and documented, under the supervision of two staff members, to ensure proper amounts, time given, etc.

Parents are requested to remember to take medication home with the child each day or you may wish to ask your pharmacist to provide you with two bottles for the medication. This is especially important for those medications requiring continued administration on a consistent basis, as with antibiotics. When medications are no longer needed, the Academy must return them to the child's parent. The Academy must dispose of medication when a child withdraws from the Academy, or when the medication is out of date.

**Parents and teachers are not allowed to administer any kind of vitamins or medications, by adding them to the child's bottle, cup or thermos.**

### **EMERGENCIES AT THE SCHOOL**

In case of illness or injury during school hours, parents will be contacted immediately. If the parent or the child's physician deems it necessary, the child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest emergency room. If it appears an accident or illness is critical, or may lead to complications, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will be contacted. Parents, and the child's physician named by the parents, will be notified immediately. Rocking Horse Academy carries student accident insurance to cover expenses your insurance company does not cover. First aid treatment and/or CPR will be administered to children as needed. Rocking Horse Academy staff are trained in first aid and reviewed on a consistent basis. Written documentation of the incident will be provided to you. We review any incident to determine preventive measures to reduce the possibility of a repeat incident.

If any changes have been made in the information you furnished Rocking Horse Academy, please notify the school immediately. It is very important all information on your child's enrollment sheet is current. Our dated information could pose a very serious problem in the case of an emergency.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN**

A full copy of our emergency preparedness Plan is available in the lobby and as an appendix to this document. Please read it thoroughly and keep emergency numbers and locations convenient for you and your family.

### **SURGERY OR MINOR PROCEDURES**

Children may not be in care on the same day they have surgery or minor medical procedures. Young children recover quickly, but there is always a risk of reactions to anesthetics

or other complications. Rocking Horse Academy does not have the materials or staff to react to such emergencies.

## **PICTURES**

From time to time throughout the school year, teachers and/or administrators may take pictures in the different classrooms. If you have objections to your child's photo being taken, please indicate so on the authorization form.

## **FUNDRAISERS**

Throughout the school year Rocking Horse Academy will host a variety of fund raising activities, such as Parent Date Night, Live Entertainment and Dinner Buffet, Festivals, Auctions, and more. The school will always inform you of our goals, and when we have accomplished them. (i.e. student and teacher materials, playground equipment, books, and much more.) All moneys earned from the fundraising activities are used for the school and your children. Your cooperation and support is always appreciated. If families are unable to contribute financially, we encourage them to volunteer their time and skills in other ways.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

It is the school's strict policy that no child is ever left alone. Children shall always be under adult supervision. Before moving to or from different areas within the Academy, a headcount will be taken to account for all children within that group. During the transition from room to room, a teacher will always leave the classroom first, as a leader, with the other teacher being the last out of the room to assure all children have safely left the room. Transitions involving the outdoors follow the same procedure. Teachers will carry attendance sheets with them wherever their class goes.

Our policies and procedures for dealing with emergencies and security are carefully drafted to ensure your child's safety. We conduct monthly emergency drills for evacuation and severe weather. Evacuation plans are posted in each area of the Academy.

**Rocking Horse Academy's policy of no guns (open carry or concealed) on the property is strictly enforced. We are a gang-free zone.**

## **RELEASING YOUR CHILD(REN)**

Children will be released only to authorized adults who are identified in the child's enrollment packet. It is your responsibility to notify the Academy, and to complete new forms if there are any changes. It is for the safety of your child that:

- All persons entering the Academy must show I.D., if requested. In addition, all visitors must sign in and out of the school. All visitors will be escorted at all times while in the building.
- Parent/guardian authorization may be verified by valid birth certificate or record of legal custody.
- Always notify the Academy if someone other than the parent/guardian is to pick up a child. When possible, notify the Academy with a note stating the adult's name, date and time he/she will pick-up your child. If notification must be given by telephone,

the Academy staff will return the parent's call, or review private information for verification.

- All persons (other than parent or guardian) authorized to pick up a child will be asked to provide proper identification at the administrative desk, before picking the child up. His/her identity will be verified by viewing a driver's license, or other form of picture identification. This information will be recorded.
- This person will then receive a "permission slip" to take to the child's classroom, to allow the child's release. Please notify the person picking up your child that he/she must show appropriate identification before the child will be released.
- Please maintain your child's records with up-to date emergency information. Also, be sure to let the office know if the phone number where you can be reached during the day has changed, even temporarily.
- In the event of separated or divorced parents, the law stipulates we cannot determine which parent may pick up the child. We must release children to either parent, regardless of which parent has enrolled the child ***unless the custodial, enrolling parent has a court order.*** In that case, we must retain a copy of the court order in our files. Parents should inform the school if there are any problems with custody of the child.
- Any time an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child, the parent is called before the child is released. If this person acts suspiciously, or is hostile, law enforcement will be called. **No child will be released to an unauthorized person, without parental or guardian consent.**
- Parents must communicate with the teacher in charge of the child's class, that you have arrived and that you are taking your child home for the day. This is especially important on the playground when the teacher's attention is focused in a variety of directions.

We encourage parents to take the opportunity to talk to your child's teacher about his/her learning experiences and accomplishments. Communication is the key to a strong relationship between home and school.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

In the event of a sudden storm or emergency where parents are unable to reach the Academy, we are prepared to care for the children for extended periods. In the unlikely event of the Academy being severely damaged and declared unsafe, plans will be made to evacuate children to safety, where they will await your arrival. Should such an emergency occur, the Director will notify you and/or post a notice at the Academy. Appropriate agencies will also be notified in the event of an emergency at the Academy.

In cases of severe or inclement weather before school hours, Rocking Horse Academy will follow HCISD closings or delays. Announcements will be made on television and radio. (Check channels 7 and 24; stations KVET, KASE, and KLBJ for up-to-date information.)

### **HOLIDAYS**

Rocking Horse Academy is open five days a week, year round, except for the following holidays:

New Year's Day + 1 day TBA	January 1 <sup>st</sup>
MLK (Teacher Inservice Day)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday in January
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4 <sup>th</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday August (Teacher Inservice Day)	
Labor Day	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday in September
Columbus Day (Teacher Inservice Day)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday in October
Thanksgiving and the Friday after	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday and Friday in November
Christmas Day + 1 day TBA	December 25 <sup>th</sup>

The Academy will be closed the following Monday, if a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday. Rocking Horse Academy retains the right to alter this schedule with prior notification. Please consult our annual calendar for clarification.

## **PARENT CONCERNS**

- A parent will discuss the concern directly with the teacher/staff involved, in a timely manner using polite, straightforwardness, discretion, and tact.
- If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached between the parent and the staff member, an appointment will be made to discuss the issue with the Director (to be held within ten working days.)
- If the parent is not satisfied with the Director's decision, he/she will present a written grievance to the Director and the President of the Board of Directors. The Director will send a written response to the President of the Board of Directors. The grievance will be addressed at the next board meeting. A written grievance will contain the following:
  - A. A concise statement of the facts on which the complaint is based.
  - B. A brief record of the dialogue that took place between the parent and the Director.
  - C. Desired results.
  - D. Date and signature of the parents.
- The Board will provide a written, proposed solution to all parties involved, and the proposed time line for the implementation of the solution.

## **LICENSING**

Rocking Horse Academy is licensed by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services and meets and exceeds the Minimum Standards for Child Care Facilities. A copy of these standards are on file and available for review at the reception desk, located in the lobby.

Our Academy is licensed to serve 208 children, ages six weeks to 11 years. The children are grouped according to age.

Rocking Horse Academy operates within the requirements of city and state health, fire and building regulations. The Center has the following items available for review upon request:

- Up-to-date snack and lunch menus.
- Up-to-date Letter of Compliance Evaluation from the most recent licensing visit or investigation.
- Up-to-date fire inspection report.
- Up-to-date sanitation inspection report.
- Up-to-date gas leak test report (where gas is used).

Rocking Horse Academy will display the following in a prominent place where staff, parents and others may review them:

- The Academy's license.
- Letter of Compliance Evaluation from the most recent licensing visit or investigation.
- Notice of requirement to report suspected child abuse.
- Emergency evacuation and relocation plans.
- Notice regarding any planned field trip.

### **REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE**

An important factor in providing quality care to young children is ensuring their health and safety by protecting them from abuse and neglect. Adults who work with children are legally required to identify signs of suspected abuse, and responsibly react to potentially abusive situations so children may be protected. In order to protect the safety and well-being of all children, it is the policy of Rocking Horse Academy to report any signs of suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities. Our school has dedicated itself to the well being of children, and we are child advocates.

Parents may contact the Department of Family and Protective Services child abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400. Their website is <https://www.txabusehotline.org> or locally (512) 929-6784. (See the Appendix for more detailed information.)

### **SCHOOL RULES**

- Guns are not allowed on school premises.
- Rocking Horse Academy (within 1000 feet) is a Gang-Free Zone where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.
- Parents are reminded that smoking is not permitted in the Academy or on school grounds. For the safety of our children, please do not toss cigarette butts on the grounds, or in the parking lot. We thank you for your cooperation.
- An adult must escort children at all times.

### **RULES OR POLICIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

The rules and regulations contained within are not exclusive. Other rules and regulations may be posted in and about the facility and shall be binding as described within this handbook in full. The Academy may, from time to time, choose to adopt and make amendments to its rules and regulations. All enrolled participants will be obligated to observe these policies.

## **Reporting Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation**

The law requires any person who believes that a child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report the circumstances to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Abuse Hotline. A person making a report is immune from civil or criminal liability, and the name of the person making the report is kept confidential. Any person who suspects abuse and does not report it can be held liable for a Class-A misdemeanor.

Additional reporting requirements apply to teachers and other professionals. A professional must report suspected abuse or neglect of a child within 48 hours of suspecting the child has been or may be abused or neglected. (TFC 261.101 (b))\* A professional cannot delegate this duty to another person to make the report. Reporting suspected child abuse makes it possible to protect the child and for a family to get help.

***For life threatening or emergency situations, call your local law enforcement agency or 911 immediately, and then make a report to DFPS.***

There are two options for reporting abuse, neglect and exploitation to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

**By Phone:** Call the Abuse Hotline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free **1-800-252-5400** from anywhere in the US to report abuse or neglect that occurred in Texas.

**By Secure Internet Website:** From your internet browser, go to <https://www.txabusehotline.org>. When you get to the web site, there will be directions to the links to report abuse or neglect against children or to report abuse against elderly or disabled adults. Recent improvements to the site include a registration page, ability for the user to print the report, left side navigation, and spell check. If you have trouble or questions about making a report on the website, call (512) 929-6784 or **1-800-252-5400** for help.

### **Types of Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation**

#### **What is Abuse?**

- Abuse is mental, emotional, physical, or sexual injury to a child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities, or failure to prevent such injury.

#### **What is Neglect?**

- Neglect of a child includes (1) failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter and/or medical care; and/ or (2) leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm.
- Neglect of a person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities results in starvation, dehydration, over- or under-medication, unsanitary living conditions, and lack of heat, running water, electricity, medical care, and personal hygiene.

#### **What is Exploitation?**

- Exploitation is misusing the resources of a person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities for personal or monetary benefit. This includes taking Social Security or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) checks, abusing a joint checking account, and taking property and other resources.

#### **Information that is helpful to have on hand when filing an abuse report includes (if known):**

- The name, age, and address of the child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities.
- Your name and contact information.
- A brief description of the situation and the child or vulnerable adult.
- Current injuries, medical problems, or behavioral problems.
- Parents' names and names of siblings in the home (for a child).
- Names of relatives in or outside the home and name of perpetrator (for an adult).
- Explain how you know about the situation.

FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES D

- *Texas Family Code Chapter 261.101 (b)*

**How does reporting abuse or neglect of children in Texas work? What do I need to do to make a report?** State law requires anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report those suspicions to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or to a local law enforcement agency.

**Always call law enforcement first and the Texas Abuse Hotline second if you suspect that there is an immediate threat of harm or death to a child.** Any person making a report to DFPS is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in good faith. The reporter's name is also confidential and will not be provided directly to the accused person by any DFPS employee. *There are circumstances under which DFPS is required to disclose a reporter's identity to law enforcement, a court of law, or another state agency. Please see the section below on Confidentiality for more information.* A person who suspects child abuse or neglect, but fails to report it, can be charged with a misdemeanor or state jail felony. Remember, reporting suspected child abuse or neglect makes it possible for a child to get help.

<b>Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child in Texas: Reporting Basics</b> <b>Telephone</b>	<b>Internet</b>
<p>You may call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 to report abuse or neglect. The hotline is answered by DFPS Intake Specialists (who are all degreed professionals) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You will be asked to provide your name and contact information. You will be asked to explain your concerns. The Intake Specialist might ask additional questions to determine if the situation that you describe meets the Texas Family Code's definitions of abuse or neglect.</p>	<p>You may report your allegations to the Texas Abuse Hotline through the Internet at <a href="http://www.txabusehotline.org">http://www.txabusehotline.org</a>. This secure website provides a way to explain your concerns in writing. You <b>must</b> provide your name and a valid e-mail address. Your identity remains confidential and will not be provided directly to the accused person by any DFPS employee. Once an Intake Specialist processes your report, you will receive a confirmation e-mail with a Call Identification Number. The e-mail will also tell you whether or not your report was forwarded to a local DFPS office for further investigation.</p>

Please note that the Internet Reporting System is for **non-urgent situations**. Receipt of internet reports may be delayed during times of high call volume to the Texas Abuse Hotline. The Internet Reporting System should NOT be used in urgent or emergency situations, including but not limited to:

- Injuries to a child age 5 or under or serious injuries to any age child
- Immediate need for medical care (including a suicidal child)
- Sexual abuse where the perpetrator has access or will have access to the child in the near future
- A child age 5 or younger who is alone or is likely to be left alone in the next 24 hours



- Any other situation you feel requires a response within 24 hours

**Call in reports about these (and similar situations) to the  
Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.**

**Always call local law enforcement first if a child is in imminent danger.**

**What information do I need when I make a report? What will I be asked to provide?**

Intake Specialists need specific information before they can forward a report of abuse or neglect to a local Child Protective Services (CPS) office for investigation. This information includes the alleged victim's address (or other information to help CPS contact the family) **and** an allegation that indicates abuse or neglect as defined by the Texas Family Code.

Not every allegation reported to DFPS will result in a CPS investigation. This is because not every situation involving concern for a child meets the legal definition for abuse or neglect under the Texas Family Code. It is crucial that you provide as many details as possible about the alleged abuse or neglect, as well as the family demographics, so that the Intake Specialist can make an accurate assessment of the situation.

<p>Before making your report, please take a moment to gather any records or notes you have on the family so you have easy access to the necessary information. While you may not have all of the information noted below, providing as much of it as possible will allow DFPS to make the best decision about how to proceed. <b>Persons Involved/Persons with Knowledge</b></p>		
<p><b>Household Members</b> All known persons living in the child's home (adults and children)</p> <p><b>Alleged Perpetrator(s)</b> The person or persons suspected of abusing or neglecting the child. They may or may not be household members</p> <p><b>Collaterals</b> Any other people who may have information about the situation. This may include school employees, neighbors, other relatives, medical staff, etc.</p>		
Information Requested for Each Person		
<p><b>Identification</b> Name, Date of birth (preferred) or age Social Security number, Race/ethnicity Marital status</p>	<p><b>Location</b> Home address (including apartment name and number) Directions to the home Home phone number &amp; cell phone number(s) Work School, or daycare name Address, phone number, hours in attendance, and grade level.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> <i>Multiple forms of locating information are important so we can find the family as quickly as possible. For example, having only a school address is challenging if</i></p>	<p><b>Special Needs</b> Do the child, parents, siblings, or alleged perpetrator have any special needs? If so, how do those needs affect their normal functioning?</p>

	<i>we need to locate the family quickly on a Saturday morning.</i>	
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To send a report to CPS for investigation, an Intake Specialist also **must** have an allegation that meets the Texas Family Code definition of abuse or neglect. Giving as much detailed information as possible helps the Intake Specialist make as

accurate an assessment as possible. *This is especially important with Internet reports because the Intake Specialist cannot ask follow-up questions.*

Learning to identify child abuse and neglect and deciding to make a report is very distressing for many people. However, DFPS can more accurately assess a situation if you frame your statements as objectively as possible. Clear and detailed information allows the Intake Specialist to make the most accurate assessment possible.

When you make your telephone or Internet report, you will be guided through a series of questions. The questions below are ones most commonly asked by our staff when assessing information.

### **Allegation Information**

#### **What happened?**

- What led you to suspect abuse or neglect?
- Did you witness something?
- If so, what did you see?
- Where and when did it occur?
- Was anyone else present?
- If someone said something to you, who was it (the child or someone else)?
- What did the person say?
- When did the person tell you?
- Are you aware of anyone else who may have been told?

#### **Who abused or neglected the child?**

- Do you know who may be abusing or neglecting the child?
- Does that person live in the home with the child?
- If not, how often does the perpetrator have access to the child or when will the person see the child again?
- Does the perpetrator have access to other children?

#### **What is the role of the parent/guardian?**

- If the parent or guardian is not the perpetrator, is he or she aware of the concern?
- Do the parents or guardians seem protective?
- If they are not aware of the concern, will you tell them?
- How do you think they will react?

#### **What else is happening in the family?**

- Are there factors at work that put additional stress on the family such as drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, gang activity, recent marital problems or job loss?
- Are there any issues that could pose a safety risk to our staff?
- Is anyone helping to support the family?
- Have there been any previous concerns?
- Do you know if they have been reported to our agency or another agency before?
- How is the family likely to react when we contact them?

#### **Questions Specific to Different Types of Abuse & Neglect**

#### **Emotional Abuse**

- How is the child being emotionally abused?
- If verbally, what is being said to the child?
- How is the child reacting to the abuse?
- Has the child demonstrated or verbalized any self-harming thoughts or behaviors?
- Is this child being treated differently than others in the home?

**Sexual Abuse**

What makes you think the child has been sexually abused?

Has the child said anything?

Are there physical indicators of sexual abuse (e.g., physical injury or sexually transmitted disease)?

Has the child been examined by a medical professional?

Is there a known sex offender in the home?

**Medical Care**

Does the child have medical needs (regular or acute) that are not being met?

If so, what are those needs?

Have these needs been determined by a doctor or other professional?

What medicines should the child be taking and for what conditions are the medicines prescribed?

What are the short term and long term consequences of not receiving care?

**Physical Care**

Are there concerns about the child's physical care?

Does the child appear malnourished or seem to be losing weight?

Is the child extremely dirty or inappropriately dressed for the weather?

Is there a bug or rodent infestation in the home?

Are there concerns about trash, rotting food, sewage, or animal waste in the home?

Are there hazardous home conditions that pose a safety risk to the child (e.g., exposed wiring, broken glass, loose nails, or holes in the floor)?

What effects (if any) have the home conditions or the cleanliness of the child had on the child's health (e.g., constant illness, rashes, etc.)?

**Supervision**

Is a young child being left alone or in the care of someone not capable of providing supervision (e.g., child is young; caregiver is intoxicated)?

Are children living alone?

Are very young children left outside unsupervised?