



Rocking Horse Academy

FAMILY HANDBOOK

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1: INTRODUCTION TO ROCKING HORSE ACADEMY

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/guardian 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.

Rocking Horse Academy reserves the right to refuse or discontinue services to any family at our discretion. This may occur when policies are not followed, tuition obligations are not met, or when a child's needs cannot be safely or appropriately met within our program. All decisions are made with the safety, well-being, and best interest of our children, families, and staff in mind.

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.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURE CHANGES

As a working document, this handbook is subject to updates, clarifications, and changes. Any Additions, Changes, Clarifications will be posted on our website and in an email sent with invoices. Parents/guardians are encouraged to review this handbook annually, or if there is a question or concern.

If major revisions are made, RHA will create a summary of changes memo and distribute that through the classrooms.

HOURS OF OPERATION

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

Our educational program begins each day no later than 8:30 a.m. We encourage families to have their children in their classes by this time to fully benefit from our activities. Families may not drop off 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. Families dropping off (with a doctor's note) during this time must ensure that children arriving after scheduled lunch have been fed and are prepared to nap in accordance with the classroom schedule.

WE ALSO ASK FAMILIES 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 cannot monitor children eating breakfast with a classroom filled with other children. Too often, other children want to take the food and disputes erupt.

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 rooms, the part-time program is not available until our 2-year-old program. Drop-in care may be 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 pick-up that same day. Please check the current fee schedule for rates.

Children receive a healthful morning and afternoon snack with milk or water. Each child may bring his/her own nutritious lunch. Please do not send juice boxes or sugary snacks or drinks with lunch; Rocking Horse Academy provides whole milk for the younger students and 2% for the older students. Parents/guardians 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 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.

ACCREDITATION

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

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/guardian 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 receive 30 hours of training annually. Rocking Horse Academy will be closed on those training days. Every year our teachers must renew their training on Blood-borne Pathogens, SIDS, Maintaining Safe Environments, and Abuse/Neglect in addition to curriculum development, behavior/classroom management, and other appropriate subjects.

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.

We strive to operate our classrooms at low teacher/student ratios. 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.

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 exploring and manipulating hands-on, age-appropriate activities and materials that pursue their own interests. 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 TEKS 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 explore 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 is limited to developmentally appropriate programming that has been previewed by adults prior to use. Children under the age of 2 are not allowed to watch TV, computers, or any form of media. Another activity option is always available; no child is required to view a program. The staff discusses what is viewed with the children to develop critical thinking and viewing skills. Media may be used for 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. The following pages detail 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, seriation, 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

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 fractions
- ✎ Use large muscle skills; develop eye-hand coordination
- ✎ Control the placement of objects

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

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

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

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

2: ENROLLMENT AND FINANCIAL AGREEMENTS

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. 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 (wait) 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 childcare 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 at least one week prior to the child's first day. These forms must be reviewed and updated annually.

RHA requires a security deposit for enrollment. The security deposit must be paid in full prior to the start date. Families on our waitlist will be contacted when an opening becomes available. They must pay their security deposit in full prior to their start date.

WAIT LIST

How It Works:

To get on the Rocking Horse Academy wait list, interested families need to complete and return the Financial Agreement and Financial EFT Enrollment Form (Both forms can be found as the first 2 pages of our enrolment packet) with the non-refundable registration fee. As the list is usually long, especially for the Infant (6 weeks to 12 months) and Mobile Infants/Toddlers (12-24 months), it is important to apply as early as possible. **The average wait time for enrollment varies depending on the current enrollment, age/development of your child, and the date on which the registration paperwork and fee was submitted.** As children age while on the waiting list, they are automatically considered for any opening that they qualify for based on their

date of birth and development. Your child’s place on the wait list is determined by the date we receive your financial agreement forms and registration fee. *Note that the payment of the registration fee does not ensure a place in our school but does serve to keep your child's name on our list of prospective students.*

(Children of our staff may be given priority over all others on the wait list. Rocking Horse Academy also reserves the right to give preference to siblings of children currently enrolled in our center based on individual circumstances; however, this is NOT guaranteed.)

Beginning at the top of each list, parents/guardians are notified via phone and/or email when a space is available for their child. Families are given 48 hours to notify us of their decision to either accept or decline the enrollment. Because of this, it is very important to keep us up-to-date with changes to contact details (e.g., email address and phone numbers). If families fail to contact us within the 48-hour period, the assumption is made that they are no longer interested in our program and the child’s name will be removed from the wait list.

If the available spot is accepted, families must enroll their child(ren) within 30-days of accepting said opening. They must pay their security deposit in full before their first day.

If the space is declined, the child’s name will be removed from the wait list or families may “pass” on the offered spot one time without losing their registration fee. We simply call the next family. However, if when you are called a second time, you are still unable to accept the spot, your child’s name will be removed from our wait list.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WAIT LIST:

We compiled these answers to questions families frequently ask with the hope that this information will be helpful to you. If you have a question that isn’t answered here, please call 512-405-3700

1. How long is the wait list?

While the wait list for some of our programs is quite lengthy, we often enroll children into our Preschool and Pre-K in the summer period fairly quickly from the wait list.

2. Will my child get in faster if I wait for part-time?

Part-time availability is extremely limited and only available for toddlers, and preschool age groups. Flexibility in your child’s schedule may result in a quicker enrollment.

3. Can I stop in anytime and have a look around?

In order to provide a safe and secure environment for the children, we can only permit you to visit our classrooms if you are accompanied by the director or another staff member. To schedule a visit please call the office at 512-405-3700.

4. If my child is still on the wait list when he or she reaches toddler age (or preschool age), do I go to the bottom of the wait list for that age group?

Your child’s name will be added to the toddler (or preschool) wait list by your original date of application. His/her name will be higher on the list than those who applied after you and lower on the list than those who applied before you.

5. How is it possible that someone who applied after I did was offered a space before me?

The only priorities we offer are for children of center staff or extenuating circumstances for siblings of enrolled children. Aside from these priorities, it is generally not possible for someone who applied after you to be offered a spot before you, unless you require part-time care and only a full-time spot is available, or we didn’t receive your updated email address and/or phone numbers.

6. When will I hear from you about where I am on the list?

It’s just not feasible for us to contact each of the waiting families to tell them where they are on the continually changing list. You are welcome to contact our Assistant Director by phone or e-mail. The program Assistant Director will be able to provide you with more accurate information.

TUITION

Tuition is charged every two weeks. Tuition begins Monday and ends Friday. Unless otherwise arranged, tuition is due every other Monday. 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. Tuition must be paid in full without deductions for absences, vacations, holidays or school closures.

Only ONE account will be made for each child/family; we cannot split accounts. Both parents/guardians are legally liable for the full payment of tuition. We cannot become involved in financial disputes between parents or guardians.

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 communicated with the Accounts Manager by Monday. 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/guardians do not receive an invoice.

Families are required to sign up for 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.

Part-time children who miss a scheduled day due to illness or vacation may not attend on an unscheduled date. RHA will try to accommodate children on unscheduled days with the approval of a director to make up days when the center closes for holidays or training days, as long as the classroom will be in ratio, and additional staff is not required due to extra children. The make-up days must be arranged within a minimum of 5 days in advance of our closing. No refund or adjustments will be made if we cannot accommodate the unscheduled day. 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 no set time period between rate increases (e.g., every year). We will notify parents/guardians 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.

Non-Sufficient Funds Policy

NSF tuition is handled in the following manner:

- Parents/guardians will be notified of their check being returned to Rocking Horse Academy by their bank.
- Parents/guardians will be required to make restitution on the returned check, plus fees, upon receipt of notification from their bank. 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 an 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.)

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 may be charged monthly at an interest rate of 10% until the balance, late fees and interest are paid in full.

Subsidies

RHA accepts subsidy programs as long as our tuition rates remain the same. Parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for completing all required forms associated with the subsidy, tuition, fees, and expenses. RHA accounting will work with agencies to process the needed paperwork to support subsidy payments.

Discounts

- Upon request, siblings will receive a 5% discount off the oldest child's tuition. (Corral Kids Students are not applicable)
- RHA offers a 5% discount to our fellow teachers, police officers, fire fighters, military members, EMT first responders.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

You must give a minimum of thirty days' written notice if you intend to withdraw your child from the Academy. Upon enrollment, parents/guardians are required to give a deposit and sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the "Family's Handbook" and agreeing to the terms and policies set forth. Specifically, the acknowledgement includes an agreement to give the school thirty-day written notice of their intent to withdraw their child from the program. If thirty-day notice is NOT given, the deposit is NON-REFUNDABLE. If thirty-day notice is given, the deposit is applied to your tuition account. If a parent/guardian has paid tuition in advance and given a thirty-day withdrawal notice in writing, the deposit will be refunded. A 30-Day Notice of Withdrawal form is available online and in the lobby.

SCHOOL-INITIATED WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Rocking Horse Academy reserves the right to have any child removed from the Academy at any time without previous notice or a corrective program being required. Any tuition or deposit refund is at the sole discretion of the Academy.

FEES

Registration/Waitlist Fee

A registration fee is due at the time your child is accepted or in order to ensure a position on our waitlist. This fee is used to help cover the administrative cost of registering 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.

If a student runs out of family-provided consumables, RHA will provide a daily supply and charge the family's account accordingly. (Diapers, wipes, waters, lunches, etc.)

Should your child damage/destroy RHA equipment, furniture, or property, you will be asked to replace, repair, or compensate RHA for that expense. This would not include minor classroom materials like a truck or a book but would include putting holes in walls or breaking a toilet.

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/guardian 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 3rd late pick-up 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 workdays or holidays by signing up on a first-come first-serve basis. Please check with the front office 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 and substitute expenses when we are asked to participate in court hearings. Feel free to ask for a copy of those current fees from any administrative staff. If we are involved in litigation, RHA reserves the right to ask the family to withdraw from our services.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Inclement Weather

In the event of a sudden storm or emergency where parents/guardians 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, on Facebook and on our communication APP. 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 when possible. Announcements will be made on Facebook and our communication APP. RHA will not adjust tuition when closed due to weather or states of emergency.

Holidays/Inservice Days

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

New Year's Day	January 1 st	
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	3 rd Monday in January	Teacher In-service Day
President's Day	3 rd Monday in February	Teacher In-service Day
Good Friday	Friday before Easter	
Spring Training	Monday after Easter	Teacher In-service Day
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May	
Independence Day	July 4 th	
August Training	2 nd Friday in August	Teacher In-service Day
Labor Day	1 st Monday in September	
Fall Training & Columbus Day	2 nd Monday in October & Friday Before	Teacher In-service Day
Thanksgiving Day + Wednesday before & Friday after	4 th Wednesday, Thursday and Friday in November	
Christmas Day + 2-days TBA	December 25 th	

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. The annual calendar is posted on our web page.

RHA will not adjust tuition when closed due to holidays/in-service days.

NON-ATTENDANCE

PRESCHOOL: 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.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM: Parents/guardians must 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 he/she is not at the designated spot at the school for pick-up. Parents/guardians will be charged a fee if a child's absence is not communicated, and RHA staff is required to inquire or search for that child. See our rate sheet for current fee.

3: FAMILIES AND COMMUNICATION

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 family bulletin board are available at the Academy. Our newsletters and weekly menus are posted on our website www.rockinghorseacademy.com We maintain a Facebook page where we post current activities and emergency information.

Family/Teacher Conferences are held once a year to discuss your child's academic progress and accomplishments. Conferences to discuss behavioral concerns or difficulties at home may be scheduled as needed. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please notify your child's teacher 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 all parents/guardians
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 always build and establish open lines of communication.

PARENT/GUARDIAN - 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/guardians 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/guardians 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.

Our website is an excellent resource for school information and contact numbers.

DIGITAL APP-COMMUNICATION

As technology advances, so does the software available for Childcare Centers to communicate with parents/guardians. Rocking Horse Academy uses a digital communication platform. We use tablets in our classrooms to help us stay in touch with our families. It is essential that every parent/guardian has an email address in order to receive notices and information from our teachers. The program also has a convenient APP for your mobile phone devices. Below is a list of features offered on this software.

Parents/Guardians

- Receive photos, videos, notes by email
- Download or share photos and videos of your children
- Receive emergency alerts by text message
- View your children's portfolio using our mobile application

Teachers

- Share photos, videos, notes to parents/guardians throughout the day
- Record meals, activities, naps, and more to daily reports
- Post lesson plans up to 4 weeks in advance
- Take attendance
- Record classroom visitations
- Mark children sick or on vacation
- View medical and birthday reminders
- View child allergy and emergency information
- View guardian and medical information

The digital communication system is our way of ensuring safety and providing communication for all of our staff and families.

LESSON PLANS

Teachers are required to post lesson plans in their classroom and a copy is available to all families. Lesson plans may include activities to work on at home that reinforce what we are learning in school. 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.)

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.
- Your completed enrollment packet is required one week prior to your start date.

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/guardians must accompany the child to the classroom. Each classroom has a tablet with our digital communication platform to record attendance. Parent's/guardian's must sign their student in/out of the classroom using their provided PIN or scan the QR code in addition to notifying the teacher directly. This tablet is kept with the class as the students move from area to area within the school campus and off campus field trips. Teachers refer to the attendance log each time the group moves to another location, thus enabling them to know exactly which children are present at all times. *Please do not take your child from the playground without communicating with the teacher. Also, please do not allow your child(ren) to run ahead of you when departing. He/She/They must remain with you at all times.* This is a state regulation requirement for the safety and protection of everyone.

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. Parents/guardians 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.

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.

- Occasionally, 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 VISITS

Parents/guardians 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". If a parent/guardian visit is too disruptive, RHA reserves the right to ask that you refrain until your child is older and more able to deal with your visit.

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 may return the parent's/guardian'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 may then be given a pin code to enter into the tablet when retrieving the child or be escorted to the proper classroom to pick up the child. 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 families, the law stipulates we cannot determine which parent/guardian may pick-up the child. We must release children to either parent/guardian, regardless of which parent/guardian 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. Families 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/guardian is called before the child is released. If this person acts suspiciously, or is hostile, law enforcement may be called. **No child will be released to an unauthorized person without parental or guardian consent.**
- Parents/guardians 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.
- **Intoxication:** If a parent/guardian or emergency contact person appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of medication/drugs when he/she arrives at the center to pick-up a child, the staff will not release the child. Staff will:
 - Offer to call a relative or friend to pick-up the parent/guardian and child.
 - Offer to call for alternative transportation.
 - Inform the parent/guardian/other person that if he/she chooses to drive with or without the child, the educator will inform the police immediately.
 - Call DFPS and/or 911 if they believe the child needs protection.

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

FAMILY CODE OF CONDUCT

We expect parents/guardians to observe a certain standard of conduct while at Rocking Horse Academy. The following items are not acceptable as a part of our school community:

- 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.
- Hiring an RHA teacher as a personal nanny. Our teachers sign a non-compete clause that they will not work for one of our clients for at least one year following resignation. The teacher could face legal actions in the amount of 1 year's tuition. Families who submit notice to hire an RHA staff member are not eligible for a refund of their deposit and face legal action up to 1 year's tuition per child.
- No recording devices are permitted within the school unless preapproved by a director.
- Parents/Guardians may not confront another family regarding concerns or issues. All concerns should only be brought to our administrative staff.
- Parents/Guardians may not become aggressive toward our staff or administrators.
- Making disparaging comments regarding the school to staff, parents, or anyone other than Administration (including outside of school)
- Not following policies designated to protect the safety and security of everyone at the school.

Any violation of this policy may result in the immediate withdrawal of the family. When withdrawal is deemed necessary, the Director may attempt to provide parents/guardians with two weeks' notice

of termination of care, however, if Rocking Horse Academy feels it necessary, we reserve the right to terminate care immediately.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONCERNS

- A parent/guardian will discuss the concern directly with the teacher/staff involved, in a timely manner using polite, straightforward, discrete, and tactful language.
- If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached between the parent/guardian and the staff member, an appointment will be made to discuss the issue with the Director (to be held w/in ten working days.)
- If the parent/guardian 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/guardian, staff member, and the Director.
 - C. Desired results.
 - D. Date and signature of the parents/guardians.
- The Board will provide a written, proposed solution to all parties involved, and the proposed timeline for the implementation of the solution.
- Parents/guardians can contact the Department of Family and Protective Services at <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us> or the Austin office 512-834-3426 or San Marcos office 512-753-3259
- Parents/guardians who suspect cases of abuse can report to <https://www.txabusehotline.org> or 1- 800-252-5400
- Should parties disagree on how to resolve a matter, RHA requires that both parties use mediation to settle differences.

CONFIDENTIAL DISCLOSURE

Childcare Regulation requires that all information regarding a child be kept in confidence. Staff may not share any information about a child or his/her family with anyone else other than with another staff member as it pertains to their job. If there is an accident or incident, our staff is not allowed to divulge any details about other child(ren) involved. A staff member who violates this regulation and policy may/will be terminated.

The same holds true for when the parent/guardian is also a staff member at Rocking Horse Academy. Teachers may NOT share personal information about another child involved with our staff's child(ren). In the role of parent/guardian, he/she is not to have access to information that is otherwise confidential.

4: HEALTH, SAFETY, AND DISCIPLINE

HEALTH POLICY

This health policy has been developed to meet the standards for childcare centers set by the State Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. The purpose is to provide the parent/guardians 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, unless documented authorization is provided, 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. 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. Failure to keep immunizations current may result in withdrawal of services.

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 a child is healthy enough to stay at the school. Any additional information about the child's health parents/guardians could share with the teacher at this time would be greatly appreciated.

Health Policy Guidelines

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she may be given a rest mat and may be placed in an office or teacher's lounge area until you can pick him/her up. Parents/guardians must pick-up their child within 90 minutes of attempted notification or arrange to have an alternative person pick-up your child. 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 24 hours after fever and other symptoms disappear.

- Notices of contagious illnesses such as flu, chicken pox, etc. in a class will be posted in each classroom.
- A current record of a child's physical is required for all children registered at the Academy. Immunization records must be kept up-to-date and documented in the Academy's office.
- If your child will be absent or late arriving, please call the school.

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 to send a child home. See the following page for a chart of illnesses and symptoms children may be sent home for.

1. If a child has an axillary/forehead temperature of greater than 100°, the parent/guardian will be asked to take the child home. Temperatures will be taken if the child feels warm to the touch. The temperature is taken axillary/forehead. There is a 15–30 minute wait, and the temperature is rechecked. If there is a fever, the parent/guardian 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 illnesses listed on the following page, the parent/guardian will be asked to take the child home and follow the guidelines in the section Guidelines for Returning A Child To School on returning a child to the Academy.

Illness	Symptoms
CHICKEN POX	Watery blisters appearing on scalp, face, or body.
DIARRHEA	One loose, watery bowel movement with one or more additional symptoms (fever of greater than 100° (axillary/forehead), 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.
GIARDIA	Intermittent soft, unformed bowel movements during at least a two-week period, usually including abdominal cramps, unusual odor, and color.
EYE INFECTIONS	Red eyes, discharge from tear ducts, swollen eyelids and/or bumps on eyelids, crusted or matted eyes.
STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTIONS	Fever and sore throat.
RASHES	Unexplained rash on all or part of the body.
RINGWORM	Itchy, scaly patches on scalp or body. Usually, ring-shaped. Margins may be red and slightly raised.
PIN WORM	Itchy rectum. Child appears uncomfortable and has difficulty sleeping.
IMPETIGO	Any infected wound or small blister that become crusted or contain pus.
EAR INFECTIONS	Pain in ear, fever greater than 100° (axillary/forehead), fussiness, pulling on ear.
NASAL DISCHARGE	Any nasal discharge that is not clear. Fever greater than 100° (axillary/forehead), irritable or lethargic, not able to participate in daily activities.
LICE	Itching or scratching of scalp, white pinpoint eggs (nits) that will not flick off.
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.
VOMITING	One vomiting episode, with one or more additional symptoms (fever greater than 100° axillary/forehead, abdominal pains, lethargy, unable to console). Two vomiting episodes, with no additional symptoms within twenty-four hours.
HAND, FOOT, MOUTH	Fever, mouth sores, and skin rash commonly found on the hands, mouth, and/or feet.
RSV	Runny nose, decrease in appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, and wheezing.
COVID-19	Fever or chills, cough; shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, headache, loss of taste or smell.

3. A teacher can send a child home if his/her behavior indicates he/she is too ill to participate in the day's activities.
4. Parents/guardians must pick-up their child within 90 minutes of attempted 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/guardians. 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/guardian, 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 the time of the initial attempted communication and the 90-minute period will begin. If a message is left and the parent/guardian does not call us back, we will begin calling any emergency numbers provided.

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 regulation 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'/GUARDIANS' 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 to send a child back to the Academy.

Children sent home because of fever may return 24 hours after the temperature has returned to normal without Tylenol or other fever suppressants. Families will be asked to sign acknowledgment of this policy.

Please refer to the chart on the following page to determine when a child with any of the listed communicable diseases might return to the Academy.

Communicable Disease	Child may return to school when:
CHICKEN POX	Sores are dried up or crusted, and no new blisters are appearing (approximately six or seven days).
DIARRHEA	Symptoms are gone for 24 hours, and child has a normal bowel movement without medication such as <i>Kaopectate</i> .
GIARDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stool analyses must be done to identify Giardia, and a copy of a negative result must be filed in the Academy's office. ◆ If test is positive, the child may return after 24 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. ◆ If there are several cases in one classroom, all children may be asked to be tested.
EYE INFECTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When parents/guardians see the first symptoms of discharge, they are advised to keep the tear ducts clean and open. Warm compresses often work. ◆ With any eye infection, the child may return to school after twenty-four hours on medication, discharge has cleared up, and redness is gone. ◆ 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.
STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTIONS	24 hours after antibiotic has been administered, no fever is present, and the child is able to participate fully in activities.
RASHES	The child is free of symptoms, or there is a written statement from the doctor stating the child is not contagious.
RINGWORM	After medication is administered and sores are covered.
PIN WORMS	May return the day after treatment begins. Fingernails must be cut.
IMPETIGO	After treatment begins and sores are covered unless they are dry.
EAR INFECTIONS	After fever is gone and the child is comfortable and on medication.
NASAL DISCHARGE	Mucus is clear.
LICE	After treatment and nits are removed.
VIRAL HEPATITIS	With doctor's written approval.
VOMITING	24 hours after last vomiting episode, and no other symptoms exist.
HAND, FOOT, MOUTH	All sores must be completely covered or healed.
RSV	24 hours after fever-free and no longer wheezing.
COVID-19	Negative test or 10 calendar days after a positive test and symptom-free.

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 are 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/guardians 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/guardians, 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 become ill. Names of ill children are confidential. Only the date it was reported, 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 by a family member or friend, again, notify us so we may watch for symptoms.

Whereas we take every precaution to prevent the spread of any contagious disease, RHA is not liable if your child(ren) contracts any contagious disease while attending our school.

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/guardians must sign and date the medication form before any medication can be administered. Parents/guardians 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 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/guardian. 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. Medications are administered at 11a.m. and or 3p.m. unless otherwise authorized by a director.

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/guardian. The Academy must dispose of medication when a child withdraws from the Academy or when the medication is out of date. Medications are only kept on an as needed basis and are typically returned within one week unless specified otherwise by a physician.

Parents/guardians 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/guardians will be contacted immediately. If the parents/guardians or an administrator 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/guardians 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 within 48 hours. We review any incident to determine preventive measures to reduce the possibility of a repeat incident.

If any changes have been made to the information you furnished Rocking Horse Academy, please notify the front office immediately. It is very important all information on your child's enrollment sheet is current. Outdated 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. Emergency drills are practiced monthly/quarterly in accordance with regulations.

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.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The front door is locked and can be accessed with a keypad security code, or a visitor can ring the doorbell to identify himself/herself before gaining entrance. Families are given a number code that is changed annually or as needed.

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 tablets 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 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.

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.

There will be no physical or demeaning punishments. If the usual guidance techniques are unsuccessful, the teachers will request a conference with the parent or guardian, 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 or guardians 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.

Rocking Horse Academy reserves the right to send a child home for a day or ask a family to leave if behavior becomes unmanageable in a group setting. Tuition will not be refunded when sending a child home.

BEHAVIOR DISMISSAL POLICY

All families will be required to sign a Behavior Contract as part of their enrollment. Challenging behaviors that may not be age-appropriate or demonstrate anger and aggression towards peers and staff are behaviors that may initiate the use of a Behavior Action Plan. We strive to provide each student enrolled in Rocking Horse Academy with a fun and safe learning environment. To ensure this, RHA provides an environment that promotes the social and academic skills necessary for successful development and eventual transition into a kindergarten classroom. The Academy has a variety of behavior systems in place.

Every effort will be made to resolve differences. However, the Academy may require parents/guardians 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 behavioral 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.

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

- Parents/guardians will be notified of the problem by the teacher or office staff as soon as possible.
- Parents/guardians and teacher(s), or administration will set up a conference for discussion of an ongoing problem.
- A follow-up conference will be scheduled in two weeks.
- If significant improvement is not observed, parents/guardians 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 a student to withdraw.

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 wellbeing of children, and we are child advocates.

Parents/guardians 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.)

5: GENERAL POLICIES AND 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/guardians 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.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

We ask children not to bring personal items or technology to school unless the teacher has designated a “Show and Share 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. RHA is not responsible for items lost, broken, forgotten, or taken by others.**

YOUR CHILD(REN)’S CLOTHING

Busy, creative, educational activities can be messy regardless of the age of your child. 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. RHA is not responsible for tears or stains.

Closed-toe shoes must be worn in school. For your child's safety, we require children not wear flip-flops, sandals, Crocs, or “jellies” at the Academy. Sturdy shoes, including tennis shoes, are more suitable for climbing and running and 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 person drops off and another person picks up that evening. Read the label to be sure you are not walking off with another child’s jacket or sweater. RHA is not responsible for lost or taken items.

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

DIAPERS AND TOILET LEARNING

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 family's 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 APP 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.

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 milk and/or water, 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/guardians can provide a meal from home. When preparing your child's snacks/lunches, please keep in mind the following:

- Food should be cut or prepared for your child's developmental abilities. It should be ready to eat.
- Food must be cooked and prepared for warming only. We do not have the ability to prepare or cook food.

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.

If your child has dietary restrictions or allergies, we inform the teachers and place a notice in your child's file. If the dietary restriction is family preference, we only need a parent/guardian statement. If the allergy requires any type of medication, we must have the doctor's written notification with an action plan in your child's file. This must be updated with any changes. Parents/guardians are asked to provide an alternate snack or beverage that meets the dietary guidelines for your child. Two-week menus are posted on our website and in our lobby. Parents/guardians are responsible for checking menus and to provide accordingly.

Infants:

A Child Information Sheet will be provided to keep babies on the family's requested schedule. Unless specifically requested, we do not wake babies to feed them. Babies usually will wake up when they are hungry. Families will be asked to check this sheet each month to revise it. If the instructions remain the same, the form will need to be signed and dated.

- Bottles must be prepared and ready to warm. One clean bottle for each feeding.
- No glass bottles allowed.
- Bottles may be filled with water and a separate container with pre-measured formula may be brought. We will mix and feed.
- Bottles must be labeled with baby's first and last name and the tops with baby's initials.
- Only formula or breast milk may be given in bottles. RHA WILL NOT administer medication or cereal in a bottle without a doctor's note.
- Babies should be accustomed to a spoon before having solid foods at RHA.
- New foods must be tried at home in advance in case of allergic reactions.

RHA will adhere to CDC guidelines in regard to bottle milk expiration. Formula bottles will not be offered beyond one hour of being made. Breast Milk bottles will not be offered beyond 2 hours after first being offered.

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. Families 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/guardian.

BIRTHDAYS/CELEBRATIONS:

Sharing a birthday is a special time for children. 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 plan to bring a special treat for your child's class, you must give RHA a 24-hour notice so that we can inform all parents/guardians of the change in our menu.

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. Regulation prohibits balloons in the school.

Rocking Horse Academy will celebrate four parties during the school year. These may 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. The teachers will plan the activities for the parties. There is no need for the families to attend the parties, unless they want to, but sometimes we may ask for volunteers to help. Children not normally attending school on party days may come during the scheduled time of the activities as long as they are accompanied by a parent/guardian.

RHA also celebrates Thanksgiving Feast, Graduation, and Teacher Appreciation weeks. We ask our families to volunteer to help make these events successful.

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.

SLEEP AND NAP POLICY

Infants:

- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants less than one year of age be placed on their back to sleep. When the infant's licensed healthcare provider prescribes an alternative sleep positions or special sleeping arrangements for health reasons, parents/guardians must provide documentation to the school with written instructions detailing the special accommodation and sign a waiver. Teachers will put the infant to sleep as specified in the written instructions from the physician.
- ✓ As infants develop, they will learn to turn from their backs to their tummy and back. The TX HHSC requires teachers to return sleeping infants to their backs unless parents or guardians sign a waiver allowing the child to adopt whatever position they prefer for sleep.
- ✓ Sleeping infants will have a supervised sleep/nap period. The teacher will be positioned where she can hear and see the infants. The teacher will physically check on the infants during napping and sleeping periodically.
- ✓ No blankets, comforters, pillows, bumper pads, or any other object that can increase the risk of suffocation or strangulations may be in the cribs. Infants may use an arms-free sleep sack or sleepers designed to keep them warmer. Parents/Guardians must provide the sleep

sack; RHA does not provide those.

- ✓ Pacifiers will be allowed in the infants' cribs while they sleep, but they cannot have cords or attaching mechanisms.
- ✓ Only an individually assigned, safety-approved crib with a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet will be used for infant sleeping or napping. Only one infant may occupy a crib at one time, except during emergency evacuation procedures.
- ✓ Sitting devices such as swings, or bouncy seats may not be used for napping. If infants fall asleep while sitting in such a device, they must be moved to a crib within 10 minutes of going to sleep.

Toddlers/Preschoolers:

For rest time, each child will be furnished a cot of his/her own. A crib sheet, pillow and/or any comfort items will be provided by parents/guardians 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 may pat backs to help the children relax. There is always constant adult supervision during rest time. Parents/guardians can help ease their child's transition from school to home and back by adhering to the nap schedule during weekends, holidays, and vacations.

Should a student become disruptive during rest time, teachers will try to calm the student. If the student continues to disrupt classmates at naptime, RHA staff may call parents/guardians to come and pick-up your child for the remainder of the day.

OUTDOOR PLAY

We believe in order for children to be healthy, they need fresh air and exercise. The regulation agency concurs and requires us to provide outdoor time for children every day, weather permitting. Parents/guardians 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.

We ask that parents or guardians apply an application of sunscreen in the morning before school. In addition, Rocking Horse Academy will provide sunscreen to be applied to students before afternoon outside time to help prevent sunburn. Sunscreen will be applied to children's exposed skin prior to going outside after nap. Please see the front desk for current information on the type/brand of sunscreen we use. If it is preferred, families are welcome to provide their own sunscreen to be applied in the afternoon. As with other medications, sunscreen must be labeled with the child's first and last name.

Rocking Horse Academy will apply insect repellent on children if provided by family and a waiver has been signed. Aerosols or any form of sprays are not allowed for use at school.

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.

CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE

As stated above, a parent/guardian is required to accompany his/her child(ren) to and from the classroom. Parent's/guardian's must sign their student in/out of the classroom. Families must notify the teachers in person when dropping off or when taking your child from the classroom or playground. Teachers must know exactly who is in their care at all times. Please do not send a minor 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.

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 everyone's safety. All visitors must sign-in and show identification.

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

SOCIAL MEDIA

Rocking Horse Academy directs our staff to not engage in social media with our families as a matter of professionalism. We ask that families do not become "friends" with staff members on any social media platform. (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snap Chat, etc.)

When attending events at RHA, we request that families taking photographs that include children other than their own please refrain from posting the photos on social media sites unless prior permission has been given by the other child(ren)'s parent/guardian.

PICTURES

From time to time throughout the school year, teachers and/or administrators may take pictures in the different classrooms. Facial front photos are not shared on social media by RHA. Teachers may send photos from the classroom via our APP; however, their primary role is to teach and directly supervise children.

FUNDRAISERS

Throughout the school year Rocking Horse Academy will host a variety of fund-raising activities, such as 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, computers, playground equipment/mulch, 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.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

RHA coordinates with private companies that offer physical fitness classes, sports, dance, and other enrichment programs to childcare centers. They typically come once or twice a week to provide lessons to our students. These are family-paid classes for Preschool children in sports, dance, gymnastics, boot camp, and cheer. Please see our front office managers if you would like a brochure.

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/guardians 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/guardian chaperones.

CHILDCARE REGULATION

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 is on file and available for review at the reception desk located in the lobby.

Our Academy is licensed to serve 282 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 regulation 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/guardians and others may review them:

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

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.

6: APPENDIX A. 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.

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.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF A CHILD IN TEXAS: REPORTING BASICS	
TELEPHONE	INTERNET
<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.</p> <p>You will be asked to provide your name and contact information.</p> <p>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 http://www.txabusehotline.org. This secure website provides a way to explain your concerns in writing.</p> <p>You must 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 aged 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 aged 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.</p>
<p>PERSONS INVOLVED/PERSONS WITH KNOWLEDGE</p>
<p>Household Members: All known persons living in the child's home (adults and children).</p> <p>Alleged Perpetrator(s): The person or persons suspected of abusing or neglecting the child. They may or may not be household members</p> <p>Collaterals: Any other people who may have information about the situation. This may include school employees, neighbors, other relatives, medical staff, etc.</p>
<p>INFORMATION REQUESTED FOR EACH PERSON</p>
<p>Identification Name Date of birth (preferred) or age Social Security number Race/ethnicity Marital status</p> <p>Location Home address (including apartment name and number) Directions to the home Home phone number & cell phone number(s) Work School, or daycare name Address, phone number, hours in attendance, and grade level.</p> <p>Note: <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 we need to locate the family quickly on a Saturday morning.</i></p> <p>Special Needs Do the child, parents, guardians, siblings, or alleged perpetrator have any special needs? If so, how do those needs affect their normal functioning?</p>

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
<p>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?</p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>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?</p>
QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE & NEGLECT
<p>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?</p>
<p>Sexual Abuse What makes you think the child has been sexually abused?</p>

<p>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?</p>
<p>CARE AND SUPERVISION</p>
<p>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?</p>
<p>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.)?</p>
<p>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?</p>

7: APPENDIX B. Emergency Plan and Transportation Letter

See following pages.