

Parent Handbook



MUSTARD SEED KIDZ WELCOME TO ALL PARENTS

Welcome to our center! We are excited to have you as a part of our family. At MUSTARD SEED KIDZ every child is important. Our program is academically rich and designed to promote your child's growth and development. Thank you for choosing MUSTARD SEED KIDZ for your child.

A transition into any new environment can be challenging and cause anxiety for any child or adult. Our staff is trained to be alert and aware of your child's reaction to their new environment and will be sensitive to their feelings. After enrolling your child at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ, your child may visit and be introduced to his/her new teacher. This will also give you an opportunity to get to know the teachers and staff involved in the care of your child prior to their first day.

Separation anxiety is common and your child may resist being left at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ in the beginning. However, after several days, drop-off becomes easier. We suggest that after you do the necessary signing in and walking your child to class, simply give your child a hug and assure them that you will return for them that afternoon to pick them up. Prolonging your departure could cause more anxiety for your child. We encourage parents to call any time during the day to see how their child is adjusting. If needed, the director will be happy to provide additional suggestions for a smooth and enjoyable transition into the school environment for both you and your child.

This handbook will help you understand our center goals and policies. Our guidelines are all designed to make sure that each child receives the best education possible. Please look over the information given, so that you are familiar with our operation and guidelines.

Please let us know of any area in which we can be of particular assistance to you. We are looking forward to getting to know you and your child and providing a rich leaning environment where all our children develop to their full potential.

Lastly, to ensure that your child's time at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ is as enjoyable and comfortable as possible please bring the following items:

- A complete change of clothes (more than one set for infants)
- A small child-sized blanket for rest or nap
- A familiar cuddly toy to be used at nap time
- Bibs for infants and toddlers
- An extra can of pre-mixed formula for infants
- Diapers and wipes if needed.

Always label everything with your child's name. Labels are available in the classroom for infants.

KRISTA PONTON
DIRECTOR

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ PARENT'S HANDBOOK

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ MISSION STATEMENT:

Mustard Seed Kidz aims to build each child's character through family partnerships, while providing high quality instruction based on Christian principles and solid curriculum. We will aid each child in their social, intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual growth. These levels of development will guide your child towards making a positive contribution to future generations and their God given destiny.

STATEMENT OF SERVICES:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ is a year-round program that offers all day care for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years. Our daily activities and programs consist of a flexible schedule that has been created to provide diversity and challenge for children in all age groups. We offer a structured program for children of all ages that includes a year round curriculum. Our activities include school readiness skills, arts and crafts, games, music, outdoor play and story time. We offer a Full Time position, which is for children present at the center 5 days per week, and we offer a Part Time position, which is for children present at the center for 2-3 days per week. Mustard seed Kidz also uses Procure software as a childcare management system for keeping track of student information, tuition and parent communication.

QUALITY OF CARE:

Children are the greatest learners in the world and are learning at every possible moment, but what and how they learn is extremely vital to life-long development. At Mustard Seed Kidz we succeed in accomplishing our mission through a variety of methods including faith-based curriculum, independent exploration, STEAM implementation and technology integration. We promote a wide range of learning experiences to meet the educational, emotional and spiritual needs of the children in our care, such as implementing projects in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math to promote critical thinking skills as well as utilizing cutting edge technology and interactive software to develop early literacy skills. The quality of our school is established by carefully implementing the practices above while also adhering to the core principles of excellent childcare listed below:

- To establish and maintain a safe healthy learning environment
- To advance physical and intellectual competence
- To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance
- To establish positive and productive relationships with families
- To ensure a well-run purposeful program responsive to participant needs
- To maintain commitment to professionalism

Excellent childcare combined with faith-based development create our uniquely wonderful school here at Mustard Seed Kidz.

HOURS AND DAYS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ is open from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Children must be dropped off before 10:00am everyday unless spoken to a director for a temporary accommodation. We are closed New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day and Christmas Day, and possibly 2 all staff training days. If holidays fall on a weekend day the weekday closest to that day will be observed as the holiday. (i.e. Christmas day falls on Sunday – Mustard Seed Kidz will be closed on Monday) These days will be decided in Summer of each year and will be posted for your convenience. Regardless of holidays, all tuition is still due at the regular rate to maintain the child's spot.

NATURAL DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES/PANDEMIC:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ will make every effort to remain open during disasters and emergencies including hurricanes. In the event we are closed due to such circumstances you will still be responsible for tuition at the regular rate for the week to maintain your spot.

OTHER CLOSURES:

Pandemic or other safety related closures lasting longer than one week may have different conditions and policies depending on the situation. You may or may not be charged at the regular rate for the weeks these days fall. Mandatory masks or other policies may be put in effect.

STATE LICENSING

We understand the importance of keeping strict compliance with the state licensing regulations in order to ensure a quality environment for your children. Mustard Seed Kidz complies with the applicable state licensing regulations and policies. These requirements cover staff qualifications, facility, playground, health and safety guidelines, and child/staff ratios. In addition, MSK contacts the local health department annually to keep up to date and current with relevant health information including information about viruses, communicable diseases, and outbreaks.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

Enrollment in our program is open to all families of our community. We operate on a non-discriminatory basis. No one shall be excluded from any of our programs because of race, color, religion, disability, sex or national origin. Only the child(ren)'s parent or legal guardian may enroll a child(ren) (Proof of custody may be required). All forms provided to you upon enrollment must be completed before your child may attend MUSTARD SEED KIDZ. All requested personal information is kept confidential. Parent's are required to update all emergency data as needed, including address, home, cell, and work numbers and individuals authorized to pick up your child. Current immunization information must be submitted to the center upon enrollment, and all immunizations must be current. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ must be informed of any custody situation in advance and will request that the proper paperwork be in the child(ren)'s file. Parents will be required to comply with all state regulations and center rules as set forth in this Parent's Handbook.

ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Parents wishing to enroll their children in the center are encouraged to set up an appointment with the center office to come and tour the center and meet the director and their children's Lead Teacher. (Tours are scheduled at the parent's convenience, however, due to rest time and other challenges in our schedule we encourage tours to be scheduled between 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Monday through Friday). The purpose of the informal tour is to answer any questions you might have concerning our policies and procedures and make you aware of the flexible schedule of your child(ren)s average day. At this time we will email you a copy of the parent's handbook and any forms necessary to enroll your child(ren) in the center. All children shall be considered continuously enrolled from the time of enrollment until they are formally withdrawn according to the procedure outlined in the section "VACATIONS, ABSENCES, AND WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CENTER."

PAPERWORK, FORMS and ANNUAL RENEWAL:

We are required by the state to have current and updated information on each child in our center. This is also for your safety. As mentioned above, we require all forms to be filled out on each child prior to their initial attendance at Mustard Seed Kidz. Also, from time to time we may have you renew and refresh all your paper work and all forms. There will be a deadline given for compliance to this requirement and a fine may be charged if the new paperwork is not turned in on time. Failure to renew and refresh paperwork does not constitute withdrawal from the program and fees will continue to accrue according to the newest published rates including all late payment convenience fees and all other fees due. If Mustard Seed Kidz is penalized or fined for incomplete information on one of our admissions forms or for failure to update/renew this information due to a parent's neglect, that fine will be passed on to the client responsible including an additional \$50 administration fee.

DROP-OFF:

Parents must accompany their child(ren) into the MUSTARD SEED KIDZ area every morning and clock their child(ren) in immediately after dropping their child(ren) off in the appropriate room. Children will not be permitted in the building prior to opening hours. New families will be given a code to use to clock each child in. The clock in/out system is located across from the office. The children are not allowed to come into the MUSTARD SEED KIDZ area alone or to sign themselves in unless prior written permission has been given by the parent and approved by the Director. This is for their protection in case of a fire or other emergency. We require that all children have direct contact with a person upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. If any of these things are determined, the child must go home immediately.

PICK-UP:

All children must be picked up and clocked out by an adult and/or person approved by the parent and the center. All children must be clocked out before being picked up from their classroom. Anyone, including all parents, who are to be allowed to pick the child up, *must* be listed on the Pick-up Permission form or be approved in writing by a parent. In an emergency, parents may call the center and give verbal approval of an alternate individual. However, this is strongly discouraged. The center reserves the right to not allow any individual onto Mustard Seed Kidz property for drop-off or pick-up if they have created a problem. Anyone not recognized by sight will be asked for a picture ID. In the event anyone out of the ordinary is to pick-up the child, please alert the office prior to that time. This is in addition to them being on the Pick-up Permission form or approval as stated above. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the office and make changes on this form whenever necessary.

PARKING POLICY:

Mustard Seed Kidz has a drop-off area by the doors to the building. Due to the limit of the number of vehicles that may be in this area, please park in one of the further parking spaces if you anticipate you will be in the building longer than 5-10 minutes. We strongly urge you to turn your car off and lock it when you come in to drop-off or pick-up your child(ren). MUSTARD SEED KIDZ is not responsible for items lost or stolen from cars or from the parking lot or facility.

AUTHORIZED PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM:

During enrollment parents must complete an enrollment packet in which parents and enrolling family members can add authorized individuals to pick their child up. Each authorized individual must provide a Driver's License or ID card with their picture before a child is released into their care. Changes to the pickup list may not be made over the phone. In addition, each parent has their own individual pin code to gain access to the facility. All persons authorized to pick a child up from the center must be listed on the PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM. To avoid confusion, it is the responsibility of the parent signing the child into our center to properly fill out all forms. In a custody situation the parent signing the child into our center takes full responsibility to ensure that this is in accordance with their specific court agreement, which must be attached to the enrollment forms if any limitation of rights is suggested by the PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM. If a parent who is not listed, or who believes the information given to us was inaccurate, contests the authorization details they must first offer proof that they are indeed the legal parent or guardian and have legal rights to pick the child up. We then will require lawyers for both sides to be contacted and both attorneys will be requested to give us documentation as to the individuals approved for pick-up. The center reserves the right to not allow any individual onto our property for drop-off or pick-up if they have created a problem.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL CONSENT FORM:

Mustard Seed Kidz may dispense medication as listed on the medical authorization form or for emergency situations approved by the parent. Medical authorization forms must be filled and updated for medicine to be dispensed. Our staff may apply bandages and first aid by cleaning wounds and utilizing the kit. First aid supplies are stored in each classroom, locked in the closet or a cabinet. They are also stored in the front office to help care for hurt children. Our Center reserves the right to not dispense or store medications. Parent/Guardians are allowed to dispense medications off school property prior to drop off or after pick up.

INFORMATION CHANGE

Organizational records are kept onsite at all times and are renewed when applicable. Children's folders must be redone every 2 years. The Parents are to notify the center of any change in home or work phone numbers and addresses. This is for your safety so that we may reach you in an emergency. The center requires that someone listed on the Pick-Up Permission form of each child be available within thirty (30) minutes notice to come and pick up a sick child or a child that MUSTARD SEED KIDZ has determined needs to go home. It is required that all changes of phone numbers, places of employment, residence changes or changes in pick-up information be turned into the office immediately. Please give the Director written notice of the change as soon as possible.

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS:

All children enrolled must have their immunization records up-to-date or provide an exemption affidavit. The child's immunization record must be provided by the parent and all information must be current. The parent shall also provide proof of this with a form signed by a health care provider. This form will state that the child has received all current, age-appropriate immunizations. Parent's wishing to take a religious exemption must contact the office to find out the proper procedure for providing an affidavit of such a religious opposition. If Mustard Seed Kidz is penalized or fined for non-compliance of immunization cards due to a parent's neglect, that fine will be passed on to the client responsible including an additional \$50 administration fee.

ALLERGIES:

We must be aware of any food or other known allergies that affect your child. If your child has any known food allergies, you will need to fill out an "Allergy/Food Exemption Medical Statement." This allows us to alert all of our staff to be on guard of their allergy. The Allergy/Food Exemption Statement must be turned into our office as soon as this allergy has been identified. This form must be updated annually. We also need to be aware of any Non-Food allergies that can affect your child. If your child has any Non-food allergies you will need to fill out a "Non-Food Allergy Medical Statement" which must be turned in to our office as soon as this allergy has been identified. This form must be updated annually. You will also need to fill out a "Authorization to give Medication" form if your child requires an Epi-pen or other emergency treatment.

ILLNESS AND CONTINUED HEALTH:

These guidelines are for the welfare of all of our children. In order to provide a safe and healthy we rely on our parents to monitor their children with these guidelines in mind. Outdoor play is essential to your child's development. We feel that if your child is too sick to play outdoors then they are too sick for group care. A child that is ill or has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above should be kept at home. All children shall have direct contact with a staff member upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior, see the Drop-Off section above. A child that is too ill to remain in the center shall be supervised and cared for until the child can be cared for elsewhere. The child will be sent home if he/she is running a temperature of over 100.4 degrees, if he/she is vomiting or has diarrhea, or if it is suspected that he/she has a contagious disease. In the event you are called to come pick up an ill child, you must pick your child up within 30 minutes, or overtime rates will apply. If a child needs to be sent home and their parents are unreachable, we will call the emergency contacts listed on the Pick-up Permission form. If no one is available by contact after 30 minutes the overtime rate will apply. The center reserves the right to request the child to see a physician or have a physician's note prior to returning. MSK reviews our Health Exclusion policy and guidelines at each bi-monthly staff meeting. The Health Exclusion policy is also reviewed and discussed between our directors and the local health department which acts as a consultant to ensure the highest quality of health practices for our school.

ACCIDENT REPORTS:

Safety is a top priority of MUSTARD SEED KIDZ. Yet, there are times when a child will have an accident/ incident between your child and another child. If the accident/incident requires “more than a hug and a kiss”, our teachers will complete a report for you detailing what happened and the nature of the injuries. If any first aid is administered, the treatment will be described to you. A copy of this accident report, signed by the teacher in charge at the time of the accident, will be provided to you and a copy filed with the Director's office. We ask that you sign the copy provided to you and return it to the Director's office to confirm that you were notified of your child's injury. This system is aimed at ensuring communication at all levels and can be a very good way to be certain little things are not forgotten in a hasty departure. If your child happens to be injured by another child, we ask you to please respect the child's privacy by not asking us to reveal the name of the child. It not only puts our staff in an awkward situation but could cause a confrontation between our families. We will handle any and all behavior problems in a professional and appropriate way.

CHILDREN REQUIRING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable regulations pertaining to providing services to individuals with disabilities. We desire to make special accommodations for children who require such accommodations, provided it is within our power and authority to do so. Accommodation can be a specific treatment prescribed by a professional or a parent, or a modification of equipment, or removal of physical barriers. The accommodation shall be recorded in the child's file. Whenever we deem it appropriate to the needs of the child to have a child with special needs in our center, the entire staff must follow the reasonable accommodations we have made for that child. Any questions about the accommodations of the child should be referred to the leadership staff.

DISCIPLINE:

At MUSTARD SEED KIDZ the staff are trained in using positive reinforcement as a means of discipline. Our goal is to find solutions and to provide the very best environment for your child. We have a detailed Discipline policy including an early intervention system which we call our Behavior Intervention Policy.

CLEANLINESS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ procedure for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting the facility is as follows: All classrooms and classroom materials are cleaned during the day and disinfected at the end of each day. General classroom areas such as shelves and equipment are cleaned using disinfected wipes. Toys, bathrooms, diaper changing areas and dining areas are cleaned and sanitized using diluted bleach water and soapy water. As mouthed toys are used, they are set aside in a bucket to be sanitized and put back away. Floors are cleaned using a broom, mop and cleaner after eating has taken place and at the end of each day. The facility also employs a cleaning crew that arrive nightly after hours to do a final clean of the facility including walls, floors, windows, and all other surfaces. When the facility is made aware of illnesses or exhibits signs of illnesses, additional cleaning is performed within all classrooms and common areas.

TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training is best accomplished with the cooperation of teachers, parents and children. Children learn toileting skills through consistent positive encouragement from adults and home and at the center. Toilet Training usually begins around 2 years of age. When a child shows an interest in toilet training, the parents and teachers should complete a Potty Training Plan that describes how they will cooperate to encourage toilet training. This plan is commitment to work with the child in a consistent manner; it is not a timeline for completing toilet training.

Each child will begin at a different time and progress at a different rate. The staff will provide documentation of your child's progress each day. The director and staff are available as a resource to answer any questions about your child's toilet training progress at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ. Several complete changes of clothes should be kept on-center during this process.

TOYS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ has a wide variety of toys, games and other resources to offer children during center time. Preschool classes will have show and tell related to the week's lesson. Personal toys are not permitted in the center, as they can cause disputes and can be broken or lost. The exception to this is show-and-tell or sleep-toys which should be labeled with the child's name. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ is not responsible for stolen, lost or broken toys or clothing.

Do not bring toy guns, war toys or other toys of destruction.

CLOTHING:

We encourage the children to dress for play and comfort as the seasons change. Children will have opportunities for outdoor play twice a day weather permitting. Children will go outside if the temperature is above 32 degrees or below 100 degrees with the wind chill and heat index taken in to consideration. It is required that you bring one set of extra clothes for your child in case of a spill or accident. We have some extra clothes available, but we may not have the item your child needs in his/her size. If your child comes home in center clothes, please wash the clothes and return them within one week. **It is strongly suggested that all clothing brought or worn to the center have the child's name on it.**

DIAPERS:

Please provide diapers, wipes and diaper ointment (if needed) for your non-potty-trained children. All items must be labeled with the child's first and last name. You can bring a package of diapers to leave at the center. You will be notified when your child is running low on diapers. If you run out of diapers we will provide them to you automatically for a fee of \$2 per diaper. If you have any questions please check with the office.

SUPPLIES:

Each child will be provided with all the instructional supplies necessary here at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ. ***Please mark all items clearly with your child's name.*** Additional personal items which are needed include:

- 1) A small blanket for rest time
- 2) A crib sheet for the mat
- 3) If your child prefers a small pillow and/or a stuffed animal/doll for resting. Please be sure to provide one daily or leave one in the child's cubby at school.

CURRICULUM:

Children learn by doing. They learn through play, experimentation, exploration, and testing. Learning should be a joyful, natural experience. We have chosen a curriculum based on the developmental and spiritual needs of the children to foster individual growth through opportunities for exploration. 90% of brain growth occurs from zero to 5 years old. Each class's lesson plans and your child's class flexible schedule are posted on the parent's board in your child's room. We incorporate current trends in Early Childhood and School Age Education and then structure this curriculum to meet the needs of the majority of the children in the group. Our curriculum, although it will vary depending on age, is a faith-based curriculum and is guided by strong principals.

DAILY SCHEDULE:

Although your child's schedule varies somewhat day to day, a typical flow of a day's activities is below.

Activity Time: Activities specific to the weekly theme are presented along with basic activities such as puzzles, table manipulatives, dramatic play, blocks, etc.

Group Time: Group times are child-centered participative sessions. The planned group activities include reading, music, movement, finger plays, discussion, dramatization, games, and experience stories.

Outdoor time: The playground is an extension of the classroom. Children can participate in an activity of their own choosing. Inclement weather, special events, or celebrations will occasionally affect the scheduling of outdoor time.

Snacks and Meal Time: Staff sits with children while they are eating, encouraging and participating in quiet conversation.

Rest Time: Children are given the opportunity to nap or rest each day.

Specific activities vary based on age, all are posted weekly in each room.

CLASS DIVISIONS AND CLASS SIZE:

We endeavor to have a challenging and appropriate atmosphere for children of all ages. Homeroom class divisions are based upon three issues. These are: the individual developmental needs of each child, state set student to teacher ratios, and the overall enrolment management plan of the center. Children not yet in school are generally divided into classes by age since this usually keeps them with children in their own developmental level and keeps our age-based student to teacher ratios easy to calculate. In most cases it is our target to have children together with the children with whom they will be attending Kindergarten.

STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIOS:

Student to teacher ratios are based upon guidelines set by STATE law. The following chart shows the maximum ratios that we observe.

Age of children	Number of Students	Per teacher
Infants	4	1
Toddlers 12-24 months	6	1
2-Year-Olds	11	1
3-Year-Olds	15	1
4-Year-Olds	20	1
School-Age Children	25	1

In addition to the teacher to child ratios each group also has a group maximum. We meet or beat these ratios and minimums at all times.

MIXED-AGE GROUPING

Our program encourages times for mix-age grouping of children to provide a rich learning environment that recognizes that all children are unique and develop at their own pace and according to their individual interests and abilities. In times of the day where mixed-age grouping is implemented, children who are at least one year apart in age are sometimes placed in the same classroom. Our teachers and staff are educated in mixed-age grouping to help ensure it is implemented with the utmost focus on the child's development and safety. Mixed-age grouping is an effective tool in child development providing many benefits including:

- Older children learn to be helpful, patient and tolerant, while developing increased confidence in their own skills and abilities.
- Younger children have the opportunity to learn more advanced cognitive and socialization skills from the older children.
- Individual differences in development are better accommodated.
- Children are challenged to think about problems in a more creative and flexible way as they observe children of different ages approaching problems differently than they do.

TRANSITION PLAN

Mustard Seed Kidz will create an individualized TRANSITION PLAN to help children are about to transition from one class to the next. This is to help the children become familiar with the new program, teachers and children. It also allows the new teachers to get to know the individual needs of each child prior to the transition of an entire class group or several children together. The plan allows flexibility in order for us to best meet the needs of each child. Each child's individual need is different therefore the TRANSITION PLAN may vary quite a bit from child to child. Your child's teacher or the director will provide more details about transitioning when your child will move to another classroom.

SUMMER CAMP

A summer camp program is offered during the summer months for children of all ages. The camp is built around weekly themes. Activities include various art projects, music, water fun, sports, stories, cooking, theatre and field trips. A separate summer program fee is generally charged to help cover transportation costs, and a summer camp T-shirt.

OUR STAFF:

At MUSTARD SEED KIDZ we strive to provide nurturing, quality care in a highly interactive learning environment. Our friendly qualified staff are an integral part of providing this environment. Our current staff has had

- A detailed interview and screening process.
- Approval by the state of Florida through a background analysis that cross references state and federal criminal records as well as child abuse reporting records to insure that each employee has a background that is clear.
- State CPR and first aid requirements fulfilled

We believe firmly in training and continued education for all our employees and staff. Each has qualified themselves to work with your children by attending specific training classes and often college level courses to learn about early education and the needs of children. We emphasize training and encourage all of our employees to exceed the state minimum number of clock hours of training required to be qualified to continue to work in an early education setting.

STAFF AND CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ considers it inappropriate for parents and clients to solicit our staff to work for them either in their business or homes. We are not legally or financially liable for our employees or any of their actions when they are off the clock or no longer employed by MUSTARD SEED KIDZ. All employees have signed a statement saying that they will not engage in “care for hire” or any employment by or for any past or current client family of MUSTARD SEED KIDZ while currently employed by MUSTARD SEED KIDZ or for eighteen (18) months after their last day of employment. An employee who violates this policy has violated their employment agreement and is subject to possible termination. It is inappropriate for a client or parent to solicit any employee for any type of work. Clients who violate this policy may be subject to termination of services.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

The success of our program is based on establishing a partnership between our parents and our staff. Open and frequent communication will help your child have a positive early learning experience. We will endeavor to keep you informed concerning your child’s day and overall development through several written means.

- Procare Connect mobile app
- Parent Board – updated with current information about MUSTARD SEED KIDZ and curriculum
- Daily written communication in the form of “Daily Report” forms, “Incident/ouch” forms, and classroom memos will be placed in the child’s “cubby” from time to time.
- Newsletters
- Parents always have the option of requesting specific parent/teacher interaction to aid in the child’s development.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

We will endeavor to be communicative during drop-off and pick-up times. However, this is not a good time for extended conversations since the staff members/teachers have responsibilities for all of the children in the group. Furthermore the person caring for your child at the pick-up time may not be the individual who has spent the majority of the day with your child. This is due to the fact that many children spend 10 hours a day at the center and most of our employees only work 6-8 hours. Since children learn best in the morning, we schedule the teachers who are responsible for the majority of the classroom development for the earlier hours and the majority of the day. We suggest that you go to your child’s “lead” or “primary” teacher to obtain detailed information on your child’s general growth and development. You can call to see how your child’s day is going or to speak to your child’s teacher for more detailed conversation. The best time to call and speak to your child’s teacher is during naptime. There is always a member of management available for you to talk to in person or on the phone. You may also use the Payment/Suggestion box to leave information for Management, or you can e-mail us through our web center at mustardseedkidz.com/contact.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:

We encourage all parents and or guardians to be involved in the activities. We believe that parental participation is key to any successful child care program. Children should be raised by parents. At MUSTARD SEED KIDZ, we strive to fill the gap created during early separation and educational opportunities and when parents are not available. We welcome parental visits. We have an open door policy that allows parents access to the center during operating hours. We have enclosed a sample list of some of the opportunities for involvement in our center. Parents are in no way limited to the involvement listed below. Any parent wishing to be involved in another area is strongly encouraged to contact the MUSTARD SEED KIDZ office with their suggestion.

1. Parent Meetings
2. Fall Open House
3. Programs and Special activities, such as the Christmas Program
4. Special parent's involvement activities such as Fall Festival
5. Party Day Volunteer
6. Come and eat lunch with your child
7. Send special treats for snack or meals (please notify the teacher a day or two in advance)
8. Help with center Fund Raiser
9. Participation in a parent's group
10. Reverse Field trips (When we bring a "field trip" type activity to our property)

We also expect parental involvement in discipline and behavior intervention as outlined in these policies.

POLICY FOR PARENTS WHO CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL EVENTS:

In the event that a parent feels like they would like to be more involved in the center but cannot due to their work schedule, or due to other conflicts, we will help them find a project or area which they can do on their own time. A member of the leadership staff will meet with the parent to find their area of interest. We will offer suggestions to them based on their interests and time. For example, if the parent likes to sew, we may offer to have them make doll clothes or repair mat sheets.

CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are special days for children. If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ, please make early arrangements with your child's teacher. Hard or chewy candy and balloons are not permitted because they pose a choking risk. (See "Bringing Food From Home" for more specifics concerning food snacks brought for parties or to celebrate a child's birthday)

VISITING THE CENTER:

You are welcome to visit your child at the center at any time. We do ask that you check in with the office or sign-in desk before going to your child's room. It is the responsibility of each employee to make sure any visitor for a child or employee has checked in with the office. If you are coming to eat lunch with your child, please let us know in advance. Persons not listed on the "Pick-Up Permission" form, will not be allowed to visit your child. In a custody situation, please note that the same procedure will be followed as listed in the Pick-Up section. Parents are encouraged to pre-arrange opportunities to share lunch with their child or visit the class. Extended family members such as grand parents and aunts are also welcome to visit in certain pre-arranged situations. The custody challenges of our current society demand that we follow strict guidelines in this regard. Feel free to contact a member of the management team if you wish to set up a "visit" from an extended family member.

CLASSIFICATIONS:

Due to strict licensing guidelines and safety issues we require that all individuals on our property be categorized as one of the following:

- 1) A scheduled employee during the regular course of their work day
- 2) A Child who is in our care (all paperwork has been filled-out)
- 3) Parents or others during the course of regular drop-off or pick-up (This to be approximately fifteen (15) minutes)
- 4) Delivery personnel – From a regular or expected company delivering items to the center (should be in eye sight of an employee at all times and arriving at an expected time)
- 5) Visitor's – Must be approved by the office and should be accompanied by an employee at all times not to exceed once per month and limited to a maximum of 2 hours
- 6) Volunteers – Anyone who is helping with a class party or in any other capacity or anyone who has been a "visitor" for more than once a month or for over 2 hours.
- 7) An Intruder – Action will be taken by the staff to notify the proper authorities

Therefore anyone who is in the building or on the property for an extended period of time must be considered either a "visitor" a "volunteer" or an "intruder" including parents and employees who are off the clock.

VOLUNTEERS:

Any parent wishing to help chaperone an event must go through our screening process. Volunteers are also welcome in our center. Anyone visiting or volunteering for more than one day per semester must go through a screening process. Our screening process includes, but is not limited to, 1) a signed statement indicating whether or not they have had a conviction of any law in any state, or any record of founded child or dependent abuse in any state; 2) a signed statement indicating whether or not they have a communicable disease or other health concern that could pose a threat to the health, safety or well-being of the children; 3) undergoing a fingerprinting and background check 4) a signed statement regarding child abuse 5) going through New Teacher Orientation. Any "visitor" who spends extended periods of time in the center will be considered a volunteer and be required to go through the screening and training listed above.

INTRUDERS:

The safety of the children is our first concern. Although we have an open door policy and welcome parents to visit their children we also have a commitment to the parents of the other children in the program. Since we cannot attest to the background of anyone that has not gone through our screening process we also cannot allow parents to spend extended periods of time in our facility without requiring them to fulfill certain screening and training requirements. These are set by state law and our policies. Any individual who does not submit to our safety policies concerning "Visitors" and "Volunteers" must be considered an intruder and steps will be taken according to the "Intruder" portion of our "Safety and Evacuation" policies.

MEALS AND SNACKS:

Our meal and snack service consists of a Breakfast, Lunch, and a PM snack. All food served will be nutritious and healthy as per CCFP guidelines. Each child will be encouraged to eat what is prepared and to try new items as introduced. Please alert our staff of any food allergies or food restrictions as we want to accommodate and respect individual preferences.

FOOD FOR INFANTS AND CRAWLERS:

Parents must provide food/ formula/ liquid/ milk for children in the Infant and Crawler rooms or accept our formula based on CCFP guidelines. The Infant and Crawler rooms are equipped with crock pots and refrigerators. All bottles are required to have a sticker with the child's name and the date the bottle was made. Please be certain to inform staff in the classroom the type of formula your child is using, and any other facts regarding diet. Do not bring open baby food jars - Licensing requirements restrict us from serving prepared baby food from previously opened jars. Any unused baby food will be sent home or thrown away each evening. Breast milk must be handled in a manner consistent with universal precautions. Please clearly identify all breast milk.

BRINGING FOOD FROM HOME:

Breakfast and lunch should not be brought from home without prior approval. The center will provide these meals for the children. To ensure that the children are eating safe food, the following guidelines will be met. 1) Food may only be brought from home if a specific need warrants it and arrangements have been made in advance with the management. 2) This food is considered a supplement to what we serve and should meet nutritional guidelines. 3) Perishable food brought from home should be contained so as to avoid contamination. 4) Prepackaged snacks may be brought from home for birthdays and parties that do not meet nutritional guidelines. (Please notify the child's teacher prior to bringing special treats.)

PORTRAITS AND PICTURES:

We may offer school pictures, in the spring and fall. The fall photos usually include two sittings per child and should be delivered in time for use as holiday gifts. The spring portraits include one sitting and a complete class portrait. You will receive proofs before purchasing. In addition we may take pictures of the children playing or for use on their cubbies or for use with a project or we may need pictures of children for promotional use.

REGISTRATION FEES:

As stated in the Enrollment packet and tuition policy, there is a registration fee that is due prior to the child's first day at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ. This fee is due upon initial enrollment to reserve your spot and prevent another child from enrolling. **Registration Fees are Non-refundable and all parents are notified as such prior to taking payment.**

Children who pull out of the program for a specified or un-specified length of time will be required to pay the registration fee again. The exception to this will be children who physically pull out of the program but whose parent's continue to pay their full weekly fees in order to retain the spot in our program. Children who attend in a "Drop In" fashion who pay the "Drop In" rate will be considered as continuously enrolled for that school year and will only be required to pay one registration fee provided they continue to fit the definition of this program.

WEEKLY TUITION FEES:

It is our philosophy that clients are paying for the spot their child will take in our center. This is not based upon attendance but rather on a set weekly or monthly fee that is due regardless of the attendance habits of the child who has the spot. Our fee structure is based upon a weekly fee that is set by the contract which is signed by the parent's upon enrolling the child(ren) in the program. These contracts may be adjusted from time to time as needed with a two weeks notice of intent to change services. This to be allowed at the discretion of the management based on space availability. Contracts are re-done annually prior to the first of June. Since the weekly set fees remain the same, no bill will be given to remind you of these fees. Add on fees may occur such as in the case of School aged children who are in need of additional services due to an irregularity in the school schedule such as an early dismissal, schools out day or school break. In the case of summer break, a new contract will be entered into by the parent's specifying the charges for this period.

PAYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Weekly fees are due in advance on Monday. There will be a \$30.00 late payment convenience fee added if the account is not paid by Tuesday at 9:00am. Failure to pay on time may result in termination of services. No account will ever be allowed to carry a balance unless arrangements have been approved by the Director. There will be a \$30.00 fee added on all returned checks. After two NSF checks are received by the center, payment will be required by cashiers check or money order. Fees for two weeks will be added if a two week written notice is not given prior to your child leaving the center. Clients may pay by ACH or credit card. All payments will be **payable to: MUSTARD SEED KIDZ**. All tuition is non-refundable except for prepaid tuition that is over-and-above any additional charges, including the two weeks notice. Registration fees are non-refundable as they are used to reserve your spot from another child enrolling. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ may seek collection of fees due and clients may be required to pay a two week termination fee, and any collection costs and attorney's fees incurred by MUSTARD SEED KIDZ to collect this amount. If MUSTARD SEED KIDZ elects, it may immediately terminate all services provided by it including but not limited to the immediate dismissal of the children from it's facility.

ELC/SR/VPK/ STATE PAID TUITION CLIENTS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ is authorized to receive payments from ELC and other Federal/State daycare assistance programs. If you qualify for free or reduced meals at a public school you might be eligible to receive help through ELC. Our participation in this program in no way limits our freedom or right to set and enforce the policies listed in this handbook. Clients wishing to use ELC assistance must make these arrangements on their own and list us as their ELC Childcare provider. You may enroll in the program as a ELC client once the office has received a letter of authorization from ELC or a phone call from the ELC case worker, establishing your eligibility in our program. The annual registration fee and material fee is generally the responsibility of the client and not that of ELC. ELC clients are required to pay the difference between our private pay rates and the rates that ELC pays on your behalf.

ELC clients may also have a daily co-payment that is set by ELC. This is based upon family income. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ requires that all ELC co-payments be made weekly on Monday in advance of service. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ does the book keeping on ELC accounts once per month after the service has occurred. All PAYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES listed above for self billed clients will also apply to ELC clients. It is the responsibility of each ELC Client to insure that they have no balance when the previous months fees and co-payments are added on the account. Failure to do so will result in a late payment fee. Failure to make co-payment amounts will void your contract with ELC whether you stay at MUSTARD SEED KIDZ or move on to another center.

DISCOUNTS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ may offer promotional discounts from time to time. Parents will receive one vacation credit per year after 90 days of enrollment to use on one weeks tuition in order to not be responsible for that weeks payment.

REFUNDS:

We do not issue refunds. In the event you have over-paid the credit will be applied to your next week's tuition. In the event you have a balance after your child's last day, all applicable fees including the two weeks notice required will be subtracted from any balance prior to a final refund being issued. Checks for this are cut monthly and will be mailed according to our monthly bill payment schedule.

RECEIPTS AND STATEMENTS:

Receipts are available upon request. Annual statements for tax and accounting purposes are available upon request for all accounts with a zero balance.

LATE PICK-UP FEE:

There will be a \$3.00 fee added per minute if pick-up takes place after closing. This fee is non-negotiable and is the responsibility of all clients. Parents, or those picking the children up, are required to call ahead if they feel they are going to be more than 5 minutes late. Parents notified that a child is ill and needs to leave the center for the day a "reasonable period of time" to pick-up the child or the above "Late Pick-up Fee" will also apply. If no parent or emergency contact can be located within 30 minutes of trying to contact the parent, the "Late Pick-up Fee" will also apply. An attempt will be made to contact individuals on the emergency contact list after children have been left 15 minutes past closing. Children left at the center later than 60 minutes past closing will be considered abandoned and Child Protective Services will be informed.

VACATIONS, ABSENCES AND LEAVING THE CENTER:

Vacations and illnesses will be charged at the regular weekly rate. We request that all absences be reported to the MUSTARD SEED KIDZ office prior to or the day of the absence. We require a two week written notice prior to your child leaving the center or a change in your child's contract. Fees for two weeks will be added if a two week written notice is not given prior to your child leaving the center. Failure to notify the center will cause all fees to continue until written notification is given. When notification is finally given, two additional weeks will be added. The center reserves the right to require the dis-enrollment of a child according to our "Discipline Policy" and or the "Behavior Intervention Policy". The center also reserves the right to require the dis-enrollment of any child whose parent and or guardian has become a problem at the center or who has developed and un-cooperative, aggressive, dissatisfied, or angry demeanor towards the center, its policies or its staff.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING POLICY:

The State of Florida requires that MUSTARD SEED KIDZ and all members of child care institutions be on the lookout for, and report to the State and appropriate authorities any and all suspected cases of abuse to a child.

At MUSTARD SEED KIDZ our center and staff are mandatory reporters of Child Abuse. All incidents or suspected incidents will be turned over directly to the Child Protective Services for investigation. We are not allowed to do our own investigation and are required by law to report anything of a suspicious nature. It is advised that clients make the staff aware of any lingering bruising or other visible injury to minimize suspicion of possible child abuse or endangerment.

The following steps are to be taken if a staff member is suspected of child abuse:

- A staff member who has a situation or investigation pending should immediately notify the Director or most senior leadership staff member in the building.
- The person who suspects abuse should bring it to the attention of the Director or most senior leadership staff member in the building.
- The supervisor will check on the complaint and if they agree that there may be abuse, the supervisor will report the incident to Child Protective Services and our State licensing authority.
- We will then follow their advice regarding whether or not to suspend the staff member

If a staff member is founded in a case of child abuse, we will take the following steps:

- We will allow the staff member to appeal the decision
- The Director or an appointed member of the leadership staff will meet with the individual to go over the incident and form an opinion as to its validity and/or consequences to the Center and the individual.
- Based on the advice of our licensing agent, we will either suspend the staff member or allow them to continue their job until the appeal is completed.
- The staff member will meet with the Director or an assigned member of the leadership staff during this time and steps will be taken to ensure that there won't be any problems.

If after the appeal the decision is still founded, we will take one of the following steps based on the advice of our licensing agent:

- The staff member will be terminated from their position at the Center, or
- We will inform the parents that we have a staff member who has a founded child abuse on record. We will also let the parents know what the charge was.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY:

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation to the center and for arranging their own car pools. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ will provide transportation for school aged children to and from school at the locations that this service is offered. MUSTARD SEED KIDZ will provide transportation for field trips as the opportunities arise. Parents will be notified about field trips in advance and written permission will be obtained. Field trip information regarding destinations, ETD, ETA, and anticipated return time will also be given prior to the field trip. The center complies with all State laws that pertain to motor vehicles as well as transporting children who are enrolled in a licensed child care center. Parents will also need to fill out the transportation permission form.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ meets or exceeds the minimum insurance coverage as suggested by our independent agent and periodically reviews insurance needs on an annual basis. Our school examines any events from throughout the year that may involve insurance and we discuss with our independent agent what additional insurance may be needed. For more information concerning policies and liability see management.

Mustard Seed Kidz Discipline & Child Expulsion Policy

At Mustard Seed Kidz we pride ourselves in understanding and developing positive behaviors and attributes in your child's behavior. Our staff is fully trained in positive, productive guidance. Our guidance will always be positive and immediate when behavior is inappropriate. Our discipline will always fall in line with God's word and behavior which are pleasing to Him. Children will never receive physical punishment. Children who have conflicts or problems with others while at our center will be encouraged to verbalize their angers and concerns. Even infants without verbal skills will hear their caregivers describing problems, and logical consequences. The role of the adult at school is to be a helper to positive problem solving. Our staff members guide rather than punish. Children whose behavior endangers others will be supervised away from other children. The child will then process the problem with a staff member and other concerned parties. Staff rarely use "time out" unless a child is emotionally out of control and needs private time to regain composure. Verbal processing is our preferred technique. All Mustard Seed Kidz staff will comply with the facilities written disciplinary policy as stated in Chapter 65-C of the Florida Administrative Code of Child Care Standards. Such policies shall include standards that prohibit children from being subjected to discipline, which is severe, humiliating, frightening or associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of punishment is prohibited by all childcare personnel. Our Directors' have numerous years of experience as Interventionalists working with child behaviors. We will utilize our strengths towards providing the best behavior modification for your child. Behavior that is chronic will be brought to the attention of the parents so we can work together to correct the situation. If the behavior continues or worsens your child may be asked to discontinue enrollment at our center. We genuinely want to work with you and your family to provide the best possible solution for all involved. Mustard Seed Kidz has enacted a child discipline policy for the safety of your child. We want to do our best to protect your child and give you a sense of comfort and peace while your child is in our care, so therefore we have put in writing a copy of our discipline policy for your review. The following actions will take place for behaviors such as hitting, biting, verbal aggression, physical aggression towards peers or adults to list a few.

First Offense: Incident Reports will be signed by parents and behavioral adjustments discussed.

Second Offense: Meeting with parents on ways to combat behavior.

Third Offense: Child will be given one (1) day suspension from school.

Fourth Offense: Child we will be expelled from school.

***Management reserves the right to immediately expel children who pose a server threat to themselves, others and/or staff without notice ***

Please Sign below to verify you have read and understand both the child discipline policy and expulsion policy.

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ HEALTH EXCLUSION POLICY

Vomiting	1 or more times within a 24-hour period
Diarrhea	Three or more abnormally loose stool within a 24-hour period: may also include blood or mucus in the stool
Pink Eye	Must have doctor's note to return to school. Symptoms (redness with drainage) must be gone for 1 calendar day after beginning antibiotics (If Doctor has prescribed them)
Head Lice	Must have proof of treatment. Treatment required and no lice present.
Fever	100.4 or above or accompanied with other symptoms. Infants are recommended to seek immediate Doctor attention.
Chicken Pox	Must have Doctor's note to return to school. Return upon 6-10 days after onset of rash and all lesions must be at minimum dried and crusted.
Impetigo	Must have Doctor's note to return to school 1 full calendar day after first treatment.
Rash/Lesion	Must have Doctor's note to return to school, and the rash/lesions must be able to be covered. If the rash is questionable and accompanied with fever or a change in behavior.
Ringworm	May return to school 1 calendar day after treatment with anti-fungal medication. Area must be always covered during school.
Scabies	Doctor's note required.
Varying Symptoms	Doctor's note required to return to school for the following: difficulty breathing, stiff neck, uncontrolled coughing, unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, unusual dark urine, and gray/white stool.
Hospitalization	Must have a doctor's note to return to school.

Children with symptoms of communicable disease are removed from class to our sick area and remain with a staff member until the parent or designated representative arrives for the child. We make every effort to reach the parents when a child is ill, but after 30 minutes we will contact the emergency contacts indicated by the parents.

Please do not send your child to school if they have any of these symptoms during the night or early morning prior to school!

Children sent home for any reason must *REMAIN AT HOME FOR 1 FULL CALENDAR DAY* before they return to school!

ADDITIONS AND CHANGES:

MUSTARD SEED KIDZ reserves the right to edit or adapt the policies in this handbook as the needs arise. The center will make all changes and additions available at the time these changes are made on the website.