



Hilltop

CHILDREN'S CENTER

FAMILY INFORMATION GUIDE

2021-2022

HILLTOP CHILDREN'S CENTER
4 NICKERSON ST, SUITE 100
SEATTLE, WA 98019

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Introduction and Organization Information

Hilltop Children's Center is a nonprofit corporation licensed by the State of Washington Department of Child, Youth, and Family (DCYF) to provide childcare services. Hilltop began serving the Queen Anne Community in 1971. Hilltop meets the standards and regulations that are required by the State of Washington for childcare agencies, is regularly inspected by the state, and was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children for over a decade. We are a nationally recognized organization of early childhood educators that has set criteria for quality infant, toddler, preschool and school-age programs.

Hilltop Children's Center is open for care Monday through Friday, for children aged six weeks through twelve years old. Children, families, and faculty of all races, creeds, income levels, sexual orientation, languages, gender identities, abilities and national origin are most welcomed at Hilltop.

Hilltop is governed by a Board of Directors, which is composed of faculty, families, and volunteers from the greater community. Board meetings are held quarterly and interested families are welcome to attend. Further information about the Board of Directors is included in the manual under *Organizational Structure*.

Fremont Location:

Fremont Village Square
3601 Fremont Ave N, Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98103
Fremont.Supervisor@hilltopcc.org
8:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Queen Anne Location:

246 Nickerson Complex
4 Nickerson St, Suite 100
Seattle, WA 98109
QueenAnne.Supervisor@hilltopcc.org
8:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Non-Discrimination Statement

Hilltop's programs are designed to support children's growth and to challenge them to learn. Our hope is to build programs that are responsive to the wide range of individual learning styles and needs in our classrooms — programs that truly celebrate and value the individuality of each child. Hilltop provides full-day and part-day programs for children between the ages of 6 weeks and 12 years without regard to race, religion, color, creed, gender, cultural heritage, family marital status, family political beliefs, family sexual orientation, disability or special needs, child's toileting ability, medical condition, HIV status, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided to people with disabilities. The law covers children with disabilities seeking reasonable accommodations in a childcare setting, as well as the families served. Hilltop will conduct an individualized assessment of the needs of a child and family and engage in an interactive dialogue with families, faculty, and medical professionals to identify reasonable accommodations and to safely integrate the child into the program, given each individual's capabilities, and to give the family full access to and participation in our programs to the extent feasible. Any information regarding a child, a child's family, or other matters discussed with center management or staff will be held in the strictest confidence.

Organizational Structure

Hilltop is fortunate to be comprised of multiple groups whom we consider “stakeholders” in our organization, dependent upon each other for our success and accountable to each other in responsibilities, each with significant roles and rights. Those stakeholders are the Board of Directors, the Senior Leadership, the Administration, the Faculty, the Families, the Early Learning Community, the Local Business community, and most of all, the Children. As a non-profit organization, Hilltop takes a community-based stance in decision-making and fundraising.

Hilltop Children's Center is an IRS registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization, under its legal name Seattle Institute for Early Childhood Development. Our educational program is managed and operated by the administrative and educational team, as described below. Additionally, Hilltop contracts payroll and other accounting services to an outside agency.

Board of Directors

The organization is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, organized by the by-laws registered with the Secretary of State. Board terms are a minimum of two years, with an executive team of a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and the Executive Director. Members are nominated and voted in by the current board. One non-voting seat is reserved for a faculty representative. The Executive Director is an agent of the Board and is a non-voting member.

The Board's four major functions are to:

1. Ensure the organization's financial solvency and sustainability.
2. Assist in strategic planning and visioning.
3. Provide support to the Executive Director, including an annual performance review.
4. Conduct fundraising activities and attend to fund development.

Senior Leadership

Executive Director – is responsible for the organizational development and administration, fund development, grant management, public relations, budgeting, board relations, HR risk management, alumni relations, and marketing.

Senior Manager of Family Engagement - acts as an ambassador to Hilltop families and children, providing information, connection, and support services at all stages to ensure the success and relationship between families and Hilltop.

Senior Manager of Faculty Engagement - acts as an ambassador to Hilltop faculty and prospective employees, providing information and support services at all stages of the employee life cycle: recruitment, onboarding, orientation, career planning, career development, and transitions.

Senior Manager of Community Engagement – acts as an intermediary for Hilltop and the community, allowing for successful partnerships that will ensure the growth and viability of children.

Executive Assistant - provides administrative support to the executive director.

Administration Faculty

Program Supervisors – Each center has a Program Supervision who is responsible for the daily operations of the program: supervision of mentoring team, liaison to families, facilities, supplies and materials, and licensing and accreditation

Mentor Educators – Each center has a team of Mentor Educators who provide guidance and support to all teaching faculty to ensure the success of their teaching methods and the success of growth of their children and families. Mentor Educators are divided into age development areas of study and expertise.

- Infant and Toddler
- Early Preschool
- Preschool
- School-Age

Finance Coordinator - counsel and support to the Executive Director, Board of Directors, and faculty on all matters relating to finance and operations, including accounts payable, accounts receivable, and payroll.

Enrollment Coordinator – coordinates placement and orientation process for children and their families during the enrollment, waiting lists, analyzing attendance, and filling identified enrollment opportunities.

Special Projects Coordinator - coordinate and monitor a wide variety of complex activities, plan and oversee large-scale events, provide administrative and technical support, serve as a departmental resource, and provide ongoing support to staff.

Nutrition Coordinator – coordinates menu planning, cooks and serves meals to all centers, leads nutrition education classes, ensures the safe handling of food by complying with local health & safety rules, organizes food storage spaces and coordinating food deliveries.

Teaching Faculty

Primary Educators - our teaching approach translates to a rich learning environment and deeper curriculum development supported by high quality educators. Our primary educators receive paid planning time out of the classroom each week, including a weekly team meeting to work on documentation, discuss and develop curriculum, share observations of the children and classroom dynamics, and plan future trips or events, among many other curricular tasks.

Support Educators – our classrooms are designed to have two (2) classrooms paired together as a suite or unit. Each suite is supported by a Support Educator who works as part of a dynamic team, supporting Primary Educators in developing and implementing positive, nurturing, and stimulating activities suited for the children's developmental needs. They provide coverage for breaks, planning, and meetings.

Substitutes and Work-Study Students – substitutes and work-study students are pre-arranged or called when an Educator is ill to cover teaching responsibilities. Substitutes share their availability and teaching preferences with our Senior Manager of Faculty Engagement in advance. Substitute opportunities range from one to several days in a given classroom throughout the school year.

Educator Institute

Hilltop is well known across the local and international early learning community as a model for child-centered curriculum and reflective teaching practice. In response to increasing demand for high quality growth and development opportunities for both teachers and program administrators, our organization launched its professional development Educator Institute in 2013, which offers trainings, center tours, program consultations, and contributions to professional publications. Hilltop faculty engage as both participants and facilitators within the Institute, allowing an opportunity to develop and refine their own pedagogical practice, as well as being offered opportunities to take their professional development to the next level by engaging as pedagogical leaders in the Early Childhood Education community.

Hilltop is utilizing opportunities created by the Educator Institute to make a larger investment in our organization, to continue to grow and refine our classroom teaching practice and to positively impact faculty wages, organizational funding diversity, our commitment to social justice, board recruitment and longevity, and educator retention.

Children in our classrooms benefit from opportunities the Educator Institute offers our educators to hone and polish their teaching practice, to develop as professionals through inspiring and invigorating professional growth opportunities, and to engage as leaders in their field. The Institute helps us attract, develop, and retain the highest quality of early childhood educators.

Families engage in the Educator Institute by participating in its strategic development, volunteering to help support various projects, and attending events to learn more about child development, early learning, and current issues in the early childhood field.

We've had visitors from as far away as Australia and as close by as Queen Anne engage with Hilltop's Educator Institute. We welcome your participation in whatever way is most meaningful to you.

Family Engagement

Learning in Relationship is one of our core values at Hilltop, which highlights the value we place on the social emotional development of children and our partnerships with families. We aim to create a healthy environment of communication. Here are some ways to help grow a strong, professional relationship with your child's educator:

Communicate directly with educators. If you have feedback, a question, or a concern about your child's classroom or for one of the educators, please talk directly to the educator(s). If you are unable to resolve the issue, please contact the Program Supervisor.

Share relevant information about you or your family. We love knowing about your family, especially as it is relevant to your child's experience. It is helpful for educators to know about big life changes, such as if there is a baby on the way, an ill relative, a move, a separation, etc. And, we appreciate a heads up about day-to-day occurrences that impact your child's life, such as your child not sleeping well the night before, your child's dance recital, visitors from out of town, or an argument your child had with a sibling.

Be thoughtful around classroom etiquette. We love hellos, good-byes and quick small talk at drop-off and pick-up. If we can step to the side of the classroom, we try to share a snippet from your child's day with you. However, our primary responsibility when we are in the classroom is to be attentive to the children. If you need to communicate more intentionally, please use that quick moment with the teacher in the classroom to set up a different time to talk over the phone, by email, or in person. We want to be sure we can fully honor and absorb what you have to say.

Assume positive intent. We come from a place of having the best intentions for your child and family and know that you do too. If you are wondering why we do something, just ask us. We appreciate your feedback and collaboration, both of which make our classrooms and community stronger.

Be as involved as you can. We will offer many opportunities for your input on pedagogical documentation, on our observations of your child at center, on the curriculum being generated in the classroom, etc. We love to hear from you and will incorporate your ideas, feedback, and perspective into your child's experience here.

Speak up! If you are interested in helping with the center, becoming more involved, or getting to know more about your child's experience, let educators know and they will help guide you toward the activity that would be the most rewarding for you.

We look forward to getting to know your child and you. Thank you for learning in relationship with us!

Family Communication

At Hilltop, we strive for clear and open communication between families, faculty, and children. Please communicate directly with educators if you have a question regarding the classroom or your child. If you would like extra support in communication, please loop the Program Supervisor into your discussion.

It is the family's responsibility to read all written communications from the educators and the Hilltop administration, including BrightWheel messages, posted signs, newsletters, emails, and personal communications, and to respond when necessary. The following paragraphs detail our forms of communication. Additionally, families should notify Hilltop, in writing, of any important changes or information regarding their child's health, attendance, schedule, etc.

BrightWheel and email is used as a regular form of communication between Hilltop and families. Please provide Hilltop with your preferred email address(es) and keep us updated with any changes. Each class has an email list from which faculty can email families. As email is our primary form of communication with families, please be sure to read what you receive from Hilltop. If you do not have access to email, please let the Enrollment Coordinator know.

Each classroom has a system for communications between families and educators, which might include a bulletin board where important information is posted, a blog, a notebook, or regular emails. There are also systems in place in each classroom for families to leave written messages for teachers.

Other forms of communication are intended to offer families a view into their child's daily life and ongoing work in the classroom. This may include an evolving curriculum/documentation board posted within each classroom that gives an overview of current in-depth curriculum investigations and/or of the daily life of the children in the group. Each child also has a journal of her/his artwork and documentation. We encourage families to read this journal regularly and to respond to the questions and comments included in the documentation.

Documentation - Faculty members are in regular communication with families about their child's pursuits, interests, strengths, and struggles. This year we are introducing a new platform called Educa that will help support documentation. Families are encouraged to download the program so that educators can share learning stories and anecdotes with families. Classroom educators are available during their planning time to talk with families via phone or virtual calls about their child's development. These conversations are an ideal time for families and educators to follow-up with each other on any issue a child may be having at home or at the center. In addition, educators highlight children's learning and development through documentation posted on curriculum bulletin boards, in individual children's journals, and in the group's archive of written documentation. You are encouraged to take your child's journal home and add your own reflections!!

Conferences - Educators meet with families in the fall in informal, half-hour conferences, to learn more about their hopes and wishes for their child. We meet again in the winter to discuss each child; with families and educators both preparing notes about the child's strengths and growth across key developmental areas: personal, physical, language, logical, and creative. Families receive a written summary of that meeting, as well as a follow up letter in the spring. All in-person meetings are not recommended at this time due to COVID safety restrictions.

In-Depth Investigations - In addition to our ongoing emergent work with children, we intend for every child to be engaged in at least one “In-Depth Investigation” every year. This in-depth work may be carried out by small or large groups, over a period of weeks or months, around a topic of deeper interest to those children. This in-depth work is facilitated and documented by the classroom educators. Once these investigations are well under way or nearing conclusion, families of the children involved are invited for a small group “Collaborative Conference.” At these conferences, educators and families come together to study and reflect on children’s in-depth investigation work. Together, we read transcriptions of children’s conversations, and study photos, video footage, and examples of children’s work, looking for the underlying meanings of their work and the questions they’re pursuing. Teachers and families think together about how to support and deepen the children’s investigation.

In addition to all the regular and ongoing observation, documentation, and communication from faculty to families, we also strive to identify and support children who may be of concern in our program. These concerns may be behavioral or developmental, and may come to light before a child enrolls, or in the course of a child’s time at Hilltop.

Observing and Supporting Children

At Hilltop, we use protocols such as the Thinking Lens (c), Considering a Moment, and the Developmental Observation Tool as integral parts of our teaching practice, to design curriculum, track children’s development, and make pedagogical decisions. Part of our role as educators is to use these protocols to reflect on those observations and turn them into next steps for the classroom in curriculum development, social-emotional skill-building, and in-depth project planning. In addition, we use those observations to learn about individual children: Where are they succeeding with peers? Where do they need extra support in transitions? Is their behavior lining up with developmental expectations?

At Hilltop, we see teachers as researchers whose work is to understand, analyze, challenge, and support children in their social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. We know children succeed and need extra support at different times. Some children might be struggling with transitions from lunch to nap, while for others that transition might be easy, but they are having difficulty holding a marker. Others might have trouble joining in games with their friends, but are skilled at building towers.

When we observe that a child is experiencing a particular challenge, we approach that question through a lens of curiosity and inquiry informed by our knowledge, education, and experience in child development theory and science. At Hilltop, we see ourselves as researchers in the classroom. A large part of this role includes a continual cycle of observation of children and the reflection and analysis of our observations. Based on those observations, we might make different choices in the classroom to support each child.

For example, we may observe that a child is suddenly having difficulty with transitions. The teaching team will research why that might be happening for themselves, which might include:

- Asking a child’s family for more information about the child’s life and transitions outside of the program
- Compiling notes and observations about those challenging transitions times for the child
- Inviting someone into the classroom specifically to observe the child during those times (a mentor educator, program supervisor, etc.).

We want to understand what is happening for this child, in order to plan how to best support them through this challenge so that they can be more successful.

Often enough, we notice that a child's behavior does not line up with typical developmental expectations, despite continued support from family and educators. Something seems to be getting in the way of a child's ability to be successful in the classroom, whether socially, physically, academically, or in some other way.

When that is the case, the following process, enhanced by the Developmental Observation Tool, helps deepen and guide our understanding of that child and how to best support him/her:

- Gather data in the form of written observation and notes to better understand the child and evaluate what factors may be impacting their behavior.
- Meet with family to discuss our observations.
- Work with family to bring in a specialist (such as an occupational therapist, speech therapist, psychologist, etc.) to offer more consultation and expertise to the child and family regarding the specific area of challenge.
- Work in partnership with families and specialists to support the child to thrive in the classroom setting.

It is our job, as highly qualified and experienced early childhood educators, to support children in their successful development as thinkers, learners, and citizens in a group setting. To ensure the success of every child, we will guide families to outside resources when the child's need for support extends beyond our expertise in child development, or when the support needed by the child can't reasonably be offered through regular classroom activities. We are committed to offering an inclusive environment that supports all children and their families to the best of our ability and as resources allow.

If it is determined by educators, mentor educators or specialists that a child needs more individualized support, we will work closely with the child's family to consider what that might look like. Possibilities included adjustments or enhancements to the program or routines of the classrooms, particular efforts and interactions by the family and the educators, and consultation with outside specialists. We rely on the family's full engagement in this process: responding to communications, attending meetings, sharing information about changes at home, and including educators in ongoing support plans.

Educators and families will work together with the support of a mentor educator to support each child's needs while maintaining a sustainable classroom environment for all. If a family chooses not to move forward with a recommendation from educators to bring in the perspective of a specialist, the next step will be for the Program Supervisor and Senior Manager of Family Engagement to meet with the family to better understand their perspective and observations about their child. In the case that a child requires specialized attention beyond our ability, with or without the support of a specialist, the child's enrollment at Hilltop may be terminated. Every attempt will be made to partner with families to find programs and resources that are more suitable to the child's particular needs if Hilltop does not make the most sense for a child's success.

Research shows that in general, the earlier the intervention with children experiencing a developmental delay or challenge, the more successful children can be in the long run. We have seen considerable success in our classroom and beyond Hilltop when a specialist is engaged to work with children, families, and educators around a specific challenge a child is experiencing. We look forward to partnering with your family around your child's development, successes, and challenges.

Family Participation

As part of being a state licensed early-learning provider, Hilltop is expected to communicate with families to identify individual children's developmental goals. As an early learning provider, we must attempt to obtain information from each child's family about that child's developmental, behavioral, health, linguistic, cultural, social, and other relevant information. Hilltop must learn this information upon that child's enrollment and continue to do so annually thereafter.

As an early learning provider Hilltop will determine how the program can best accommodate each child's individual characteristics, strengths, and needs.

Hilltop will utilize the information and seek input from family members and staff familiar with a child's behavior, developmental, and learning patterns.

Hilltop will:

- a) discuss with family information including, but not limited to:
 - i. A child's strength in areas of development, health issues, special needs, and other concerns;
 - ii. Family routines or events, approaches to parenting, family beliefs, culture, language, and child rearing practices;
 - iii. Internal transitions within the early learning program and transitions to external services or programs, as necessary;
 - iv. Collaboration between the provider and the family in behavior management; and
 - v. A child's progress, at least two times per year.
- b) Communicate the importance of regular attendance for the child;
- c) Give family contact information for questions or concerns;
- d) Give family opportunities to share their language and culture in the early learning program;
- e) Arrange a confidential time and space for individual conversations regarding children, as needed;
- f) Allow family access to their child during normal hours of operation, except as excluded by a court order; and
- g) Communicate verbally or in writing:
 - i. Changes in drop-off and pickup arrangements as needed; and
 - ii. Daily activities.

Family members are welcomed and encouraged to form partnerships with faculty in supporting their child's growth and development while at Hilltop. In addition, we welcome each family as part of the classroom and overall organization-wide community. There will be many opportunities to participate in potlucks and celebrations and we hope you will join in these events. In addition, you are welcome to spend time at Hilltop or join your child for lunch when your schedule permits. There are a number of ways that families can volunteer, most of which fall into one of the following categories: faculty support (field trip attendance, washing, sewing and mending, helping maintain the environment etc.), center maintenance (gardening, painting, carpentry, repairs, etc.), fund-raising (auctions, parties, special events, grant writing, etc.), or oversight committees (Board of Directors, Fundraising Committee, etc.). We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from families. Please complete the *Family Partnership Form* in the enrollment packet or ask the Enrollment Coordinator for a copy.

If you have a skill that you would like to share with the center or classroom, please let your child's teacher know. Maybe you can arrange a field trip to your place of work for a group of children or bring in something that relates to what the children are studying. The possibilities are endless, and your contribution of time and energy helps bring you and your child closer as you become part of their world in the center. Please ask your child's teacher if you would like ideas for ways to become more involved.

Family Observations and Visits (Not during COVID-19 protocols)

Typically, Families have access to all areas of the center used by the children anytime their children are in attendance, although currently this is not the case as COVID safety guidelines are to be followed. You are welcome to drop in and observe whenever you like, but advanced notice is helpful for both you and the teacher. The class may be out of the building at the time you decide to drop by, or they may be involved in planned activities that could be disrupted by the unexpected visitor. Children get excited to see their family members, and this wonderful surprise can disrupt a child's focus or interrupt their social play. By the same token, if you do make arrangements to visit, please try to attend as planned, or inform the classroom educator if there is a change.

Your presence in the classroom is exciting to your child, and she or he will probably try to engage you in play or act differently than usual because you are in the room. If you'd like to get a chance to observe what your child's day is like when you are not present, you can try finding a place to sit that will help you remain as unobtrusive as possible. Your child may get engrossed in social play, and you will get a chance to see what his or her day is like when you are not present. Please do not bring food or treats to the center (unless requested by a teacher) or engage in loud or boisterous play. Families are also welcomed to come visit to play, work, or have lunch with the children.

Family Behavior

If Hilltop has reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking a child up is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way and may endanger the child, we may refuse to release the child to that person. If this occurs, we will request that another adult (family member or someone listed on the Child Release form) pick up the child or we will call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. This will be done for the protection of your child.

Grievance Policy

In any community, and in the routine and regular process of daily living, there are inevitable situations or conflicts that are potentially negative for individuals or for the community. It is critical that long before conflict arises, an environment already exists that fosters mutual respect, tolerance, and clear, honest communication. The emotional health of a center is determined not by the absence of conflict, but by its quick and intelligent resolution. Hilltop is committed to responding to all family grievances within a 24-hour period and to resolving those grievances as quickly as possible. Concerns and grievances are most effectively addressed within the center directly. If a specific classroom concern arises, you should discuss the issue with the appropriate educator and/mentor educator. We encourage you to discuss more general center concerns with program supervisor, who will involve staff members as needed. If you feel that your problem is not yet resolved, you may then wish to speak with the Executive Director, Darline Guerrero, 206-283-3100, Darline.Guerrero@hilltopcc.org to pursue the matter forward.

Guidance and Conflict Resolution

At Hilltop Children's Center, we provide a responsive, safe environment where children can relax or be busy. It is a happy atmosphere in which children can feel secure. Positive reinforcement, redirection, natural consequences, and coaching around problem solving are used to encourage appropriate behavior. We believe that the best way to change behavior is to focus on the positive and give less attention to the undesirable behaviors.

We make the limits and rules clear and are consistent in enforcing them. Educators use clear, simple statements about acceptable behavior (i.e. sand is for digging or books are for reading) and offer choices whenever possible. When a child behaves in such a way that we must intervene, we calmly remind and redirect without embarrassing or humiliating them. If the misbehavior continues, the child is given the choice of discontinuing the inappropriate behavior or choosing a different activity. If they continue to act inappropriately, then the child is removed from the current situation and told that they can "return when they are ready." When the child decides and shows that they are ready to return, we greet them warmly and welcome them into the activity.

To reinforce natural consequences that help children to understand the results of their actions, we use "If, then" and "When, then" statements. For example, if a child is throwing sand we might say, "If you throw sand, then it might get in someone's eyes." If a child is having a hard time staying with the group while going for a walk, we might say, "If you run ahead of us, then I will have to hold your hand because I need to know that you are safe."

We encourage children to be active participants in solving their own conflicts and be responsible for the consequences of their actions. We coach children to express their needs and feelings verbally. For example, we might suggest that children let their friend know: "I don't like it when you push me" or ask their friend: "Can I have a turn with the truck when you're done?" Eventually, children will be advocate for their needs without an adult's intervention. In addition, children are taught to "check in" with a peer when conflict occurs to find a solution, show empathy, or apologize.

Discipline should not be equated with punishment. We design the environment and plan activities to fit the needs of the children in order to prevent unacceptable behavior. We carefully observe the children in order to anticipate problems and avoid them by offering positive suggestions or additional activities. We respect the child as a person and recognize and accept their individuality.

There is no corporal punishment by anyone at Hilltop Children's Center, including families, as this would be considered abuse under Washington State law. In the case that a child's behavior was to compromise the safety of the classroom, even after a series of interventions from educators, a plan developed with the family, and the support and guidance of specialists, Hilltop administration would need to terminate the child's enrollment at Hilltop. We will work with the family as best we can to find a different program that could better support the child.

At Hilltop Children's Center, our goal is to provide help and empathy as children develop their own controls, to learn to make decisions, and to solve problems non-violently. We recognize that all three of these skills are difficult and will continue to be refined throughout one's lifetime.

Age Specific Classroom Policies

As with most other decisions at Hilltop, we reference general guidelines, but do not impose them largely across the board, as no two children or situations are exactly alike. Rather, we consider the uniqueness of each child, recommendations from faculty, family preference, and Hilltop's bigger picture in making our decisions. Administration will make the final decision regarding a child's placement, with careful consideration of all factors, some of which can be made public to families and others which might be confidential, based on the needs of individual children and families. We make these decisions deliberately, intentionally, and with deep care for each child and family.

Infants and Toddlers - (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM)

Your child is one of your most precious gifts and we are honored to be a part of their journey from the very beginning. We ensure a smooth transition to communicating milestone achievements; we're not a daycare, we're an extension of your home.

Our highly trained infant and toddler primary educators' partner with you to ensure your child's developmental needs are met every step along the way. They create predictable routines and nurturing classroom environments that foster social and emotional development.

Through age-appropriate, natural materials inspired by our Reggio Emilia approach, your child will be introduced to sensory play, art, music, language, and fine/gross motor activities that are documented and shared with you through our daily activity log on BrightWheel.

Diapering Procedure - Children will always be attended to during the diapering procedure. Diaper changing is handled on an individual basis. Different ages require different times therefore we care for each child's needs as they present themselves. Diapers are changed at regular times and as needed between scheduled times. Diapers are checked at least every two hours and changed at least every four hours and always as needed. Families provide disposable diapers and wipes. Proper hand washing is practiced, washing child's hands also with soap and water.

Diaper changing area will be sanitized after each use and air dried. Dirty diapers will be disposed of by the provider in a garbage bin with a tight-fitting lid. The following steps will be used during all diaper changes:

- Have access to necessary materials.
- Wash hands both the child's and the staff.
- Put on gloves.
- Remove soiled diaper
- Clean diaper area with wipes, using only one wipe per swipe, wipe front to back.
- Place diaper, wipes and soiled gloves in a plastic bag and place in garbage can with a tight-fitting lid.
- Using a diaper wipe to clean hands.
- Diaper child and dress child.
- Wash child's hands and your hands at sink with soap and water, small infant's hands will be washed with a diaper wipe.
- Clean and disinfect the diaper-changing table. Let air-dry.
- Disposable diapers are disposed in sealed garbage; cloth diapers are placed in plastic bag and sent home with the child

Toilet Training - Before a child is ready to start toilet training, we will discuss with the family their views on toilet training. Please talk to us ahead of time about what your techniques are at home, so we are aligned with the same practices. For toilet training we use positive reinforcement, culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate methods, as well as a routine developed in agreement with the family.

Training will be discussed and coordinated with family when the child shows an interest. We will not begin toilet training until family is ready to follow through at home. Toddlers will never be allowed in the bathroom alone. We will assist in teaching proper training and hand washing. Children will need to remain in "Pull Ups" or diapers until they are no longer having accidents. Children need to wear appropriate clothing which is easy for them to remove. Families are required to supply the needed supplies and plenty of extra clothing. All soiled clothes will be placed in a sealable plastic bag and sent home with family to launder. Working together as a team is crucial to the success and comfort of your child.

Infant Feeding - Bottles and food in order to maintain consistency from home to the center, and to meet the individual needs of children, infants will eat according to their own schedule. Fresh formula or breast milk (refer to breastfeeding procedures below) and baby food will need to be supplied to the center daily. All bottles should be capped and labeled with your child's full name. Each infant will be assigned a color code that will be placed on all bottles and food containers. A color-coding chart will be kept in the classroom. Faculty also use a verbal double check procedure to be certain all infants receive the correct bottles. Microwave ovens are not used to heat infants' bottles or food due to uneven heating and placing the children at risk of burns. It is Hilltop's policy that all leftover contents of a bottle shall be discarded after 60 minutes to avoid contamination. All bottles will be sent home at the end of the day. For older infants, the center will supply all snacks (e.g., crackers, fruit, etc.).

NOTE: Solid food and cereal will not be fed in a bottle unless the child has specific written instructions from their medical provider. Solid food in a bottle is not only a choking hazard, but it also teaches the child to eat solid foods incorrectly. Additionally, please note that medications should not be put in a child's bottle. If your child is not feeling well and does not complete the bottle, they may not get the full dosage of the medication. See the Medication Policy for further information.

Breastfeeding - A meaningful benefit of having childcare near your work site is the opportunity for a new mother to breastfeed throughout the day. If you are a nursing mother, we will be more than happy to make arrangements for you to visit your infant at any time. If the center is not convenient to your workplace for nursing visits, please feel free to supply us with expressed milk to feed your baby. All breast milk bottles will be stored in the refrigerator or freezer until needed. Mothers are welcome to come and breast feed at any time. Bottles or sippy cups will not be given to any child in a prone position. Infants will not be allowed to share bottles or sippy cups. Children will not be allowed to walk around with a bottle or sippy cup. Bottles will be heated in warm water never in microwaves. Breast milk or formula will be discarded if it has been sitting at room temperature for more than one hour. We will wash and sanitize the bottles. All bottles must be given directly to a staff member when you arrive.

Infant Sleep Patterns - In order to maintain consistency from home to the center, and to meet the individual needs of children, infants will sleep according to their own schedule and never be forced to sleep. At Hilltop infants will be put to sleep on their backs unless family request otherwise (See Infant Safe Sleep Positions) and were allowed by state licensing with a release form signed by family and a physician.

We will offer a quiet rest time for all children. Infants will use napping equipment approved by the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission or ASTM international Safety Standards. Napping equipment will be clean and firm with a snug-fitting mattress that does not have tears or holes. Children will be removed from car seats, swings, rockers, or other similar equipment if they have fallen asleep. When children can climb out of a crib, or it is no longer developmentally appropriate for the child to sleep in an infant crib we will consult with the family and develop a transition plan to a mat or other approved sleeping equipment.

Infant Safe Sleep Positions - To reduce the risk of *Sudden Infant Death Syndrome* (SIDS) We have completed yearly safe sleep training and will complete new training each year. We will actively supervise infants and toddlers by visibly checking often and being within sight and hearing range, including when an infant or toddler goes to sleep, is sleeping, or is waking up. We will follow the current standard of American Academy of Pediatrics concerning safe sleep practices including SIDS/SUIDS risk reduction. We will place an infant to sleep on his or her back or follow the current standard of American Academy of Pediatrics. If an infant turns over while sleeping, we will return the infant to his or her back until the infant is able to independently roll from back to front and front to back. We will not use a sleep positioning device unless directed to do so by an infant's or toddler's health care provider. The directive must be in writing and kept in the infant's or toddler's file. We will have sufficient lighting in the room in which an infant or toddler is sleeping to observe skin color. We will monitor breathing patterns of an infant or toddler and allow infants and toddlers to follow their own sleep patterns.

We will not allow loose blankets, stuffed toys, pillows, crib bumpers, and similar items inside an occupied crib, bassinet, or other equipment where infants commonly sleep. We will not allow a blanket or any other item to cover or drape over an occupied crib, bassinet, or other equipment where infants commonly sleep. We will not allow a blanket, bedding, or clothing to cover any portion of an infant's or toddler's head or face while sleeping and will readjust these items when necessary. We will prevent infants or toddlers from getting too warm while sleeping, which may be exhibited by indicators that include, but are not limited to, sweating; flushed, pale, or hot and dry skin, warm to the touch; a sudden rise in temperature; vomiting; refusing to drink, a depressed fontanelle; or irritability. Pacifiers must not have anything attached to them and must have a device or container to store the pacifier in when not in use that prevents contamination.

Rainbow Classroom

- Only available at Queen Anne location.
- Ages six (6) weeks to eighteen (18) months
- Infants are never mixed with other age groups and ratios are always maintained throughout the day.
- Eight (8) children to 2 Primary Educators.
- Baby Signs will be used during your child's day. You will receive a handbook of baby signs to help you and your infant.

Raindrop Classroom

- Only available at Queen Anne location.
- Ages twelve (12) months to twenty-eight (28) months
- Ten (10) children to 2 Primary Educators.
- Baby Signs will be used during your child's day. You will receive a handbook of baby signs to help you and your toddler.

Items Needed - The following is a list of items to bring to the center to help your child be comfortable. Please label every item. We will do our best to keep track of everything that you bring, but just like home, things do get misplaced, and we cannot be responsible for replacing items. Families are responsible for laundering their child's extra naptime bedding and extra change of clothes when used, these will be sent home regularly. We encourage you to provide a family photo prior to your child's first day of school. The photo will be attached to your child's cubby area to identify his/her personal space and to help your child with transitioning into our program by having a picture of their loved ones nearby.

Infants

- Prepared bottles (please label each bottle with your child's name and the date)
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Special sleeping sack (optional)
- Two pacifiers (optional)
- Disposable diapers and wipe
- Cereal and baby food
- Suction cup bottom bowl (optional)
- Bibs (optional)
- Family Photo

Toddlers

- Training cup (optional)
- Training underwear (several pairs)
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Nap blanket
- Disposable diapers and wipes
- Bibs (optional)
- Lunch labeled with your child's name and the date
- Seasonal clothes for outdoors
- Family Photo

Early Preschool - (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM)

Your two-year-old is becoming more verbal, continuing to explore new things around them and is beginning to develop social skills. A balanced routine and flexibility are important at this age as your child's developmental needs are different from their peers.

To do this, your child's primary educator and our classrooms create a nurturing, home-like classroom environment where your early preschooler is treated as a capable individual, whose opinions, actions and thoughts are respected and valued.

Our Reggio Emilia-inspired, emergent learning curriculum is designed to stimulate the whole child through experiences in math, science, language, drama and music. Language development is rapid at this age, so we also take this opportunity to help increase their vocabulary. All lessons are presented in a way to help develop each child's imagination by learning through play.

Cloud Classroom

- Only available at Queen Anne location.
- Ages eighteen (18) months to thirty (30) months
- Six (6) children to 1 Primary Educators.

Mountain Classroom

- Only available at Queen Anne location.
- Ages two (2) years to three (3) years
- Twelve (12) children to 2 Primary Educators.

Preschool - (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM)

Your preschooler is growing up fast, potty-trained and eager to learn new things. At this age, your child is more coordinated and is absorbing lots of information every day.

At Hilltop, your child's day is carefully planned out with a variety of hands-on activities to encourage learning and socialization. At this age, we also put a large focus on teaching self-awareness and fostering independence by helping your child master their self-help skills.

We design our preschool classrooms with these developmental milestones in mind and equip each classroom with age-appropriate, educational toys to help continue inspiring your child's curiosity and desire to learn and engage with their classmates and their environment.

Sunlight and River Classroom

- Only available at Queen Anne location.
- Ages three (3) years to four (4) years
- Fourteen (14) children to 2 Primary Educators.

Garden and Ocean Classroom

- Only available at Queen Anne location.
- Ages four (4) years to five (5) years
- Fourteen (14) children to 2 Primary Educators.

Prekindergarten (PreK) - (8:00 AM - 2:00 PM)

Hilltop Children Center's half-day (six hours) prekindergarten program is for children three to five years. Our classrooms are open from 8:00am-2:00pm, Monday-Friday and run from September to June and follow the Seattle Public Schools academic calendar from September to June. Our skilled primary educators help build essential skills by carefully crafting engaging activities that balance instructed learning and purposeful play.

We also offer an optional 2:00pm-5:00pm, Monday-Friday extended day program for children enrolled in our morning half-day program for those needing care after school.

Our Reggio Emilia-inspired, emergent learning curriculum is designed to stimulate the whole child through experiences in math, science, language, drama and music. Language development is rapid at this age, so we also take this opportunity to help increase their vocabulary. All lessons are presented in a way to help develop each child's imagination by learning through play.

Your child will also be taught fine motor skills, reading, writing and math readiness. They will be able to retell stories and, in the process learn to sequence. Simple analogies are also introduced to expand critical thinking skills. Throughout their time in pre-kindergarten, your child will develop self-esteem, learn how to follow instructions, listen, and communicate effectively, practice self-control, connect with others, manage bathroom needs and actively participate in physical activities. We consistently evaluate your child's kindergarten readiness based on age-appropriate benchmarks to assess individual growth and development.

Maple, Alder, and Oak Classroom

- Only available at Fremont location.
- Ages two and half (2 ½) years to five (5) years
- Seven (7) children to 1 Primary Educators.

Spruce Classroom and Extended Day

- Only available at Fremont location.
- Ages three (3) years to five (5) years
- Fourteen (14) children to 2 Primary Educators.
- Extended Day available for those needing care between 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM

School-Age After School – (arrival – 6:00 PM) and Full Day Care (8:00 AM – 5:00 PM)

We believe that children learn best when they are given the opportunity to explore and interact with an environment in a constructive way at their own pace. Consequently, our programs are designed to provide the maximum opportunity to experience a variety of materials, ideas and social situations at a level appropriate to the individual child.

Alder, Oak, and Maple Classrooms

- Only available at Fremont location.
- Kindergarten to Fifth grade students
- Fourteen (14) children to 1 Primary Educator.
- After school care only.
- Full Care Days (optional) – When school is closed, we provide a full-day care option
- Community projects: the children will decide on their own community projects (the local Food Bank) and create plans to achieve their goals.
- We provide homework support for your child.
- Children will also have the opportunity to play and visit with our younger children at our Queen Anne location (not during COVID-19). This encourages empathy in children of all ages. Empathy is part of our anti bullying project.
- The Youth Program Quality Initiative will be part of the day-to-day activities of our school age program to encourage youth choice and voice.

Daily Schedule and Routines

Each classroom has a daily schedule designed by the teachers to meet the needs of the children in that group. These schedules may change from day to day depending on class interests and activities, but everyone has a predictable routine for breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack and rest time. The day consists of a balance of flexible times where children are free to interact with each other and the environment, and educator-facilitated times with small or large groups. Every day there are at least two active play times scheduled either outdoors or inside. Special events may include walks to local parks, field trips by bus or by foot, cooking projects, visits from community resource people, and other special events to support children's investigations.

Bathroom Access

All of Hilltop's bathrooms are gender-neutral, in compliance with non-discrimination laws and in support of all children and adults, regardless of gender identity. The multi-stall bathrooms are for children's use only, while children are in the building. Adult bathrooms are gender-neutral and single stall with a locking door.

Each classroom has access to a bathroom that meets licensing standards for young children. Children will be able to use the bathroom in an unregimented fashion. In addition, educators will invite children to use the bathroom before leaving the building for outdoor trips or play, before lunch, before naptime and following wake-up from nap. After each time of using or attempting to use the toilet, teachers will ensure that children thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water. This ensures that children spend ample time disinfecting their hands. Hilltop does not use antibacterial soap; we have found it to be exceptionally harsh on children's delicate skin and the King County Department of Public Health advises against its use. The single most significant thing families can do to keep their children healthy is to teach, model, and reinforce proper hand washing.

Children will occasionally have toileting accidents. This is a normal part of childhood. We do not make a big deal out of these accidents. We ask that a complete change of clothes is available in your child's cubby in case it is needed. Please check your child's cubby for soiled clothes at the end of each day and replace any extra clothes that your child has used. Hilltop has a limited supply of spare clothing. If your child is sent home in Hilltop spares, please launder them, and return them the next day so that they may be used for another child.

Naptime Routine for Early Preschool, Preschool, and PreK (ECE)

Children in our ECE classrooms rest in their rooms on mats for at least forty-five (45) minutes each day. This is a state licensing requirement. Each child has their own cotton flannel sheet and pillowcase, provided by Hilltop. Some children bring a favorite blanket and soft toy from home. Families are expected to take bedding home at the end of each week and wash it. Make sure to bring it back to the center on your child's next day. Children generally start their rest time between 12:30 and 1:30, and get up between 2:00 and 2:30, depending on the age group. Each room has naptime rituals, like reading a book to children or playing music. Educators will help children relax, sometimes offering to rub the backs of children that respond to this kind of soothing touch. After a period of relaxation and rest, quiet activities (books, stories read aloud, quiet toys) may be provided for those children who do not need to sleep. We do not have a separate space for children who do not nap. Any special requests and changes in nap routine will be discussed between family and educators.

Field Trips

Field trip notices will be posted at least two days before the trip. The general permission form that you sign before starting will cover all walking and bus field trips. When children go on walks to neighborhood parks a note will be posted on the door informing you where they are.

Birthday Celebrations

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday in the classroom, please let an educator in your child's classroom know in advance. Each classroom has its own approach to celebrating birthdays. You may bring treats to share with the class (muffins, cupcakes, or a favorite food of your child's). We encourage families to bring food that is low in sugar content. Nuts, nut oils, or shellfish are strictly prohibited as there are children at the center who have life-threatening allergies to these foods. Please check with your child's primary educator regarding any food allergies or dietary restrictions in your child's group.

Holidays

There are many different holidays celebrated and they are all special and wonderful to the families who celebrate them. It is our goal at Hilltop to approach holidays in a way that reflects the children and families in our program and that acknowledges the wider world in which we live. Holidays are an opportunity to live our commitment to anti-bias practices at Hilltop. Hilltop has a Holiday Policy that we revisit and revise periodically and which each classroom adapts to fit its own unique culture. As with many of the other home-to-center connections, we offer a standing and enthusiastic invitation to families to share their rituals and traditions. Classroom educators can work with you about timing and methods of involving the classroom in a meaningful way. Please ask an educator if you have questions about our holiday practices.

Transportation

Transportation for Field Trips – Hilltop uses the Metro bus system for many field trips. We also take a lot of walking field trips. Families or faculty who are driving for field trips may only transport their own children and must provide proof of insurance. An adult in each car must be certified in First Aid/CPR training and provide written proof of certification to Hilltop administration prior to the field trip.

Transportation from Seattle Public Schools - Hilltop does not provide transportation from any of the local schools. Transportation is provided to Hilltop from these schools through the Seattle Public Schools Transportation Department. Hilltop commonly serves children enrolled at schools such as Coe, Lawton, Hay, Lincoln, and Queen Anne Elementary Schools (and sometimes others), depending on what the Seattle Public Schools Transportation Department makes available to us. Children are dropped off in the afternoon at the bus stop directly in front of the 4 Nickerson building. Educators wait at the bus stop for the bus to arrive to ensure the safety of the children. If other plans become necessary to accommodate bus schedules, this will be discussed with families and a plan will be agreed upon.

Children attending BF Day will be picked up by an educator and they will walk to our after-school program located at our Fremont location. Children arriving via school bus at our Queen Anne location will walk over to our Fremont location.

Meals

Breakfast, morning snack, and afternoon snacks are served at Hilltop Children's Center for all children, while families provide a sack lunch. Hilltop provides milk or soy milk at lunch time. Meals and snacks are served "family style" when age-appropriate and educators are encouraged to eat with the children. Educators participate in mealtimes, both to assist the children when needed and to model appropriate mealtime behavior. Daily records of meals and snacks given to the children are recorded and posted at the time of serving the snack or meal. Families may arrange with educators to provide treats for special occasions such as birthdays. Regular planned meals and snacks will still be served on those days. High sugar treats should be limited.

Dining with children is as important as any other time of day in a child's life. Children learn lifelong habits and develop relationships with food and their bodies during meal times. It is our goal that lunch will be a relaxed and conversational period for children and educators to visit and enjoy their meal. We encourage children to try what's in their lunch at least twice but will not insist that children eat everything or even that they prioritize certain foods over others they have brought. Research tells us that children can learn to listen to their bodies if they are given healthy foods from which to choose and are not forced to eat. This is how children learn to listen to and trust cues from their bodies about hunger and fullness.

Hilltop makes an effort to accommodate each child's food allergies and dietary choices and restrictions, including vegetarian, vegan, and dairy-free options. Hilltop strives to be tree nut/ peanut free and shellfish free as children currently at Hilltop have life-threatening allergies to these foods. This includes sack lunches and potluck gatherings. While we cannot guarantee that a child will not be exposed to allergens, we do our best to create a safe eating environment for all children. Soy and sunflower seed butter are OK to pack in your child's lunch and will be used in snacks served at the center.

Sack Lunch Guidelines - At Hilltop we provide a breakfast consisting of a low sugar cereal, juice and milk or a non-dairy alternative (soy milk or rice milk). We also provide an afternoon and late-afternoon snack. Families provide a sack lunch. We encourage you to involve your child in learning about nutrition, and in the planning and preparation of his/her lunch. Here are some guidelines we think you will find helpful as you plan sack lunches for your child:

What about refrigeration? Please pack an ice pack in your child's lunch box to keep items cold. Upon arrival, please place lunches in your child's cubby.

Is there a way to heat foods? Unfortunately, we are unable to heat meals for children, however; you may wish to try a good quality thermos or other insulated container to keep leftovers or soup warm.

Do I need to send a drink? No. Hilltop will provide milk or a non-dairy alternative per your request. Please do not send additional beverages with your child's lunch.

What if my child has a food allergy or intolerance? Please let our Enrollment Coordinator know right away, as there are forms, we are required to have you fill out to ensure we are effectively supporting your child's dietary restrictions. You may also contact our Nutrition Coordinator about specific food allergies or preferences.

Why no shellfish? We have children enrolled who have a life-threatening allergy to shellfish, so no scallops, shrimp, prawns or crab should be included in lunches or potluck items.

Can I bring peanut butter? No. We currently have children onsite with severe peanut and tree-nut allergies, so Hilltop is peanut-free and tree-nut free (including almonds, cashews, walnuts, etc.). This is because nut allergies are potentially fatal and, as much as we love the convenience and taste of peanut butter, we cannot justify the risk. Please do not send items that have been cooked in nut oil or contain traces of peanuts or tree-nuts. We recommend and use seed butters like sunflower seed and soy as a safe and delicious alternative.

What if I forget my child's lunch? If we happen to notice at drop off time that you've forgotten your child's lunch, we will ask you to make a quick trip to purchase a lunch for your child, or come back later in the day with a lunch. PCC is nearby and has a huge selection of fresh foods, fruit, and other lunch items from which to choose. If we notice after your departure that your child doesn't have a lunch, we will provide an emergency lunch.

Are there any guidelines about what should be included in sack lunches? Yes, the Washington Administrative Code that pertains to childcare programs lists certain regulations about what must be included in sack lunches in order to meet daily nutritional requirements. It is recommended that each child's sack lunch includes a dairy product (such as cheese, yogurt or cottage cheese), a meat or meat alternative (such as beef, fish, poultry, legumes, tofu, or beans), a grain product (such as bread, cereal, bagel, or rice cake), and fruits or vegetables (two fruits or two vegetables or one fruit and one vegetable to equal the total portion size required). Keep in mind that we do offer milk (or a non-dairy alternative) with lunch, which meets the daily requirement.

What is the lunch-time culture at Hilltop? Eating food with children is as important as any other time of day in a child's life. Children learn lifelong habits and develop relationships with food and their bodies during mealtimes. It is our goal that lunch will be a relaxed and conversational time for children and teachers to visit and enjoy their food. We will encourage children to try what's in their lunchbox but will not insist that children eat everything or even that they save some foods for the end of the meal. Research tells us that children can learn to listen to their bodies if they are given healthy foods from which to choose and are not forced to eat them. This is how children learn to listen to and trust cues from their bodies about hunger and fullness.

Items Needed for Early Preschool, Preschool, and PreK (ECE)

Proper dress is an important part of the Hilltop experience. Durable clothing that can withstand the energetic activity of young children—digging in dirt, exploring sand, experimenting with water, or painting, among other activities—is best. We consider our playground to be an extension of our classroom and we conduct programs outside whenever weather permits. That makes it important for your child to dress for the elements—rain gear including boots for wet weather; jackets/snowsuits, hats, mittens, and boots during the winter and snow.

When buying indoor or outdoor clothing for when at the center, please make sure older children can put it on themselves. If you are using boots (rain or snow) as shoes, please send slippers or sneakers so that your child will not have to keep their boots on indoors.

Each child attending the program must have a complete change of clothing labeled with his or her name. Clothing will be kept in each child's cubby and used as needed. Hilltop provides cots, cribs, and sheets. The center is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing. We will take all precautionary methods to be certain that your child's belongings are well cared for; please keep in mind, clothes that look a little less clean at the end of the day are a sign that your child was actively engaged in learning.

Self-Identity and Development

Hilltop views each child as an individual with a unique personality, learning style and way of responding to the world. Given the diversity of the families and communities we serve, it is necessary for us to recognize and appreciate the characteristics and behaviors that each child brings to our programs.

Gender Identity and Transgender Children

Early childhood is a normal developmental period for children to explore concepts of gender.

Privacy and Confidentiality - All persons, including children, have a right to privacy, and this includes the right to keep one's transgender or gender nonconforming status private in the center. Information about a child's transgender status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth also may constitute confidential medical information. Hilltop faculty and staff shall not disclose information that may reveal a child's transgender status to others, including other families, faculty or staff, unless legally required to do so or unless the family has authorized such disclosure.

Transgender and gender nonconforming children and their families have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much to share private information. The fact that a child or family chooses to disclose his or her transgender status to faculty or other children does not authorize the center to disclose other medical information about the student. When contacting the family of a transgender student, faculty should use the child's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the child's gender assigned at birth unless the family has specified otherwise.

Official Records - The organization shall maintain a mandatory permanent child or faculty record that includes a person's legal name and legal gender. However, to the extent that the organization is not legally required to use a child's legal name and gender on other records or documents, the organization shall use the name and gender preferred by the faculty, child, and/or family.

Names and Pronouns - Every child, faculty, and family member have the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity by other children, faculty, and families. The intentional or persistent refusal by anyone to respect a child's gender identity (for example, intentionally referring to the student by a name or pronoun that does not correspond to the child's gender identity) is a violation of this policy.

Bathrooms - All of Hilltop's bathrooms are gender-neutral, in compliance with non-discrimination laws and in support of all children and adults, regardless of gender identity. The multi-stall bathrooms are for children's use only, while children are in the building. Adult bathrooms are gender-neutral and single stall and are located next to Raindrop Room and in the kitchen.

Child Transitions - Generally, it will be the family that informs the center of any impending gender transition. However, it is not unusual for a child's desire to transition to first surface at the program. If faculty believe that a gender identity or expression issue is presenting itself and/or creating difficulty for the child at the center, we will approach the family about the issue. Together, the family and center can then identify appropriate steps to support the child.

Here are some helpful definitions:

Gender identity: A person's deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity that matches their assigned gender at birth. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their assigned gender. All people have a gender identity, not just transgender people. Gender identity is an innate, largely inflexible characteristic of each individual's personality that is generally established by age four, although the age at which individuals come to understand and express their gender identity may vary based on each person's social and familial social development.

Gender expression: The manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth. Other terms that can have similar meanings are transsexual and trans.

Transition: The process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

Gender nonconforming: A term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls, and those who are perceived as androgynous. This includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders. Other terms that can have similar meanings include gender diverse or gender expansive.

Sexual Development

Hilltop believes that sexual development occurs in the context of overall growth and development, along with physical, social/emotional and cognitive development. Like all areas of childhood growth, sexual development is highly individualized. Our experience is that an environment which fosters this growth in a positive light is essential. We recognize that families have differing values around sexual development and expression. It is our hope that families will feel free to communicate with faculty regarding their own individual family's beliefs and values.

We believe that a positive environment allows children to learn about and feel good about their bodies, develop a vocabulary which allows them to understand and talk about all of their body parts and functions and allows them freedom of self-expression in a wide variety of non-stereotypic roles. At the same time, we support children in learning the boundaries that help them respect their own body and the bodies of others. Children may undress to their underwear in order to try on drama clothing. While we do not allow nudity (although this is normal for children), there might be other times of day when you see children in their underwear. In addition, we do not allow the use of profanity, teasing and intimidation or sexual exploration that involves touching other's private parts. Our ultimate goal is to foster in children a high sense of self-esteem as their bodies grows and change.

Health and Safety Practices

Hilltop maintains stringent health and safety practices. Our health and safety policies and practices are based on childcare guidance protocols and a joint collaborative project of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education.

Faculty members undergo a thorough screening and hiring process, including a state-required background check. All faculty members are certified in first aid, CPR, and bloodborne pathogens (infection control) and water safety training. Comprehensive health and safety checklists are completed, and routine fire and emergency drills are conducted on a regular basis. In addition, each center has an individual emergency response plan in place which has been developed under that guidance of our licensing agency. If an emergency requires the center to evacuate and leave the premises, families can call an emergency hotline number to receive information about the safety and location of their children.

Immunizations and Health Exams

State law requires a health history and record of immunizations for each child prior to admission. We are also required to have the date of your child's last physical exam, which must have been completed within one year prior to admission. We also ask for the name and address of the family physician and dentist, who to contact in case of an emergency, and any conditions of the child which may require specific attention.

Children must have all immunizations that are recommended for their age by the State of Washington. A licensed physician may grant medical exemptions to immunizations; personal or religious exemptions can be claimed by families. In the event that your child is not immunized against a particular disease and an outbreak of that disease occurs, your child may be excluded from care. Hilltop is required to have a doctor's signature on all exemption forms.

Each year we are required to file an immunization report with the state. At the end of each school year, we will send out a form asking for updates of your child's immunizations records. Your cooperation in doing this is greatly appreciated and will be facilitated if you keep a record of immunizations in a safe place. King County Department of Health provides free immunizations for children.

Allergies

If a child has an allergy when enrolled or develops one at a later date, the center must be provided with a statement from the doctor indicating the type of allergy, symptoms, and foods to be avoided and anything else the child should not be exposed to. In the case of food allergies, the Program Supervisor and families will decide whether or not the family should bring supplemental food. For severe, life-threatening allergies, an "emergency action plan" will be drafted and posted. For other food issues, there is a Child Care Nutritionist available through the Seattle/King County Health Department when needed.

Medication

In order for faculty to administer **ANY** medication to a child (including sunscreen and lip balm), we must have written authorization from the family. Check with the Administrative Coordinator for the correct form. This form must be filled out for prescription and non-prescription medications every 6 months. Fill it out completely and return it to the Administrative Coordinator.

Please inform your child's primary educator when you have completed this paperwork and they will tell you where to store the medication. It is helpful if families remind educators **EACH DAY** that the medication is to be administered. Each time medication is administered, the faculty person will record the date, time, and amount given on that form.

The following types of non-prescription medications may be administered by Hilltop faculty with written family permission: antihistamines, non-aspirin analgesics, non-narcotic cough suppressants, anti-itch ointments or lotions, lip balm, diaper ointment, sunscreen. Medications must be provided by the family and be in the original container labeled with child's FULL name. We can only administer medications according to the dosage and age recommendations on the packaging. Any exceptions must be accompanied by a signed note from your child's physician.

All prescription drugs must be in the original container with the original prescription label on the container, including the child's first and last names, date prescription was filled, medication's expiration date and legible instructions for use. Hilltop cannot administer sample medications, medications prescribed for a sibling, or medications packaged in any container other than the original. For us to be able to administer these drugs to your child, we will need our Medication Authorization Form to be signed by both the child's family and doctor. Hint: Ask your pharmacist for 2 labeled bottles so that you can keep one at home and one at Hilltop.

Child Abuse and Neglect

All faculty of Hilltop are Mandated Reporters as required by the state of Washington. Hilltop (all faculty and staff) is required by law to report any suspected physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Child Protective Services (CPS) immediately. We are not required to notify family of a call to CPS. If a person in the Hilltop community reports concerns of the mistreatment of a child to any faculty (educator or administrator) or staff member, Hilltop is required by law to report the concern to CPS. It is outside of Hilltop's scope to determine whether or not the concern is accurate or true. The social workers at CPS are specifically trained to identify child abuse and/or neglect and, if possible, to support families in creating a safe environment for their child(ren) if they determine there is a concern that requires further action.

If Hilltop faculty or staff are concerned that a family or other authorized pick-up person might be intoxicated at the time of pick-up (or any other time Hilltop perceives the safety of a child might be in jeopardy, including drop-off), Hilltop will ask the intoxicated person not to leave with the child and will seek another pick-up person for that child from the Emergency Contact Form. Hilltop is required to report this concern to CPS. If a family member does leave with a child and is perceived as intoxicated by Hilltop faculty or staff, Hilltop will call 911 and file a report with CPS. Hilltop takes these actions not only because we are required to by law, but also because we take seriously the wellbeing of children.

Injuries

If your child is injured while in our care, an incident report form will be filled out, noting the time of the injury, what happened, how the injury was treated and by whom. We are limited to standard first aid procedures and we will not apply anything other than soap and water to a cut and ice to a bump or bruise.

If you do not find an explanation for an injury, do not hesitate to ask a classroom educator. If an injury requires treatment beyond what can be provided in the center, you will be contacted. In the event that a family member or approved pick up cannot be contacted, we will call the people that you have listed as an alternate in case of emergency on the Emergency Contact Form, and if we are unable to reach this person, we will call your physician. If medical attention by a physician is required and we have been unable to contact any of the people you have listed, we will call 911. In the event of a more serious, or life-threatening injury we will always call 911 first, then attempt to contact you or your list of available contacts.

Hilltop is required by licensing to report injuries that result in a doctor's visit to licensing and Child Protective Services (CPS) the day the injury occurred (if possible). Please help us comply with this regulation by keeping us informed of any necessary follow up. Hilltop is unable to comply with requests from families to cover medical costs in the case of injury, regardless of a family's medical insurance status.

If your child has an injury that requires, follow up attention (eg. stitches, a cast, concussion, etc.), regardless of whether or not the injury occurred at Hilltop, we will need a note from a doctor or nurse describing any factors we might need to be aware of or behavior restrictions while your child is in the center. For example, if your child has an arm cast, the note might say: the child should not get the cast wet or use his/her hand for fine or gross motor activities until X date. However, X activities are fine for the child to participate in. Or, if there are no restrictions, the note can state that.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development, commonly seen in infants and toddlers, and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that almost all young children will try at least once. It is a natural phenomenon and not something to blame on children, families, or faculty. Still, when it happens, it's scary, frustrating, and very stressful for everyone involved. Brief episodes of biting do not mean that a child is having a social or emotional problem. Nor does it mean the family is to blame. It simply indicates that your child is going through that particular stage in his or her development. As with developmental stages, biting soon ends. In all cases of biting, our response will be to care for the child who was bitten, to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior, and to examine our program to maintain an environment that is consistent with children's needs. Our focus will not be on punishment but rather on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. We encourage you to talk to your child about this behavior, but we also caution that delayed punishment at home, hours after the incident, will not be understood by the child.

Child's bite will be cleaned with soap and water and ice will be applied.

Animal Policy

To ensure children's health and safety, we follow state childcare licensing guidelines regarding pets. Any pets at Hilltop are kept in well-managed, clean cages and containers. Fish tanks are maintained by family volunteers or faculty make it part of their weekly routine to ensure that pets are well cared for and that the space is kept clean and free of germs. On the rare occasion that children touch animals, they are asked to wash their hands with soap and water and immediately afterward. We understand the desire to bring family pets into the classroom, however prior approval from the office must be obtained before doing so. Please leash your family pet safely away from where children play.

Pesticide Free Policy

For children's safety, we do not routinely use pesticides at Hilltop. Although we hope never to have the need for pesticides in our center, in the event we needed to use them we would follow the Integrated Pest Management Policy recommended by the Public Health Department of Seattle that includes posting a notice and a myriad of other safety precautions. These policies are also used by the SPU play field maintenance group and in other areas along the canal. If our landlords notify us of any pesticide use in or around our building, we will notify families in the following ways:

1. Notify families and any other interested parties forty-eight hours in advance of the application of pesticides; and require the pesticide applicator to provide a copy of the records required within twenty-four hours of when the pesticide is applied.
2. Your notification must include a heading stating "Notice: Pesticide Application and..." at a minimum must state the:
 - a. Product name of the pesticide being used;
 - b. Intended date and time of application;
 - c. Location where the pesticide will be applied;
 - d. Pest to be controlled; and
 - e. Name and number of a contact person at the facility.
3. To notify people that a pesticide has been used, you must place a marker at each primary point of entry to the center grounds. The marker must be:
 - a. A minimum of four inches by five inches;
 - b. Printed in colors contrasting to the background; and
 - c. Left in place for at least twenty-four hours following the pesticide application or longer if a longer restricted period is stated on the label.
4. The marker must include:
 - a. A headline that states "This landscape has recently been sprayed or treated with pesticides";
 - b. Who has treated the landscape; and
 - c. Who to call for more information.

Parking Lot Safety

Our parking lot can be a busy place at certain times of the day. Please help us in maintaining a safe environment. We offer the following tips and ask for your cooperation.

- Hold your child's hand in the parking lot.
- Make sure your child doesn't run ahead of or behind you upon arrival or during pick-up.
- Walk your child to their classroom or designated drop-off or pick-up area. Let the teacher know you are dropping your child off or picking them up. Help your child with their personal items.
- Please do not leave your car running in the parking lot while unattended.
- Park in the designated parking areas.
- Drive slowly in our parking lot.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are practiced regularly with all faculty and children. All children are evacuated from the building and directed to designated location of the playground. Attendance is taken by the administration team once outdoors. The centers is equipped with a smoke and fire alarm system along with carbon monoxide detectors.

Anti-Bullying

Hilltop recognizes that a center that is physically and emotionally safe and secure for all children promotes good citizenship, increases child attendance and engagement and supports academic achievement. To protect the rights of all children enrolled for a safe and secure learning environment, Hilltop prohibits acts of bullying, harassment and other forms of aggression and violence. Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors, interfere with both a center's ability to educate its children and the child's ability to learn. All faculty and families, volunteers and children are expected to refuse or tolerate bullying and harassment and also demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil.

Disasters and Crisis Response

For 50 years, Hilltop has been providing safe and nurturing care. We have a comprehensive Crisis and Disaster Plan in place and all faculty receive training in this plan. This includes building and site evacuation, earthquake preparedness, emergency lockdown/intruder alert, fire safety, water safety, power outage, storms and snow, and other such emergencies that could occur. As required by licensing, faculty and children practice monthly fire and quarterly disaster drills so that this becomes a routine, non-threatening occurrence for the children. All of our faculty are trained in CPR/First Aid and Blood Borne Pathogens. We have 72 hours of food and water on site as recommended by Washington State DCYF. We invite you to make a comfort kit for your child in case of an emergency.

A complete copy of Hilltop's Crisis/Disaster Response Handbook will be provided upon request. Including:

- Step by step procedures on how to respond to disaster/crisis situations during the first 30 minutes.
- Prioritization of notification of emergency response personnel including how to limit escalation and injury during the initial impact of the situation.

Lockdown Procedures

Level 1 Lockdown - Schedule Modification

This level of lockdown is for a threat in the larger Seattle area that is not geographically close to Hilltop. In a Level 1 Lockdown, classrooms will need to stay or return inside and close their curtains until further notice. Classrooms within close walking distance (Stone Beach, Triangle Park, etc.) will need to return to Hilltop immediately. Classrooms on field trips will be notified and, if it seems safer, return immediately to Hilltop. Families will be notified of a Level 1 Lockdown.

Level 2 Lockdown - Evacuation

This level of lockdown is for a threat in our immediate area, where an intruder has not breached Hilltop or is contained. In a Level 2 Lockdown, administrators will alert classrooms verbally, classrooms will close curtains, and bring backpacks and the sign-in sheet and evacuate to a secure location. Classrooms that are outside the building will either be asked to come inside immediately, stay where they are on a field trip, or seek shelter in a neighboring building, depending on the situation. Administrators will bring the emergency forms binder, phones, the Lockdown Box, and at least one technology device. No one will be allowed to return to Hilltop until the threat has passed, as determined by the Executive Director or other administrator in charge.

Level 3 Lockdown - Shelter in place

This level of lockdown is for when an intruder is inside Hilltop. If possible, a person in the office will sound the blow horn twice. At this sound, educators should put a stopper in the door and quickly gather the children in an area away from windows and doors, positioning children in a safe place against walls or on the floor. Turn a table on its side as a barrier. Cover all windows, if possible. Keep children as quiet and as calm as possible and in the classroom until an administrator gives an "All clear". Classrooms outside the building will be notified as soon as possible and directed to stay where they are or move to the nearest secure location.

School Closures

A calendar of closures is available online on our website, beginning of each school year, covering the period of September through August. Signs will be posted reminding families of closures.

Holidays

Hilltop is closed New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday following, Christmas Day, and all days between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Hilltop will close on the nearest working day prior to or following the holiday. These closures, and any others, will be noted in the school year calendar.

Advocacy

Hilltop typically closes for one day each spring to participate in meetings, workshops, or community service related to advocacy for the field of Early Childhood Education. This closure day will be listed in advance on the annual calendar.

In-Service Professional Development

Hilltop closes some days each year for faculty in-service, please check the family calendar on our website for closure dates. During in-service days we spend time going classroom preparation and professional/organizational development to allow for a smoothly running program, to share best practices and to keep faculty updated in advancements in the field.

Snow/Inclement Weather

We want to ensure the safety of our faculty and children at Hilltop. When snow or hazardous road conditions exist, Hilltop will close or open late using the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) as a guide, consulting with Seattle Department of Transportation and the National Weather Service, at the discretion of the Executive Director. A message on will be left on Hilltop's voicemail by 7 a.m. and an email and BrightWheel message will be sent to all families. If the weather worsens after Hilltop has already opened, families and faculty will be contacted, via email and BrightWheel message as well as a message on Hilltop's voicemail as soon as possible.

Business Ethics

Hilltop Children's Center aspires to maintain its reputation within the community as a program of integrity and excellent standards. Therefore, Hilltop expects all employees to maintain the highest standards of business ethics and professional conduct, to avoid situations that might involve a conflict or appearance of conflict between personal interests and the best interests of the organization, and to protect confidential and proprietary information. We ask families to support this expectation by not engaging in intimate relationships with employees of Hilltop and by always maintaining professional and respectful communication with faculty and staff (including outside of school hours). If these guidelines are not followed, a family may be asked to leave Hilltop.

Communication

At Hilltop, Learning in Relationship is one of our core values: clear communication is essential to the success of that value. Part of our ongoing professional development as a faculty involves skill-building in crucial conversations and emotional intelligence. We prefer that, as much as possible, families and educators communicate directly with each other in the case of questions about the classroom, feedback for the teaching team, etc. The Program Supervisor, Mentor Teachers, and other Administrators are available to help support these conversations. If families have a serious concern, please direct it toward the Program Supervisor, who will help determine next steps. In general, if you have a question, feedback, or concern, please let us know as soon as possible. We are committed to continuing to grow as a organization and community and feedback helps make us better.

Confidentiality

We value the trust and respect we build with families and confidentiality is essential to that trust. We won't share information about your child or family with other families. We will inform you when we're sharing sensitive information with other faculty and/or staff members (teaching team, administrators, etc.) and only share that information as relevant to faculty and staff's position. We keep children's files locked in the front office and restrict access to that information. We ask that families take care when sharing or asking about other children and families. In many cases we may not be able to discuss issues pertaining to other children or families with you. We do not disclose medical or personal information (questions like: which child has lice? Do you know who else was involved in this incident?). We require that all employees sign a confidentiality form. For any information to be shared with Seattle Public Schools, we ask families to sign a FERPA form for consent to share information with schools and staff.

Babysitting by Faculty

In an effort to maintain the professional status of Hilltop's faculty and prevent any potential conflict of interest, babysitting by center staff is **strongly discouraged** by Hilltop. However, if a center staff member elects to babysit for a family, all such activities must occur outside center premises and with the understanding that such arrangements and payment for services is solely between the staff member and the child's family and that Hilltop is in no way responsible for the child's care in connection with these activities. The arrangements are not sanctioned by the center or by Hilltop Children's Center. Babysitting should not interfere with the staff member's center schedule. If a babysitting arrangement should be made between a staff member and a family, the family is required to complete a Babysitting Release form, which can be supplied by center management.