# PARENT HANDBOOK

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Webster, TX 77598
**Ark Phone: 713-551-4870**
Ark Website: gateway.cc/ark
Email: ark@gateway.cc

Gateway Community Church Phone: 281-286-1515
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Gateway Website: gateway.cc

*Jason Smith, Lead Pastor*
*Roland Salinas, Family Life Pastor*

## Our Mission

To provide a safe Christian environment that encourages positive self-esteem, meets individual needs, and develops the "whole child" through lots of learning, laughter, and love.

## Welcome

The Ark Children's Center (the Ark) is thrilled to have your child as part of our weekday program! We have an exciting year planned for all the children and families. The Ark is a ministry of Gateway Community Church and admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. We would like to invite your family to visit our contemporary worship services on Sundays at 9:30am and 11:00am. We know that God loves your child and so do we. It is our prayer that during the year your child will see God in each of us as we minister to your family.

Blessings,

**Andy Wallace**
Director
awallce@gateway.cc

*"Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them,*
*for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." - Mark 10:14*

## Philosophy

At the Ark, we believe each child is a unique individual. We strive to provide a loving, nurturing, safe and creative environment for children. We are sensitive to their social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual needs. We provide play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculums that focus on the process of learning. We encourage not just learning, but also a love of learning. We believe in providing a physical environment that is safe, clean, healthy, and child friendly. Classrooms are arranged to offer challenging play and learning choices at a range of developmental levels. Learning centers allow children the opportunity to explore, develop independence, confidence, and to experience many avenues of success. The strength of our program comes from God and the staff that He has blessed us with. Our teachers show their experience and dedication through their teaching and the love they have for the children. We support our teachers with training, resources, and the freedom to create a unique learning environment that meets our age-appropriate curriculum goals. Parents are the most significant adults in a child's life. We strive to create a mutual respect between parents and teachers - a partnership for the benefit of the child. Our doors are always open to parents.

## Licensing Information

The Ark is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. A copy of the license, along with a copy of the Minimum Standards for Childcare Centers, is in the Director's office. The most recent Licensing inspection report is posted in the hallway by the office. To contact the local licensing office call (713) 287-3238 or www.hhs.texas.gov and PRS child abuse hotline 1-800-252- 5400 or online Welcome to the Texas Department of Family Abuse Hotline Website (txabusehotline.org)

Houston Area Local Licensing Office
1330 E. 40th
Houston, TX 77022

For information about childcare in Texas, call 800-862-5252 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## Liability and Accident Insurance

The Ark maintains liability insurance in excess of $300,000, as well as accident insurance for injuries sustained during program activities. Coverage is subject to the insurance policy's applicable terms, conditions, exclusions, and limits. Families are encouraged to maintain private health insurance for their child.

## Health Information

The Ark has minimum immunization requirements governed by the state licensing agency. (See phone number and website listed under "License Information" above.) You, as the parent, must keep these updated with your child's physician and furnish an updated copy to the Ark. The state does not currently require TB testing for children or adults in our facility. At this time, we do not require our employees to obtain any vaccines, but we strongly recommend an annual flu shot.

## Gang-Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code any area within 100 feet of a child-care center is considered a gang-free zone.

## Enrollment Procedures

Enrollment forms are emailed to currently enrolled families and Gateway families in February, are available on our website (gateway.cc/ark) in March, as well as being available for pick-up at the front desk. Current families and Gateway members are given first consideration during early registration. **Annual registration and supply fees are nonrefundable**.

## Curriculum

The Ark curriculum is based on Frog Street Inc. curriculum. Frog Street Curriculum provides intentional instruction in key areas of development for children ages 36-48 months to effectively continue on the path to kindergarten readiness. Our philosophy is that children learn best in a play-based, developmentally appropriate environment. We believe that "hands on" activities provide the best learning environment. Children have different learning styles, and our teachers set up the classroom so that all learning styles are engaged. Our teachers support and enhance the curriculum using various types of media and internet resources.

## Days of Operation

Monday through Friday from 9:05am until 2:00pm. Our optional Rise & Shine program offers early drop off beginning at 7:30am. Our optional Stay & Play program (after care) is from 2:00pm to 4:00pm. Students must be dropped off no later than 10:00am, unless at a medical appointment. The Ark holidays follow **most** of the Clear Creek Independent School District (CCISD) holidays. (See the Ark's School Year or Summer Calendar).

## Rise & Shine/ Stay & Play

The Rise & Shine program allows parents to bring children in before our regular school day begins, should they need it. **The earliest we will accept children is 7:30am with a drop-off cut off at 8:30am.** We require parents to notify us a minimum of 24 hours in advance before bringing their child for Rise & Shine. This way we can ensure there will be adequate staff available. The Stay & Play program will be offered most days from 2:00pm to 4:00pm. Both programs offer a daily rate and/or ten pack semester rate. Semester packs require automatic ACH or credit card payments to secure the discount. No family or employee discounts apply for these programs. Limited class space is available. Reservations and payment will be required in advance. Payments are **non-refundable and nontransferable**. We cannot accept any phone or Procare communication for either program. To confirm availability for your child, you must email ark@gateway.cc and await confirmation from administration. The pick-up time for our extended day program is 4:00pm. **Any pick-up after 4:00pm is considered late. A late fee of $20 for the first five minutes then $1 per minute after that will be charged.** Parents need to sign their child out from Stay & Play by signing and recording the time picked up. **If a parent develops a pattern of arriving late for Stay & Play, if a child consistently misbehaves, or if their account is past due, we will not be able to accommodate their reservation at our extended day program.** The State of Texas requires that children in a program beyond four hours must have a rest time. The children will be required to rest for at least 30 minutes. The children are given a mat to rest on and may bring with them **ONE** item to aide during the rest time. (Pillow, blanket, or stuffed animal).

## Chapel

Students in the Ark attend Chapel on Tuesday or Wednesday during the school year. The Chapel time consists of fun lively Christian music, a bible story lesson, and birthday blessings. The Ark is Christian oriented. We stress Bible-based beliefs common to all Christians. Please visit Gateway Community Church - Our Beliefs for more information.

## Concerts and Programs

Three evening programs are scheduled during the school year:

1. **December** – Christmas Concert
2. **April** – Spring Concert
3. **May** – Pre-K 4 Graduation Program

## Admission

To become enrolled in the Ark, a child must have on file a completed enrollment form, current immunization record, doctor's statement (Form 1515), and have paid the registration and supply fees. **These fees are nonrefundable.** The Ark admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. All students admitted must not pose a risk or threat to other children. Students who require special medical or academic needs will be admitted on a case-by-case basis to ensure that we can meet the child's specific needs. Priority registration for the following school year is in February. Children and their siblings currently enrolled in the program will be able to register first, siblings of former students and members of Gateway second, and then we will open registration to the public. When a child registers it is for either the full school year or the full Summer Program. If at any time a child must drop from the program, we require a **30-day notice**. (See Termination of Care.)

## Termination of Care

When parents decide to terminate this childcare arrangement, **a 30-day written notice to the Ark Director is required.** Any tuition that has already been prepaid (less the 30-day period) will be reimbursed. We understand that most of the time termination by the parent is due to reasons such as relocation, a child entering school, a child not ready for our program, etc. However, we also recognize that not every situation is appropriate for every child. The Ark will make every effort to discuss matters with the parents to determine the cause and help the child make the adjustment. If this is not possible, the parent and/or Ark may choose to terminate the arrangement on a timeline that is in the child's best interest.

**Other reasons that may result in the termination of childcare arrangements are:**

- Non-payment for childcare services.
- Lack of cooperation from parents with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings.
- Abusive behavior and/or verbal threats by parents toward program staff or other parents. (Immediate termination)
- Parents disciplining children (other than their own) while at the program.
- Child exhibits special needs or needs related to serious illnesses that are not possible to meet at the program.
- Child exhibits physical, verbal, or negative behaviors towards staff or other children.

# Data Privacy

Each child will have an electronic file at the Ark. The Procare management system stores all student information in a cloud-based secure program. These files will consist of the Enrollment Form, Immunization Records, Doctor's Statement, Parent Acknowledgement, Emergency Information, Accident/Injury Reports, Conference Form, and other important information. The only people permitted to see your child's record are the parents, pertinent the Ark employees, and the state-licensing examiner. Information will not be given to others without parent or legal guardian consent. This is a safeguard for each family's right to privacy and data protection.

# Tuition

The Ark is a non-profit organization that operates on tuition fees from each child. Therefore, it is essential that tuition payments are made in a timely manner. Tuition is an annual amount that may be paid in full or in 10 equal monthly installments that are due on the first of each month. **There are no refunds given for illness, vacations, or inclement weather days.** If a child is withdrawn, any previously paid tuition (less the 30-day notice period) will be refunded. Siblings receive a 10% discount on tuition rates, third and fourth siblings will receive a 20% discount. When paying your tuition by check, please place your child's name in the memo section of the check and, make the check payable to **ACC** or **Ark Children's Center**. Through My Procare, parents can make payments online. Procare accepts one-time credit card payments initiated by the parent through My Procare. Should you choose a recurring ACH or credit card payment method, appropriate documentation must be provided to the Ark to initiate this method. The Ark is in control of processing these monthly payments. While we discourage cash and check payments, the Ark will accept payments in either of these forms. **After the tenth day of the month a late fee of $25 will be charged to your tuition**. You will be required to pay any outstanding tuition fees by the 1st of the following month, or we cannot continue to allow the student to attend our program. After three consecutive months of late payments, you will be required to pay two full months' tuition in advance. **All end of school payments must be turned in by May 10th.** Special arrangements are available upon request for tuition payments in cases of financial hardships upon approval. Please contact our Director if such arrangements are needed. A fee of $25.00 will be charged for returned checks and decline credit card transactions. **After two insufficient funds checks, we will need cash or debit/credit card payments.**

# Arrival/Dismissal Procedures

Children and parents will enter through Entrance 3. Drop off is from 9:00am-9:20am. Entrance 3 will then be locked at 9:20am and parents will need to ring the doorbell after that time. **Students must be dropped off no later than 10:00am, unless at a medical appointment.** Early arrivals are not permitted unless your child is enrolled in Rise & Shine for that day. Sign your child in at the check-in desk (**not in the parking lot**) using the Procare app. If you do not have use of the app, you will sign in by showing your ID at the check-in table. The Director will verify your name on the child's account in Procare and then guide you through completing the check-in process. Use caution and watch for children as you enter and leave the parking lot. Please DO NOT leave your car running unattended and do not park along the curb in the fire lane. Be sure to bring all your belongings with you. **DO NOT leave another child unsupervised in the car.** Classes are dismissed between 1:50pm to 2:00pm. Please be sure to check your child out using the same Procare app once your child is released from their classroom (not before).

**If a child remains on the premises after closing and we are unable to contact you, we will:**

- Call the alternate and emergency contacts listed on your child's Enrollment Form
- Contact the local authorities to assist us in contacting you.

Once a child has been picked up late three times either from school hours or stay and play, a **fee of $25 for the first five minutes then $1 per minute** after that will be charged. **If your child is picked up any time after 2:30pm, a fee of $20 (drop in Stay and Play rate) will be charged.** Please pick up your child between 1:50pm-2:00pm or by 4:00pm if attending Stay & Play. In the case of separation/divorce, the parent maintaining custody will be asked to submit in writing when the visiting parent may pick up the child. Please be sure to share any pertinent legal documentation regarding the care and custody of your child. In case of emergency closing, please listen for radio or TV announcements about CCISD (Clear Creek ISD). **If CCISD closes or has a late start, the Ark will also be closed or have a late start.** The Ark wing exit doors will remain locked during the hours of 9:20am-1:50pm. If you need to pick-up your child early, please notify Ark Administration at the check-in desk during drop-off. Or you may call the school (713-551-4870) to let us know when you plan to arrive. Notifying us ahead of time ensures the security and safety of all children and staff, and prevents any inconvenience related to an unexpected pick-up when our doors are locked.

**To facilitate better communication between the teachers and parents, we encourage parents to not be on their cell phones during drop-off and pick-up times.**

# Alternate Pick-Up

If someone other than a student's parent is picking up your child, please follow these steps to ensure the Ark staff is releasing your child to the proper person. **Please always notify your child's teacher in advance.**

- If the person picking up your child is not listed on the child's enrollment form, **we will need a written note adding this person as someone authorized to pick up your child.** (You may add additional names either through Myprocare.com, Procare app, or in person at the Ark.)
- Any person other than the regular pick-up persons who come to pick-up the child will be asked to show their driver's license or picture identification. After the information has been confirmed, the person will be permitted to check the child out.
- Anytime a teacher does not know the person who is there to pick-up your child, they will ask the person to provide photo identification, even if they have picked up your child before. These precautions are to ensure the safety of your child.

# Food (Snacks, Lunch and Special Treats)

The program provides a mid-morning snack each day for every child. If a child has food allergies, please remind the teacher in writing, and keep this information current on your child's enrollment form. If you want to provide your own individual snack, please let the teacher know. **The Ark Children's Center does not provide lunch for the students. As a result, we are not responsible for meeting our students' daily nutritional needs**. Each child will need to bring a lunch and a drink. It should be a healthy, nutritious lunch with easy bite size pieces, finger food, or other items that allow them to feed themselves. Lunches **will not** be heated up. All food being served to children during school hours must meet the requirements set by the TDFPS which states that meals and snacks provided by a parent must not be shared with other children unless a parent is providing baked goods for a celebration or party being held at the Ark and that all children's allergies and needs have been taken into careful consideration.

# Illness Policies

If your child is ill, keep them at home to help prevent the spread of illness to other children in our program. A child showing any of the following symptoms should not come to school.

**If in school when the symptoms appear, your child will be sent home:**

- If not feeling well enough to comfortably participate in daily classroom activities, including outdoor play.
- Fever: Temporal temperature 100.4 degrees or greater; armpit (axillary) temperature 99.4 degrees or greater.
- Difficulty breathing or severe coughing.
- Two abnormally loose stools in the previous 24 hours, the Ark sends home after two abnormally loose stools during school hours.
- Two episodes of vomiting within the previous 24 hours, the Ark sends home after 1 episode of vomiting during school hours.
- Thick mucus or pus draining from the eyes or nose.
- Sore throat, especially when accompanied by fever or swollen glands in the neck.
- Skin rash, undiagnosed or contagious

**Any child who has suffered from diarrhea, vomiting, yellow/green nasal discharge, discharge from the eyes or ears, or fever above 100.4 degrees may not return to school until symptom-free for 24 hours. If your child is sent home with any of the above conditions, he/she MAY NOT return to school the following day.**

**Guidelines for readmission to the Ark:**

- HIV positive - Exclude infected child if they have open sores uncovered.
- Chicken Pox - Exclude until all the blisters have dried into scabs.
- Diarrhea/Vomiting - **Exclude until 24 hours after latest episode.**
- Lice - Exclude until first treatment has been completed and no live lice are visible.
- Measles - Exclude until 4 days after the rash appears.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) - 24 hours after start of treatment
- Fever - **Exclude until 24 hours fever free.**

**If your child develops a communicable disease, please inform the office so that other parents may be notified. The communicable diseases listed by the Department of State Health Services are:**

Bacterial Meningitis
Campylobacteriosis
Chicken pox
Cold sores
Common cold with fever
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
COVID
Cryptosporidiosis
Cytomegalovirus
Diphtheria
E. Coli
Enterovirus
Fifth Disease
Giardia
Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease
Head Lice
Hepatitis A
Hepatitis B
Hepatitis C
HIV Infection
Impetigo
Infectious Diarrhea
Influenza (flu)
Measles
Mumps
Pertussis
Pinworm
Pneumonia
Polio
Ringworm
Rubella
Salmonella
Scabies
Shigella

If your child has any of the communicable diseases listed above, a note from your child's doctor will be required for your child to return to the classroom. These precautions are necessary to ensure a healthy environment for all our children. If a child becomes ill during the day, the parents will be contacted with a request to take the child home. The parent or person you authorize will need to pick the child up within 30 minutes of being notified, as we are not staffed to care for sick children. The child will not be allowed back to school until he/she is symptom-free for 24 hours, or with a note from the child's doctor stating that the child is not contagious.

**Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV).** People infected with RSV can be contagious anywhere from 3-8 days after the first symptoms appear, according to the CDC. Children with an RSV diagnosis must stay home from school until 24 hours fever free and symptoms resolved, or a note from a Physician stating the child is no longer contagious and may return to school.

**We are a school for "healthy" children. A child who is not well does not benefit from our program and can adversely affect the health of our other children. Per State Licensing, a child must not be admitted for care if an illness or injury prevents a child from participating comfortably in facility activities. If you have any doubts about your child's health, please keep your child at home and contact your family doctor.**

## Medicine

If your child requires medication during school hours, we will ask you to come to school to give the proper dosage and medication to your child. **The Ark and Ark staff will not dispense medication, according to State Licensing Regulations.** No medication may be kept in diaper bags and/or back packs. ChapStick, creams, lotions, etc., are also prohibited from being kept in your child's diaper bag and/or backpack. **Exception: Children with recurring medical problems, such as asthma or allergic reactions, must have a Form 7238 "Authorization for Dispensing Medication" signed by a parent or healthcare professional to dispense Benadryl (with doctor's note), Epi-pen, or asthma inhalants. The medicine must be in the original container and have the child's name, dosage, and directions on it. Children with food allergies must have a current Allergy Action Plan signed by a health care professional, in addition to a non-expired Epi-pen, Auvi-Q, or other epinephrine-dispensing device.**

## Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Please apply sunscreen or insect repellant at home. Teachers may not apply either of these to your child.

## Emergency Procedures

If a child is hurt while at school and requires professional attention, an incident report will be filled out and sent electronically by the staff member who witnessed or handled the incident. A copy of this report will be kept in the child's file on Procare.

In the event of a medical emergency the following will take place:

1. In a life-threatening emergency, an Ark staff member will contact 911.
2. Teachers will notify the Director or Administrative Staff immediately.
3. Parents will be notified.
4. If a parent cannot be reached, staff members will attempt to contact the next authorized person from the emergency information on the child's Enrollment Form.

5. Staff will stay with the child until they are under the care of a parent or authorized person.

Each classroom has Emergency Procedure Guidelines for Fire Drill, Evacuations, Shelter in Place, Tornados, Lock Downs, and Chemical Emergencies. **In the event of a building evacuation, our Alternate Pick-Up location is Michael G. Moore, DDS, 13810 Audubon Pkwy. near Gateway.**

**Please see pages 17-19 for a more detailed plan of our emergency procedures.**

## Vision/Hearing Screening

The State of Texas Department of Health requires that all children 4 years of age and older who are enrolled in a childcare program be screened annually for vision and hearing. **It is the parents' responsibility to provide the Ark with a copy of the results for our records *before October 1st*. The signed Doctor's Statement does not include vision/hearing screening. We must have a signed paper from the doctor with the vision/hearing results.**

## Animals/Pets

Please note that State Licensing does not permit us to allow pets or animals into the building. This includes pets that are being carried into the building during drop-off and pick-up. Please do not leave animals unattended in a vehicle.

## Water Play

On the back of your child's enrollment form you indicated whether your child may participate in water activities. Water tables are used in many classrooms, we have water activities on our Fun Day and throughout the Summer Program. In the event your child's class is going to a swimming pool, you would be notified of this field trip and an additional permission slip would be required.

## Communication with Parents

Families will receive a weekly and/or monthly newsletter from their teachers. All information shall be passed on to the parents through the Procare app, email and/or text message. (Serious incidents, or ones which we feel may be upsetting to the parents, shall be communicated verbally.) If needed, please call (713)-551-4870 to set up a time to conference with your child's teacher. All teachers have a scheduled break during the day or can meet between 2:00pm-2:30pm with an appointment. We ask that you respect the teacher's personal time and not call teachers at their home. The school website is www.gateway.cc/ark and is a great source for the calendar, upcoming events, photos, additional websites, and other information as well as our Facebook page. You will receive correspondence via email throughout the school year, so please be sure to have a working email address on file. If a child is hurt while at school and requires minor medical attention, an accident form will be filled out electronically by the staff member who witnessed or handled the accident. A copy of this form will be kept in the child's file on Procare. Parents are encouraged to volunteer their time, talents, go on field trips, and visit our program. A Volunteer Form is given at Meet the Teacher for parents interested. Feedback from parents is very important to us. If you as a parent have a concern or question, we ask that you contact your child's teacher first, then the Ark Administration Staff at (713)-551-4870 immediately to solve the problem.

# Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are offered at the parents' request at any time. There will be a scheduled conference offered with a written evaluation at the end of the school year for each child.

# Discipline Guidelines

The goal of the Ark discipline program is to provide a warm and loving Christian environment. Teaching self-control of one's behavior is a major goal of our discipline guidelines.

**The steps of our discipline program are:**

## Prevention

We prevent discipline problems by offering a planned daily routine that incorporates a balanced curriculum of hands-on activities for the children to experience throughout the day. Consistency + preparation = prevention.

## Redirection

When a child is off-task or displays inappropriate behavior, they will be redirected using positive words or they may be asked to move to another area within the classroom.

## Modeling

The teacher will model for the child appropriate behavior with words and/or actions.

## Separation-Level 1, 2, and 3

- **Level 1** - If a child continues inappropriate behavior after the above steps, he or she will be separated. The appropriate amount of time out will be one minute per year of the age of the child. The teacher will talk and pray with the child and relay specific consequences at this time.
- **Level 2** - If a child continues inappropriate behavior after Level 1 separation or causes physical harm to another person, he or she will be separated from the classroom. Someone on the Administration Staff will talk and pray with the child. The teacher will notify the parents through written or verbal explanation.
- **Level 3** – If the child continues inappropriate behavior after Levels 1 and 2, the parent will be notified for immediate pick-up that day.

**Zero Tolerance Plan** - If a child reaches **Separation Level 2 or 3 -** five times during the year, the child will be placed on a Zero Tolerance Plan and a Parent conference will be scheduled with the Director to discuss an individualized behavior plan. If this negative behavior continues, see "Termination of Care".

**Biting -** Biting is a common problem in children 12 to 36 months old. As young children develop their communication skills, they, at times, will bite (out of frustration, anger, tiredness, or for no apparent reason). We will work with your child to express themselves with their words. Each biting incident is separate and will be handled according to the individual situation at the discretion of the Director and/or

## Dress

Unless the temperature and weather does not permit, the State of Texas requires that children spend time outside every day and should be properly dressed for the weather. It is advisable that children wear clothing and shoes that are comfortable and appropriate for floor activities, water-table experiences, painting, messy activities, and physical education class. For your child's safety, **children must wear shoes with a strap on the back heel and be appropriate for running and active play**. Also, it is required that the children have at least 1 set of labeled change of seasonal clothes kept in their backpack or cubby in case of an accident.

## Toilet Training

We are happy to assist your child in meeting their potty-training goals. Please keep in mind that we must also provide a sanitary environment for all the children to learn and play. Positive reinforcement and consistency encourage a successful transition. Children are offered potty breaks throughout the day. The schedule is arranged to accommodate set times for using the restroom. In the younger rooms, where they are still potty training, each child is called upon individually to use the restroom and at least attempt to go. This is offered approximately every two hours throughout the day. Please understand that we will do our best to assist you in potty training your child, however the classroom routine cannot revolve around any one child consistently being brought to the restroom. Not only is this not feasible considering the teacher to child ratio we must comply with, but your child will not benefit from being pulled from their activities or disrupting their routine. In addition to the assigned restroom breaks, children may use the restroom at their request at any time. Potty Training is a huge accomplishment for your child, and we want to make it a smooth transition for them. If your child is not consistently ready to go for that length of time without having an accident, we will require them to wear a diaper or pull-up for sanitary purposes. Even with potty training, we do have licensing requirements that we must consider. As such, we want you to realize that we understand your child may have an occasional accident, and that is to be expected during the training stage. However, if they are unable to keep dry for a two-hour timespan, you will need to utilize pull-ups, to help us maintain a healthy and clean environment for the entire class.

**To enter a Pre-K 4 class in the Fall, your child MUST be fully potty trained and completely independent in restroom use.**

## Field Trips

Field trips are an important part of our program. Children in the three-year-old classrooms and up will be allowed to go on a field trip only if they have a signed permission slip. Parents are always given advance notice of upcoming field trips. Since the school does not provide transportation, parents with current driver's licenses and proof of insurance are needed to drive on field trips. Parents driving must follow the Ark Field Trip Guidelines and be oriented by the teacher.

Adults and children must wear individual seat belts and the **State of Texas guidelines for children are:**

- Children younger than eight years old **must** use a child booster seat.

There may be instances when we restrict the number of parents going on a field trip due to specific reasons. We will do our best to see that this is handled in a fair manner. **It is the Ark's policy that siblings and other non-enrolled children may not attend field trips.** Smoking, inappropriate language, or

inappropriate behavior is not allowed during field trips. We as adults are there as role models and are there for the supervision and safety of the children. If a fee is required for a particular field trip, all adults and children must prepay. **If you are attending a field trip as a chaperone your attention should be always focused on the children.** Cell phone use should be limited to emergencies, and you should notify a teacher or other chaperone to watch your group while you attend personal business. Children 2 years of age and younger will not have scheduled field trips.

## Pictures

Pictures are taken in the Fall/Spring and class pictures will be taken in the Spring. Graduation pictures for our Pre-K 4 classes will be taken at the end of the year.

## Fundraisers

Since we are a non-profit organization, we have a Fall and Spring fundraiser. Participation is optional. The purposes of the fundraisers are to purchase items such as books, toys, educational, manipulatives, curriculum, and other items needed in the classroom or school that will enhance our learning program.

## School Parties

The following school parties will be held during the school year:

- Christmas (celebrating the birth of Jesus)
- Valentine's Day (celebrating our love for one another)
- Easter (celebrating the risen Savior)
- End-of-Year (celebrating a terrific year)

## Birthdays

We celebrate birthdays during Chapel by calling the child up on stage and singing and praying for them. (We generally celebrate August birthdays in September and June and July birthdays in May.) If you choose to bring a special treat to class, please coordinate this with your child's teacher and refer to the Food section of the Parent Handbook for appropriate treats. This treat would replace the school snack or be a dessert after lunch **and is not intended to be a birthday party**.

## Classroom Directories

Classroom lists are often helpful to parents in arranging play dates, sending party invitations, and remembering classmate's names. Parents will be given a list of the names, addresses, and phone numbers only of the classmates in their child's class. This information will be given out only with written approval from parents. This approval or disapproval can be noted on the "Parent Acknowledgement Form".

## Children's Belongings

Unless requested by the teacher, **toys should remain at home**. We cannot assume responsibility for materials brought from home. A lost and found container is available at the school, and lost articles that are not labeled will be given away to a charity of our choice. **Please label ANY items that come from home such as books, clothing, lunch kits, backpacks, diapers, etc. with child's name.**

# Show & Tell

The purpose of "Show & Tell" is to encourage interests in life, build self-esteem, self-image, self- discovery, and enhance vocabulary skills. If a teacher chooses to have "Show & Tell" they will mark the calendar when "Show & Tell" is scheduled. The teacher does recognize private property; therefore, no child is forced to allow another child to play with his or her property. We would again ask that "Show & Tell" items be brought only on the day assigned by the teacher. (Guns/weapons or war related items are not suitable and all items must be labeled or in a labeled backpack or sack.)

# Physical and Outdoor Play

Students receive a minimum of 30 minutes of outdoor play (weather permitting) and attend 20 minutes of indoor physical play during PE class (Ave J). Teachers also implement activities and games in their classrooms throughout the day to promote physical play inside the classroom. While outside, teachers encourage unstructured, supervised physical activity with the playground, tricycles and imaginary play. For your child's safety, **children must wear shoes with a strap on the back heel and be appropriate for running and active play**

- **Heat Weather Guidelines**
  - Below 89* F-
    - Outside recess: students can comfortably play outside, provide water, breaks and shade
  - 90*F-97*F
    - Caution at recess: monitor conditions during 30-minute recess. Students should be allowed water breaks before, during and after recess. Allow shaded area for breaks.
  - 98*F-99*F
    - Limited recess: limited activity to 20 minutes or less outside. Students should be allowed water before, during, and after recess. Allow for cool down period.
  - 100*F and above
    - Danger: No outdoor play. All students should remain inside

Considerations for timeframes are based on input from the National Weather Service and Texas Children's Hospital recommendations and CCISD. Students bring water outside with them daily and teachers are checking playground equipment temperatures daily.

The Ark Director makes the final decision for outside recess. They will always consider what is in the best interest of the students and any medical conditions that may be present.

- **Cold Weather Guidelines**
  When the windchill or feels like temperature reads:
  - 59*F-50*F
    - Jacket and/or long sleeves
  - 49*F-40*F
    - Jacket/long sleeves, layers, hats, gloves
  - 39*F-35*F
    - Same as above but limit outdoor recess to 20 minutes
  - Below 35*F
    - No outdoor recess

Outdoor activities are an integral part of the school day and provide students with a break from structured

classroom time. Outdoor activities promote opportunities for physical exercise and social development. The outside temperature, including wind chills, helps to determine cold weather safety. Children are expected to come to school prepared to participate in outdoor activities. When the outside temperature, including wind chill, falls below 35° F, outside activities should be held indoors.

If outdoor play is restricted due to weather, teachers will provide alternative physical play inside the classroom.

# Infant & Toddler Care

Frog Street provides curriculum for even our youngest Ark children.

**With this curriculum, the Ark and its teachers will provide:**

- Daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits.
- Multiple opportunities to explore each day that are outside of the crib and any restrictive device
- Opportunities for reaching, grasping, pulling up, creeping, crawling, and walking in a safe, clean, uncluttered area.
- Opportunities for visual stimulation through nonverbal communication. Examples of age- appropriate equipment include large pictures of faces and familiar objects, simple, soft, washable books and toys, and unbreakable mirrors.
- Opportunities for auditory stimulation. Examples of age-appropriate equipment or activities include verbal communication, soothing music, and musical or sounding toys.
- Opportunities for sensory stimulation. Examples of age-appropriate equipment include surfaces, fabrics, textured toys, washable dolls, and toy animals.
- Opportunities for small-muscle development. Examples of age-appropriate equipment include busy boxes, rattles, teethers, grasping toys, shaking, or squeezing toys, or cloth toys; and
- Opportunities for large-muscle development. Examples of age-appropriate equipment or activities include blankets or quilts for floor time, cribs and play gyms, a variety of lightweight balls, and pillows or supportive equipment for those learning to sit up.

Parents, please be sure to provide all formula, expressed breast milk or milk your child will need during the school day. We ask that all infant bottles, clothes, diapers, wipes, and diaper bags/backpacks be labeled with your child's name. Table food or baby food will also need to be provided by the parents, clearly labeled and ready to serve. While we can refrigerate the bottles and food in the classroom, we are not able to microwave or heat up any food items. A bottle warmer is available in the classroom. The Ark will provide one snack of puffs per day. The Ark will make available our breastfeeding room as needed. Please notify the front desk so that we can make sure the room is available for your use.

**The Ark practices safe sleep which requires:**

- Each infant must have a supervised nap period that allows the infant to maintain his or her own pattern of sleeping and waking periods.
- An infant may remain in the crib for up to 30 minutes after awakening, if the infant is content and responsive.
- The infant will not be permitted to sleep in a restrictive device. If an infant falls asleep in a restrictive device, the infant must be removed from the device and placed in a crib as soon as possible.
- Infants not yet able to turn over on their own must be placed in a face-up sleeping position in the infant's own crib.
- Infants will be allowed to sleep with a pacifier, if there are no attachments.
- Infants will sleep in a crib with only a fitted sheet. No blankets or stuffed animals will be permitted.

**A daily report will be provided to the parents via the Procare app. This report will include:**

- Times the infant slept.
- Times and amount of food consumed.
- Times of diaper changes.
- Infant's general mood for the day.
- A summary of the activities in which the infant participated.
- Supplies that need to be replenished, such as diapers, wipes and spare clothing or shoes.

The Ark will follow a daily schedule, which includes nap time, that is posted in the classroom. The classroom schedule will also be made available through the Procare app.

# Abuse and Neglect

Under Texas Law, all professional staff that work with children are required to report all suspected physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse, as well as neglect of children to authorities. If a staff member suspects abuse or neglect, it is their responsibility by law to make that report to Child Protective Services (CPS). The child abuse hotline is 1-800-252- 5400. A teacher will confer with the Ark Director in such a case. All Ark teachers undergo annual training for preventing and reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

A. **Defining Neglect**
- Neglect is a pattern of child or environment care that causes harm or poses a threat of harm to the child.
- Neglect is often defined as omission or to leave out.
- Neglect is a chronic behavior pattern of the parents toward the child.
- Environmental neglect is not attending to the physical living arrangement.
- Physical neglect is not meeting the child's basic needs such as food, hygiene, and shelter.
- Educational neglect is not attending to the child's needs in learning or ignoring the difficulties the child is experiencing with learning.
- Medical neglect is not getting the child medical attention to any physical problem he/she may have.

B. **Physical Abuse**
1. Physical abuse of children includes any non-accidental injury caused by the child's caretaker. By definition, the injury is not an accident. Neither is it necessarily the intent of the child's caretaker to injure the child.
2. Any injury that cannot reasonably be explained by the child's history of injuries.
3. Physical abuse may result from over-discipline or from punishment inappropriate for the child's age or condition.
4. Physical indicators of physical abuse:
   - Unexplained bruises and whelps
   - Reflecting shape of article used to inflict injury (electric cord, belt buckle)
   - Unexplained burns
   - Unexplained fractures
   - Unexplained lacerations or abrasions
   - Unusual bruising
5. Behavioral Indicators of Physical Abuse
   - Wary of adult contact
   - Apprehensive when other children cry
   - Behavioral extremes of aggressiveness or over-compliant
   - Role reversal with the child parenting the parent
   - Frightened of care giver
   - May wear long sleeved shirts in warm weather

- Will cringe or jump at a sudden movement
- Verbally reports abuse
- Too eager to please
- Hungry

C. **Sexual Abuse**

1. Many of these signs can be explained by other childhood problems other than sexual abuse; these are not necessarily an indicator that sexual abuse has occurred except on physical indicators.
   - Sleep disturbances. The child experiences nightmares, fear of going to bed, wanting lights on, waking up during the night, fear sleeping alone, or bed-wetting.
   - The child may experience new fears such as the fear of males or females, of being touched, or of going home.
   - The child regresses to thumb sucking, bed wetting, or clinging to a parent.
   - The abused child acts withdrawn or excessively self-conscious around peers.
   - There may be a sudden change in style of dressing.
   - The child may sexually act out beyond age-appropriate sex play.
   - Inability to make friends.
   - Withdrawal into a fantasy world.
   - Excessive masturbation.
   - May overdress to cover the body.
   - Low self-esteem.
2. **Physical Signs of Sexual Abuse**
   - Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area.
   - Complaints of pain, stomachaches, headaches, even if no physical causes found.
   - Vaginal or penile discharge.
   - Venereal Disease.
   - Difficulty with urination or uncontrolled urination.

D. **Reporting Abuse & Neglect**

If a staff member suspects abuse or neglect, it is their responsibility by law to make that report to Child Protective Services (CPS). The child abuse hotline is 1-800-252- 5400. A teacher will confer with the Ark Director in such a case. All reports should be documented on paper with the name of the child, date of suspected abuse, explanation of abuse, and any other pertinent information. Document your conversation with the parent if there was one. The Director may take pictures with a witness if it is necessary. The Director will report to our State Licensing Representative. The identity of anyone reporting to CPS is kept anonymous.

E. **Emotional abuse**

- Under achiever
- Over achiever
- Low-self esteem
- Disruptive
- Extremely aggressive

F. **Allegations of Abuse Involving the Ark**

If a complaint of child abuse is filed against the center or staff, it will be investigated. If a staff member is accused, they will be placed on probation with pay until the investigation is concluded. If a staff member is convicted of child abuse, this employee will be dismissed of all job duties at the Ark without pay.

In the event that you are a victim of abuse or neglect and need to obtain assistance and/ or intervention please reach out to one of Gateway Community Church's Pastors. This can be done at 281-286-1515, via email at info@gateway.cc or in person at the main church office Monday-Thursday between 9:00-4:00pm. The Ark director is also able to meet with you to discuss what Gateway Community Church has available for assistance.

# Parent Rights

A parent of a child in care has the right to:

(1) Enter and examine your center during its hours of operation without advance notice
(2) File a complaint against your center
(3) Review your center's publicly accessible records
(4) Review your center's written records concerning the parent's child
(5) Receive from your center:
    a. HHSC's inspection reports for your center
    b. Information regarding how to access your center's compliance history online
(6) Have your center comply with a valid court order signed by a judge that prevents another parent from visiting or removing the parent's child from your center
(7) Be provided with contact information for Child Care Regulation, including the department's name, address, and telephone number
(8) View any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving the parent's child maintained by your center as long as
    a. Video recordings of the alleged incident are available
    b. The parent is not allowed to retain any portion of the video depicting a child who is not the parent's child
    c. Your center notifies in writing the parent of any other child captured in the video recording, before allowing the parent to inspect the video recording
(9) Obtain a copy of your center's policies and procedures
(10) Review, upon request of the parent, our
    a. Staff training records
    b. In-house training curriculum, if any
(11) Be free from any retaliatory action by your center for exercising any of the parent's rights

# Expanded Emergency Procedures Plan

If children and caregivers need to evacuate the building for an emergency (such as a fire or gas leak), the following procedures will be followed. Map for building evacuation is found on page 19.

**Fire or Gas Leak**

1. Students and caregivers will evacuate the building utilizing the primary or secondary evacuation routes. They will meet along the curb of the parking lot. Teachers will continue to count students to ensure all students are accounted for. They will bring with them their emergency drill folders containing emergency contact information for each student in their care, each child's water bottle, snacks, and their cell phone which contains the Procare app with digital copy of emergency contact information for their class and coloring pages to entertain children in an extended period.
2. In the event of a real fire, sirens will sound, and emergency lights will flash.
    a. Students who can walk steadily and independently will walk in a line with their teachers.
    b. Students who are under 24 months of age will be loaded into evacuation cribs that are pushed by their classroom teachers.
    c. Students who have limited mobility or who otherwise may need assistance in an emergency, such as children who have mental, visual, or hearing impairments will be evacuated with the Director or other Ark Administrative Staff.
3. If the curb of the parking lot is unavailable or deemed unsafe, students and caregivers will relocate on foot to **our Alternate Pick-Up location, Michael G. Moore, DDS, 13810 Audubon Pkwy. near Gateway.**
    a. Teachers are responsible for calling their class parents to inform them of pick-up at the alternate site

b. Parents will sign out their child with the Director or other Ark Administrative Staff.

**Severe Weather**
If children and caregivers need to shelter in place for an emergency (such as a tornado), the following procedures will be followed.

1. Students and caregivers will exit their classrooms to the hallways behind the emergency/fire doors located outside of Ave A, B, C, D, E and Ave G, H, I.
2. Students and caregivers will get into the "Duck and Cover" position (known as "turtle") where they are crouched down on their knees and elbows with their hands clasped behind their necks, forearms covering temples.
3. If this position is necessary for more than 10 minutes, teachers will lead students in a verbal game, tell a story or play music to help calm students.
4. After severe weather or tornado:
    a. Teachers will account for all students and report any missing students to Director.
    b. Follow evacuation procedures (listed above) if and when appropriate but be alert for falling debris, downed power lines, and other damage.

**Lockdowns and Shelter in Place**
If children and caregivers need to lock-down with in the center to protect themselves from situations such as an endangering person in the area or a volatile person on the premise the following procedures will be followed.

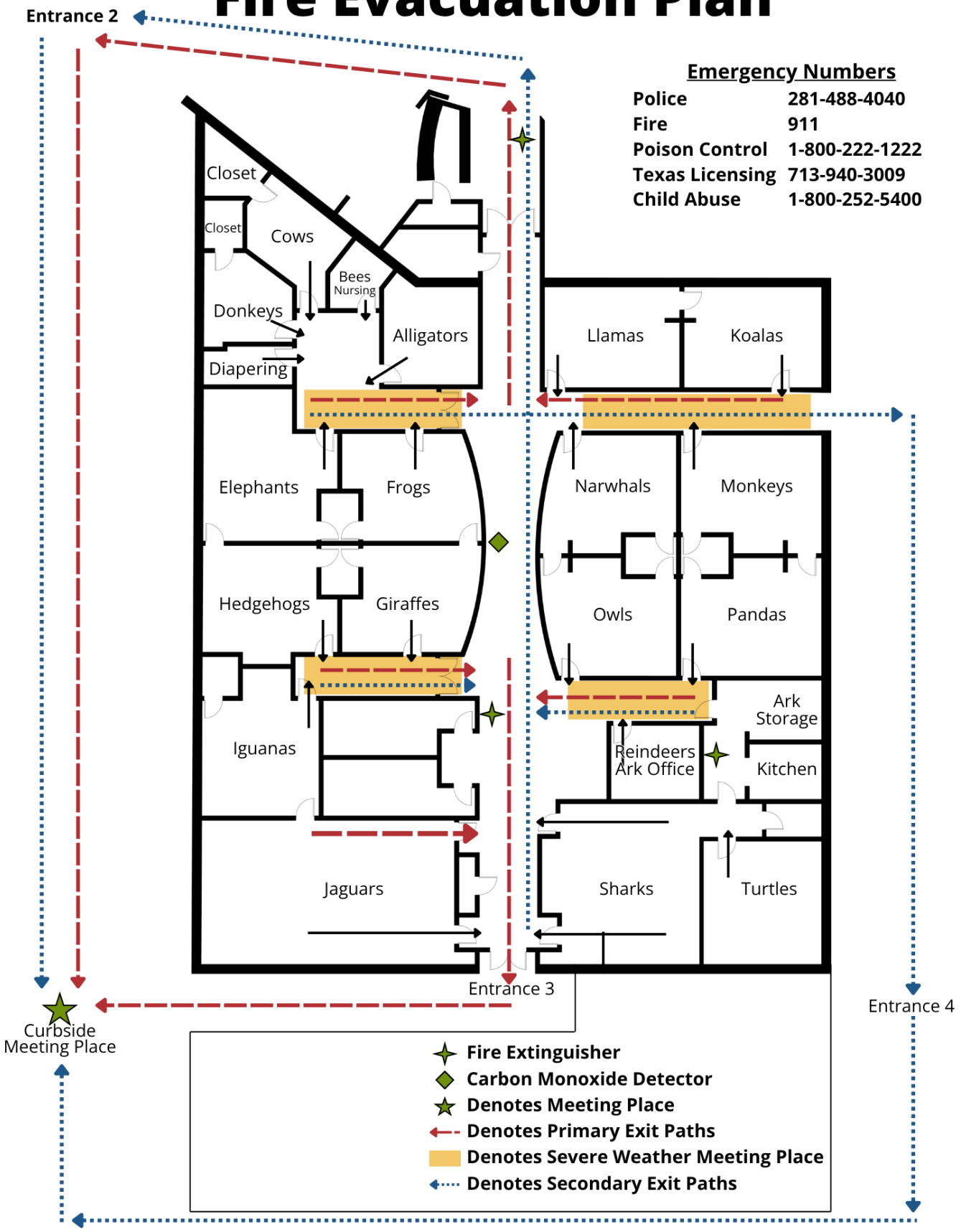
1. **Endangering person in the area**
    a. Children and caregivers will all evacuate their classrooms and go to Ave J after hearing the announcement "Teachers, Shelter in place at this time" via walkie-talkie. No one will be allowed to enter or leave the Ark wing until we have received alternative information from emergency services or the "All Clear" is announced.
        i. Once students are all accounted for, doors will be locked, and blinds closed.
        ii. In an extended period to "Shelter in Place", Procare messages will be sent to parents by the director reminding parents to not call the school, assuring them we are taking appropriate safety measures, and that they will receive a Procare message to pick-up their child once the "All Clear" is announced.
            1. Teachers will use the "Shelter in place Emergency boxes" during this extended time. This will consist of water, cups, snacks, paper towels, first aid kits, ziploc bags, duct tape, tissues, plastic sheets and containers for emergency toileting needs. Color sheets will also be provided for students to help pass the time.
    b. **When the all clear is announced:**
        i. Teachers and students may return to their classrooms
        ii. Teachers will let parents know via Procare messages the "All Clear" has been announced.
        iii. Parents will be able to pick up and sign out their child under normal procedures.
2. **Volatile person in the building or immediate surrounding area**
    a. Children and caregivers will lock down in their classrooms after hearing "LOCKDOWN! LOCKDOWN! LOCKDOWN!" verbally through walkie-talkies.
        i. Doors are closed and locked. Blinds are closed.
        ii. Children and teachers are hidden either in the bathrooms (most classes), in a corner not visible from the door window, or behind objects in the classroom.
        iii. Lights are off and everyone is quiet.
        iv. Any staff or students in the hallways are to immediately go to their classroom. Any staff or students out on the playground or in the auditorium/ sanctuary will quickly enter the Ark hallway and enter the nearest room with a door that can be locked.
            1. If a class is located on the playground, teachers can make the decision to

stay outside, moving away quickly from the school towards the alternate pick-up location if coming inside is deemed unsafe.

## Questions

Should you have any questions regarding the policies and procedures stated above, please contact the Director, Andy Wallace, via email, phone or in person.

# Fire Evacuation Plan




**Emergency Numbers**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Police** | **281-488-4040** |
| **Fire** | **911** |
| **Poison Control** | **1-800-222-1222** |
| **Texas Licensing** | **713-940-3009** |
| **Child Abuse** | **1-800-252-5400** |