



Parent Handbook

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Mission Statement

The Little Tree Preschool is a non-profit (501c3) preschool program that offers all children a rich and nurturing environment where learning opportunities are maximized and diversity is valued.

The Little Tree is an inclusive learning environment that focuses on teaching readiness and prerequisite skills that will prepare children for primary school. As a program of The Learning Tree, Inc., The Little Tree Preschool is also focused on improving the services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental disabilities. This is achieved by providing intensive, behavioral intervention (also known as ABA/Applied Behavior Analysis) in a setting with typically developing children serving as peer models.

General Information

After opening our first preschool in Auburn in 2005 with the assistance of a grant from the State Department of Education, we quickly saw the demand for other sites around the state. In the Fall of 2007, in collaboration with Mobile County Schools, a second Little Tree Preschool was opened. Then in the Fall of 2008, the third Little Tree Preschool opened in Jacksonville, AL. All three sites are committed to providing best practice in the intervention and educational services to meet the needs of young children and their families.

We highly value and maintain strong partnerships with the Universities and Colleges of Alabama to collaboratively advance knowledge in the fields of behavioral and educational interventions for young children. All three Little Tree locations serve as high quality practicum training sites for university students at the Undergraduate, Master's and Doctoral level.

Another way we achieve our mission of improving services is by developing strong relationships with the parents of the children we serve. We are able to provide parent training and assistance for all students. This service is a great source of support and education for parents to help their child maximize their potential. This is a required part of our Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (EIBI) service. Parents of children who do not receive EIBI services should consult with the Director to arrange parent training.

The Little Tree is a non-profit program that relies on donations, grants, and fundraising to keep tuition costs low for families; therefore, parents will be expected to participate in and help with various events. See Parent Involvement Section for more information.

Licensing Information

The Little Tree Preschool is a fully licensed childcare facility and is subject to all rules and regulations of the Alabama Department of Human Resources policy book entitled *Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers: Regulations and Procedures: Regulations and Procedures* (DHR Office of Daycare: 50 N. Ripley St, Montgomery, AL 36130, (334) 242-1425). All parents may receive a copy of these standards by requesting them from the above address.

Program Overview

Our parent company, The Learning Tree, Inc. is a not-for-profit program that was founded in 1983 to offer high quality educational services to children who needed more individualized education services than their local school systems could provide. Since then, The Learning Tree, Inc. has responded to a variety of children's needs by expanding its programs to serve children across the state through schools located in Mobile, Jacksonville, and Tallassee as well as through consultation services to local school systems in other cities. In efforts to decrease the number of children ending up in residential placements, The Little Tree Preschool was opened in August 2005 to provide high quality early intensive behavioral intervention services and high-quality preschool services for children in Lee County, Alabama and the surrounding areas.

The Little Tree Preschool also provides training experience for graduate students studying Applied Behavior Analysis in Auburn University's Department of Psychology. This is a Master's degree program focused on providing students with professional expertise in Applied Behavior Analysis. At the Little Tree, graduate students gain experience providing early intensive behavioral intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental delays in addition to valuable experience teaching typically developing preschoolers. Applied Behavior Analysis is one of the most effective research-based approaches for teaching children pre-academic skills and nurturing the development of socially important skills, including peer mentoring and individual expression. It is also recognized as an essential approach to treatment for children with autism spectrum disorders.

Enrollment Process

Parents who wish to enroll their child for preschool services at The Little Tree should complete the following forms and return them to The Little Tree-Attention: Whitney Hester, Director.

- 1. Student Application**
- 2. DHR Child Preadmission Form**
- 3. If applicable, any diagnostic assessments, evaluations, or previous Individualized Education Program's (IEP).**

Once the above items are received, a meeting with the family will be held (in person or via telephone) and enrollment decisions will be made based on the current enrollment of children at Little Tree and the level of need for services. Enrollment will be determined by The Little Tree's staff and may not always be determined on a first come first serve basis.

At this point:

- The child may be enrolled immediately.
- The child may be given a start date within the next 6 months.
- If applicable, assessment and parent training will be scheduled with the family.
- The child may be placed on the waiting list for services. Once a child is placed on the waiting list, they can remain on it for 6 months and their spot will be secure. After 5 months, the parent(s) should contact the Little Tree to confirm that they still plan to enroll their child at Little Tree, and to plan a start date.

Preschool Operation Hours and Closing Dates

Hours and Days of Operation-The Little Tree Preschool is open Monday-Friday, 8:00-3:00. Children can be dropped off at 7:45a.m., but must be picked up by 3:00 p.m. Morning (drop off at 6:30) and Afternoon (3:00-5:30) services are available upon request and availability.

2010-2011 CLOSING DATES AND HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Reference Calendar provided via email. If you don't have it please ask for one.

Closing due to weather or other events-In the event of inclement weather, The Little Tree Preschool will follow the schedule of **Calhoun County Schools**. If Calhoun County schools are closed due to the weather, The Little Tree Preschool will also be closed. If the county schools reopen at a later time during the day, The Little Tree Preschool will also reopen. Please follow the local weather agency instructions on driving in severe weather! If the Little Tree building is without power for more than 1 hour, parents will be called to pick up their child. Our physical space is sensitive to temperature changes and very dark when the electricity is off. We are sorry for this inconvenience.

Tuition Information

The Little Tree Preschool is a non-profit organization. All tuition and fees cover the cost of supplies, equipment, and salaries.

1. Tuition payments will be paid in monthly installments on the first of every month.
 - a. If the first is on a weekend, then the payment may be made on the following Monday.
 - b. If payment **is not** received by the 5th day of the month, The Little Tree will discontinue services until the payment is made. If the full payment is not made by the end of the month, services will no longer be provided and the child's slot in the preschool will be filled.
2. If a check is returned for non-sufficient funds (NSF), \$35 will be charged to the parent. Payment for the returned check and the NSF charge should be made immediately by cash, cashier's check, or money order. After **two** NSF checks have been returned, payment for tuition and fees is required in cash, cashier's check, or money order.
3. There is **no refund** of tuition due to absences.
4. Please include the child's name on the Memo line of all checks.
5. There is no reduction in rates for families with more than one child attending The Little Tree Preschool's Program.
6. Tuition will be calculated on a monthly basis. Tuition rate will be the prorated for the months in which school closures occur. (teacher training and workshops, closures lasting a week)
7. Statements will be sent out upon request at the first of the year for tax purposes stating the amount of tuition paid during the previous year.

Parent Involvement

All parents with children enrolled in the preschool are strongly encouraged to participate in at least two activities during each quarter. As a non-profit organization, the preschool depends on parent involvement and fundraising activities to operate. Participation in these activities is needed to increase income from fundraising in order to keep tuition at desired low rates. If you should fail to meet quarterly requirements, you may be charged additional fees.

Each quarter you will have the opportunity to sign up for a wide range of activities to participate in and sign in sheets will be located in the entryway of the school. These activities will range from material creation, purchasing of school supplies, volunteering at football games, and selling fundraising items to name a few. Quarterly parent

meetings will be scheduled and at least one parent will need to be in attendance to obtain up to date information.

Arrival and Pick-up Information

Parents must enter the preschool through the gate on the sidewalk in the front parking lot. Persons dropping off children should close and relock the gate when entering and exiting (this is for the safety of the children on the premises). Each parent will be given a pass code to enter the main door. The door is automatically locked until 7:45 a.m., and also automatically locks at 3:01 p.m. This code is not to be given to anyone other than those people listed on the child's pre-admission form to sign his/her child in and out.

Once in the building, an adult must leave their child with a Little Tree staff member before leaving the building. Children must **never** be left before ensuring they are under the supervision of a Little Tree staff member. The children must be signed in and out (with a full signature) by an authorized signer according to the preadmission form. Unfamiliar individuals will be asked for I.D. before The Little Tree will release a child. The Little Tree Preschool will not release a child to an unauthorized person. A parent is not to take a child from The Little Tree Preschool without a Little Tree staff member's knowledge.

Attendance

Tardiness and Absences

Please call The Little Tree Preschool at 256-435-6057 or email aspruill@learning-tree.org to let us know if your child is going to be absent or late. Leave a message on the answering machine if we are not able to answer the phone.

Because of the intense nature of our EIBI program and the planned academic activities for your children, it is very important that your child arrives at school on time. Parents have the opportunity to drop their children off between 7:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. The Little Tree will use the clock in the entrance way of the center as the official time, so please make sure clocks have been synchronized to this time.

Children cannot simply be dropped off at the preschool after 8:00 a.m. due to schedule disruptions and staffing plans. Parents arriving with their children after 8:00 a.m. are required to notify a preschool staff member who is not in a classroom of their arrival. The staff person will arrange for the child to be brought into the classroom.

The parent will have to wait with the child until such arrangements have been made and complete a late arrival form. If upon entering the building a staff person is not available outside of a classroom, the parent should sit in the waiting area with the child until

someone is available. Classrooms or personnel caring for children are not to be interrupted or disturbed when a child is brought in late.

Late Pick-up: There is a charge of \$1 per minute for late pick up. The Little Tree uses the clock in the entry way of the center to determine the time, so please make sure your clocks have been synchronized to this time. Late pick-ups are tallied and billed to you at the end of the month and adjustments are not made for children on scholarships or Child Care Resources. While calling ahead to let us know you are running late is appreciated, the late fee still applies unless the late arrival is for an excused reason.

Illness

Current emergency telephone numbers must be provided and updated regularly. Parents will be notified when children are sick and need to go home. Children are to be picked up immediately when sick in order to reduce health risks to other children and staff. If parents cannot be located, the person(s) listed as an Emergency Contact with daytime/work phone numbers will be notified.

Please notify The Little Tree Preschool if a child contracts a communicable disease or has been exposed to such a disease outside the center. Parents of other children in the classroom will then be notified while respecting the anonymity of the exposed child.

Children will be sent home for and should be kept out of the center for the following reasons:

(Adapted from the Center of Disease Control guidelines)

- Fever of 100 degrees and higher
- Vomiting or Diarrhea
- Colds (breathing difficulties, heavy wheezing, yellow/green nasal discharge and/or prolonged cough)
- Sore throat (yellowish or white spots in back of mouth or throat)
- Rash (undiagnosed rash other than heat or diaper rash)
- Communicable diseases such as:
 - o Coxsackie Virus, Measles, Mumps, Chickenpox, Pink Eye, Impetigo, Parasites (Ring Worm, etc) Head Lice, Diarrhea
- If child requires a urine or fecal sample to determine this must be done at home or in a physician's office.

In a situation where there is a suspected illness not covered under these guidelines, the administrative staff may call parents for a telephone conference and/or for parents to pick up the child.

Temperatures will be taken under the arm and on the forehead. When using this procedure with an oral thermometer one degree must be added to the reading for accuracy. Temperature will never be taken rectally.

Re-admittance to the preschool can occur after the following criteria are met:

- Fever- Temperature must be in normal range for 24 hours without fever reducing agents such as Tylenol, Advil, or Motrin
- Diarrhea- after a firm bowel movement
- Vomiting- 24 hours after vomiting has subsided
- Cold viruses- clear nasal discharge, significant reduction in amount of nasal discharge and/or coughing
- Strep throat- 24 hours after an injection or 48 hours after the start of oral medication
- Chickenpox- all lesions are dry and crusted
- Pink Eye- 24 hours after treatment begins
- Impetigo (blisters with honey-colored crusts) - at least 24 hours after the start of medication. If there is no improvement in 48 hours, the child should be reassessed by a physician.
- Parasites- bring the pediatrician's written negative results.
- Head Lice- after treatment has started and there are no nits (eggs) in hair.

Documentation verifying treatment should be brought to The Little Tree Director. Parents are responsible for keeping up-to-date information regarding doctors and the name of an emergency contact person. A current Blue Immunization Card must be on file for each child. An expired Blue Card is unacceptable and must be updated for the child to be enrolled. In the event your child does not have a Blue Card, a valid State of Alabama certificate of Medical Exemption or a valid State of Alabama Certificate of Religious Exemption must be on file.

Exceptions to Illness Policy

Some children with developmental disabilities may engage in behaviors related to feeding that are problematic. In some cases, if the Little Tree Director determines that vomiting is maintained by behavioral consequences rather than an illness, the parents will not be called to pick up their child.

Rumination is another behavior that children with developmental disabilities may engage in. If rumination occurs, the child's parents will not be called.

Children who are medically fragile (have multiple ongoing health issues) may also be allowed more absences from school with the Director's consent and with doctor's written approval. The parent or guardian must consult with the center Director to arrange some other intervention options (i.e.: in-home services or consultation with

another preschool or daycare) if a medically fragile child misses more than 12 days of school within one month.

Other Little Tree Policies

Birthdays

Birthdays may be celebrated at The Little Tree. If parents decide to bring items for a birthday party they must consult the Director in advance. When bringing refreshments, there must be enough for every child in the classroom. Please let us know one week in advance what items you plan to bring for the party.

Bringing toys from home

Toys, games, videos, books, and other play items are not to be brought to The Little Tree. The Little Tree is **not responsible** for any items brought from home that are lost or broken.

Clothing

When dressing your child for school, please remember that he/she will be using paint, glue, markers, playing in sand, etc. Please dress children in comfortable play clothes that they can wear for the entire day. Layering is a good idea for cool mornings. Please label all clothing and personal articles. An extra set of clothes and underwear appropriate for the weather are required to be kept at school. It is advisable also to keep an extra pair of old shoes and socks at the preschool.

When picking up your child, please make sure that you take all clothing articles with you. The Little Tree will keep them in a separate area for one month. After one month of not picking up your child's clothing The Little Tree will consider these items donated.

Upon discontinuation of services, clothing and other items may be picked up from the center within the 30 days. Please see the clothing section below.

Emergency Plan

In the event of an emergency requiring urgent medical attention, if the parent cannot be contacted, and in the judgment of The Little Tree a physician is required, one may be called at the parent's expense.

Incident reports are filled out and filed at the center and the parent also receives a copy of the boo-boo note.

Field Trips

Field trips may be taken throughout the year with parent permission and parent participation. The Little Tree does not provide child restraint seats. Parents will be required to transport children in the event a field trip. If a parent does not sign a release form permitting the child to go on a field trip, then the child must stay at the preschool with staff. Children cannot attend field trips without parent permission and the field trip permission form signed.

If a parent does volunteer to attend the field trip and transport other children, a copy of driver's license and vehicle insurance must be on file at the preschool. All parents must give written permission for their child to ride with another parent.

Meals and Snacks

Lunch is served to the children at 11:00 p.m. A refrigerator is available to store items that must be kept cold and a microwave and toaster is available to warm items if necessary.

Nutritious snacks are provided for the children by the school in the morning and in the afternoon. Snacks are provided at 9:00 am and 2:30.

The Little Tree Preschool DOES NOT PROVIDE BREAKFAST. Please make sure your child eats breakfast before coming to preschool.

Drinks: The Little Tree will provide regular disposable drinking cups for the children to drink from. Use of "sippy" cups is discouraged at preschool and if you wish to send any other type of cup to school it must be taken home daily for cleaning.

Medication

It is highly recommended when receiving medication from a pharmacist, that you request the medicine be divided into two bottles: one for daytime use at the preschool and the other for home. The Little Tree **does not** administer medication that is unlabeled. A label with physician's name, child's name, date and directions must be included. No medication will be given without parent's written permission on the completed DHR Medication Authorization Form.

DHR considers any substance other than soap as "medication". Therefore, parents must fill out the medication form for The Little Tree Preschool staff to administer sunscreen, bug spray, cough drops, lotion, baby powder, antibiotic ointment, diaper cream, Vaseline, or other over the counter items.

Medication that need to be measured should be brought with a measuring device (teaspoon, etc.) attached to the bottle with rubber band.

Minor Accidents

The Little Tree Preschool administers first-aid, including cleaning wounds, unless parents advise otherwise in writing. Unless a release has been filled out by the parent The Little Tree Preschool uses only soap and water to clean wounds.

Outdoor Play

Children spend some time outdoors each day, weather permitting. This is a DHR regulation. Please dress child accordingly. Children who are too ill to go outside should not be in attendance. A doctor's excuse **specifically stating** that a child is not to be outside must be provided to keep a child from going outside during the time they are in attendance at preschool.

Potty Training

If children are not potty trained, soon after starting the program a potty training program/schedule will be implemented for the child. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide pull-ups, baby wipes, underwear, and any other materials needed in the toilet training process.

Questions and Concerns

Parental questions and concerns about The Little Tree preschool program are to be discussed with the Director. In the event the Director is not available, concerns should be directed to the assistant Director. If the need for a conference is decided it shall be set up at both parties convenience.

Rest Time

All children will be required to rest for at least 45 min and no longer than 2 ½ hours. These guidelines are outlined in the DHR *Minimum Standards*.

Other

The Little Tree Preschool operates with an Open Door Policy. Parents are welcome to stop by and visit in their child's classroom at any time. Other visitors need to sign in and notify the Director or assistant Director of their presence before entering a classroom.

The Little Tree Preschool property is a Tobacco Free Environment. This includes the playground, the area behind the playground, parking area and yard area. Items prohibited include smokeless tobacco, cigarettes, pipes, and cigars.

Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (EIBI) Program

All students who attend The Little Tree Preschool will receive early, intensive, behavioral intervention to some degree. Some students may receive these services more frequently and systematically while others may receive these services in the classroom setting on an as needed basis. Parents, classroom teachers, and/or the program Director may identify areas that are in need of additional instruction and work together to develop a planned program to teach the needed skills and behaviors.

The Little Tree Preschool's EIBI program consists of the following components that are all equally important to ensure treatment is as effective as possible.

1. Initial assessment and parent training
2. Preschool attendance/intervention
3. Ongoing weekly parent and family training sessions (this may vary depending on the child's needs)

*1. Initial Assessment and Parent Training-*Research studies emphasize "intensity of treatment" as a crucial factor in quality programming for children with developmental delays and disorders. Due to this, we view parent training, as well as preschool-based intervention as critical. This way, intervention can continue after school each day and on weekends. Soon after the child's start date is determined, parent training and assessment sessions will be scheduled.

2. Preschool Intervention- Once initial assessment and parent training sessions are completed, the child starts attending The Little Tree each day. He or she will be placed in a classroom according to his or her age, either in our younger preschool class or older preschool class. Both classrooms' teaching style are based on thematic units and each classroom has a lead teacher responsible for creating and planning all activities the children do. Each classroom has a daily schedule of preschool activities. Based on the child's abilities and skill levels, an individual schedule will be created for them to follow throughout the school day. It may involve instruction outside the classroom or in the classroom.

Parent input is highly valued in planning intervention, but due to the fact that our intervention model is based only on peer-reviewed research studies, interventions based in non-behavior analytic methodology will not be implemented at The Little Tree.

*3. On-going Weekly Parent and Family Training Program-*Initially, the focus of parent training is to address behaviors and situations that are problematic for the child, train the family how to deal with these behaviors, and begin teaching the child prerequisite skills necessary to learn in the preschool environment.

To provide supplemental intervention hours, The Little Tree model recommends that families recruit a team of volunteers or paid staff (family members, friends, high-school students, etc) to provide intervention during the evenings and over the weekend with the child at home. The Little Tree staff will train any workers or volunteers the family recruits.