

Staff Handbook



Montessori Children's House

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MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S HOUSE

STAFF HANDBOOK

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Welcome to *Montessori Children's House*!

We are delighted to have you here.

You have been selected because of your special qualities, talents, and skills. I'm confident you will be a wonderful addition to the outstanding environment and experience we provide for young children.

As a member of our staff, you are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times, remembering you are an example to the children, parents and other faculty.

This handbook has been written to provide you with the staff policies and procedures. It's essential for you to be aware of and comply with these policies.

If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions please feel free to let me know.

I look forward to working with you!

Cynthia Bennett

Director

MISSION & GOALS

Teachers and parents working together to honor and encourage the unique potential of each child through a nurturing, creative and educational environment.

Because children progress through stages of growth at different rates, our environment is structured so they have maximum freedom to gravitate toward materials that enhance their current stage of development. Children are encouraged to choose their own activities, with a teacher's support and guidance, if needed. With this freedom to choose, each child develops a sense of responsibility for his or her own actions.

The atmosphere of the Children's House fosters the growth of inner discipline and independence that leads to a healthy self-image. By nurturing young children as individuals, we seek to develop confidence, intellectual growth, creativity and joy in learning.

Montessori Children's House is licensed as a Child Care Center through the Montana Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing Bureau.

CODE OF ETHICS

Employees of *Montessori Children's House* are expected to strive to meet the highest standards of professional, practical, moral, ethical and personal conduct in the care of children and in all relationships and responsibilities. This includes professional standards in the care of buildings, materials and facilities and compliance with all federal state and local standards for the education and care of young children.

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Statement of Equal Opportunity in Hiring

Montessori Children's House does not discriminate in regard to hiring. The school hires in compliance with all federal, state and local standards in seeking staff who meet the qualifications for each position.

Hiring Procedures

All staff and volunteers fill out an application for employment which is kept on file in the office. Personal interviews are conducted and employee references verified.

All staff participate in on-going job training and evaluation as part of employment.

All employees and volunteers are subject to criminal and certification investigations as required by Montana State Law, which may include but are not limited to: County criminal record search; state criminal record search; national criminal index search; state prison search; federal prison search; sex offender search; F.B.I. search, Nationwide U.S. Wants & Warrants search; teacher certification, job history verification and education verification.

All staff are required to supply an immunization record including a current tdap and mmr, or a notarized affidavit of religious exemption (form available in the office and must be renewed annually)

Period of Probation

All new hires or promotions will be on a provisional basis for 90 days.

Contracts

After a probationary period, staff members sign employment contracts.

Wages

Hourly wages are determined based on experience, performance and length of time employed with the school. Wages are paid on the 1st and 15th of each month for the hours from the 9th to the 25th and the 26th to the 8th (with exceptions when weekends or bank holidays shift things slightly).

Time Tracking

Staff work hours are recorded through logging into and out of the Brightwheel time clock system.

Each staff member must trace their work hours by clocking in and out daily at the start and end of their work day, as well as for breaks. In case you encounter a technical difficulty and can not clock in or out, please inform someone in the office and we will be happy to help you.

Holidays

Montessori Children's House follows the Bozeman public school calendar for major holidays. We are closed for Labor Day, Fall Break, Thanksgiving, Winter Break, President's Day, Spring Break, Memorial Day and Independence Day. We are open during the summer except for one or two weeks at the end of August to clean and prepare for the next school year. Please, refer to the MCH school calendar each year for specific dates.

Overtime

All overtime must be authorized by the Director. In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act overtime is paid for hours worked beyond 40 per week at a rate of one and one-half times an employee's regular rate of pay.

Benefits to Full Time Employees

After 1 year of successful employment, the school provides one week of paid vacation at Christmas. No health benefits are offered at this time.

Continuing Education to Meet the Day Care Requirements in the State of Montana

All employees must successfully complete the Infant Safety Essentials training in the first 30 days of hire as well as the required orientation courses by 90-days unless already completed. The school will pay for the time of these introductory training courses when proof of completion is provided. All employees are required by the Director and by Montana state law to complete 16 hours of new training per year. The school will pay for the cost of approved classes applied toward this 16-hour requirement.

Training for Daily Procedures

Training and practice in fulfilling daily procedures will occur during your orientation and on-the-job from the Head Teacher and Director.

Grievance Procedures

Speak to the Head Teacher first. If there is no attempt to address the difficulty, approach the Director for mediation.

Termination

An employee's service at the school may be terminated for any reason during the first 90 days of probation. After that time, termination may be necessary for breach of duties, or if an employee lies, steals, does not comply with the guidelines and policies stated in this handbook or is unable to perform duties to Montessori Children's House standards.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS, QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

General Requirements for Staff Employment

Staff and employees shall meet all Montana state codes in regard to work in a day care environment for young children. All staff must have clear criminal background checks and be of high moral character.

Parent Handbook

Staff must read and be familiar with the contents of the Parent Handbook, available at <https://bozemanchildrenshouse.com/content/files/Parent-Handbook.docx>

Head Teacher / Primary Caregiver

Definition: Teacher in charge of children, assistants, aides, and all classroom and outdoor areas and materials. Reports to owner/director.

Qualification: Montessori certification, experience or desire to learn Montessori approach. Ability to lead, effective communication skills, dependable, responsible, patient and kind manner, emotionally mature; able to control emotions and behavior and work positively with children, parents and staff. Ability to observe children and provide for their needs. Current CPR and First Aid Certification or ability to obtain certification within one month of hire. Current Infant Safety Essentials Training or ability to complete within 1 month. Current orientation training or ability to complete within 90 days.

Duties: Oversee and work harmoniously with assistants and aides in the care of the physical, emotional and educational needs of each child. Work with the Director in setting procedures and standards for behavior and safety in classrooms and on the playground, and see that these standards are met. Be sure the Safe Sleep Policy is followed.

Work with assistants and aids to maintain a clean, hygienic, orderly environment: vacuum, mop, scrub, disinfect, dust, etc. Each week submit a list of supplies needed to the office.

Plan and present appropriate Montessori materials and other lessons for each child. Change lessons and toys on shelves according to curricular themes and needs of the children. Plan and present group lessons.

Work with assistants to record each child's daily activities. Speak with parents on a regular basis. Graciously regulate parents' behavior when they are present in the classroom.

Assistant or Aide

Definition: Caregiver working in the classroom or on the playground under the direction of the Head Teacher.

Qualification: High School diploma or GED, 18 years of age, responsible and mature person, who is calm, kind and loves children. Attention to detail. Current CPR and First Aid Certification or ability to obtain certification within 1 month of hire. Current Infant Safety Essentials Training or ability to complete within 1 month. Current orientation training or ability to complete within 90 days.

Duties: Work under the direction of the head teacher to meet the needs of the children including such things as diapering, dressing, preparing and serving snacks, reading stories, assisting with circle time, stocking materials, supervising children on playground, keeping materials and classroom clean and hygienic, and any other duties the head teachers request.

GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance

All employees are expected to arrive at least 5 minutes prior to their shift, sign in and be ready on time to care for children with 100% of their attention.

Absence

If a staff member is unable to report to work for any reason, they are to notify the Office Assistant (Bridget 579-8042) by text message or phone call a.s.a.p. They must continue to notify the Office Assistant each work day before 7:00 am or a.s.a.p. for the duration of the absence. This procedure is needed to assure there will be a qualified substitute available to care for the children. **Failure to notify the Office Assistant of an absence could result in dismissal.**

Staff members who do not notify the Office Assistant of an absence and do not show up for their shift will receive a written warning. If a staff member is absent more than 7 times in a month without prior approval or a doctor's note, they will also receive a written warning. The third written warning within a year will result in termination of the staff member's employment.

Time-off Requests

If a staff member needs to take time off, they are to fill out a time-off request form available in the office and turn it in to the director. If approved it will be written in the staff calendar in the office. We ask that all staff try to coordinate their time-off requests within their classrooms to avoid having multiple teachers from the same classroom needing time off at the same time.

Behavior of Staff

Staff will maintain professional behavior at all times on school grounds, and seek to protect their professional reputations in public places. No liquor, tobacco products or illegal drugs are permitted on school property at any time. All staff will refrain from any behavior that is not considered to be appropriate around small children, including but not limited to: swearing, bad language, slang, anger, criticism of themselves or others, bawdy dress or jokes, or discussions of topics for adult ears only.

Many topics are not appropriate in a school setting even if there are no children on the premises or the adult(s) are away from children in a private area of the school. Staff will maintain professional behavior and model good manners and dress for children at all times. Gossip, back-biting, criticism of staff or children or their parents is unprofessional behavior and is not permitted.

In order to assure the children receive the full attention of caregivers, the following guidelines are to be observed:

- **Cell phones:** Mobile phones may not be used for calls, texts, or online activity while on duty. They are to be turned off during an employee's shift unless specific permission is given.
- **Personal Conversations:** Conversations between staff members during school hours are to be kept to a minimum so as not to distract from caregiving.
- **Family & Friends:** Employee's relations and friends are not permitted on school grounds without prior permission.

Confidentiality

Employees are required to maintain absolute confidentiality in all matters relating to children, families, or staff of the school. Do not give out any information whatsoever about members of our school community (this includes all of our children, their families, staff members and other information pertaining to the school).

Pictures of our students can only be taken if the school has a written permission from the parents on file. These pictures may only be used as displays, as craft projects and parent gifts, or in school albums.

Conflict Resolution

If a staff member has a disagreement with another staff member, she should seek to work it out directly with that person first. Approach the administration for help if this is not successful.

Problems need to be discussed openly and solutions sought to the greatest benefit of all with the needs of the children being our primary concern. Respect for each other as people and professionals who love and serve children is foremost in our treatment of each other. Gossip, back-biting, criticism of staff and children or their parents is not acceptable.

Corporal Punishment or Shaming Children

Corporal punishment or shaming of any kind is not allowed at *Montessori Children's House* and will be grounds for immediate dismissal.

Children Under Staff Supervision at All Times & Never Left Unattended

Children are to be under staff supervision at all times. Children are never to be left unattended. They are not to be left alone with any person other than a staff member.

Dress Code

Staff shall wear clean, neat, professional, modest clothing. Any tattoos need to be fully covered by clothing. No nose or tongue rings, please. The school smock is to be worn at all times by the Infant and Toddler caregivers. All Staff need both indoor and outdoor shoes, hats, gloves and coats. Remember you are a model to the children.

Music

Classical and traditional children's music is to be played. Rock music, hip-hop, techno or rap rhythms and lyrics are not considered healthy for the development of small children and are not to be played at school.

Performance of Duties

All staff are to perform their assigned responsibilities to meet the high standards of the school according to their job descriptions.

Abuse Accusations Directed Against a Staff Member

In the unlikely situation of a formal complaint being lodged against a staff member alleging illegal or serious unprofessional conduct, that staff member would be put on immediate leave pending investigation.

Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Child

If a staff member has reason to believe or suspect that a child has been or is being subjected to abuse, physical, emotional, or sexual, you are asked to report this to the Director as soon as possible. We would then begin a dated written record kept confidentially in the office of exactly what has been witnessed such as unexplained bruises or lack of care on a regular basis.

If during conversations between the administration and a family, suspicions regarding abuse arise, the school administrator will speak to the family and advise them to get counseling immediately. The school will contact state authorities as required by law. All such reporting is confidential. The number to report suspected abuse is (866) 820-5437.

Training for Emergencies

All caregivers will maintain their Adult, Child and Infant CPR certification and their Red Cross First Aid certification. The school will provide training and practices for emergency fire evacuation and disaster drill procedures.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Parent Handbook

Read and understand the parent handbook. If a parent asks you a question you're not prepared to answer, rather than say "I don't know", say "I will check for you", and then do check and follow up with them.

Parent Sign-In/Out Sheet

The State of Montana requires parents sign their child in and out each day using their full signature, not initials. Please graciously help parents to comply. The sign in/out tablet is kept at the entry to each classroom.

Children Release to Authorized Persons Only

No child may be released to anyone whose name does not appear on their Emergency Contact Form without specific written permission. Do not release a child unless you are absolutely sure permission has been given and not until you have checked photo ID.

Daily Contact

Parents may be reminded in a friendly, respectful way about lunches, sippy cups, time schedules etc.

When updating a parent on their child's day, strive to include the child in the discussion, rather than act as if he/she is not there. Even for infants, this is disrespectful. "Susie, let's tell daddy how much you enjoyed the puzzles in the lesson room today." "Jimmy, shall we let mom know you didn't like that new flavor of yogurt in your lunch?"

If a short chat is needed, try to move to an area away from the child and out of hearing of other parents and children after verifying the other teachers are aware and the rest of the group is well supervised. Avoid extended discussions before or after school.

If there is something that needs a longer discussion, it's best to notify the Director and an appointment will be made with the parents.

Refrain from discussing a child with any person who is not directly responsible for the care of that child.

COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

Respect & Kindness

Always speak to a child kindly and respectfully. Get down to the child's height – squat on one or both knees, bend down, sit down, kneel down. Look at the child and speak slowly and clearly directly to him, while saying his/her name. Be friendly and inviting. Bond first, set limits later, unless the situation is a matter of aggression or safety where a firm command may be needed.

When walking with children, go at their pace not yours. Take smaller steps, pause. In general, refrain from rushing a child.

Touching

Babies and toddlers need affection and holding. Be mindful of how you touch a child, always being respectful. Avoid patting on the head like a pet. Kissing is affection reserved for family members and not permitted by Staff – except maybe to kiss a boo-boo and make it all better!

SAFETY

Safe Sleep Policy

Staff provide a safe sleep environment for the children's daily nap. A firm mattress or mat is provided for each child. Children under one year are placed on their backs to nap and no thick blankets, toys, pillows, bottles or sippy cups are permitted in their crib.

Entrances to Building

The fire department requires all exit doors, except the main entry, to remain unlocked during school hours. Be sure to lock up when leaving at the end of the day.

Accident Prevention

The environment indoors and outdoors is designed for safety. All staff will check the premises regularly for anything that looks unsafe and correct it, or notify the Director so that it can be fixed.

No child is to be left unsupervised at any time.

Premises are to be cleaned & disinfected regularly. All dangerous substances are stored safely away from children. The playground's child-proof gates are to be shut unless in use. Teachers and aides will keep an eye out for anything unsafe in the play areas and inspect ground for rocks and sharp objects, etc.

Evacuation

The school's emergency evacuation plan is posted in the school office by the door to the infant room. There is a phone list posted to quickly notify parents in case of an emergency. All exit lights, fire extinguishers and first aid kits are to be kept in working order according to state code.

STAFF HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sign & return this page to the Director.

TO: Director of *Montessori Children's House*

RE: Staff Policy Handbook

Employee's Name: _____

I have read and fully understand and accept the contents of the *Montessori Children's House* Staff Handbook. I agree to abide by the policies and procedures set forth:

Employee's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director's Signature: _____ Date: _____