



FAMILY HANDBOOK



1512 West Elliot Road Chandler, AZ 85224
(480)831-1718 desertsun.org

INTRODUCTION

Mission Statement

Desert Sun Child Development Center's mission is to provide high-quality education for young children and to assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children.

Non-profit Corporation

Desert Sun Child Development Center is a non-profit corporation in the State of Arizona registered with the Internal Revenue Service under 501 (c) 3. Desert Sun follows all the Arizona Department of Health Services Child Care Facilities Regulations. We are dedicated to being an excellent resource for parents as the major educators of their young children.

Our Philosophy & Approach

At Desert Sun Child Development Center, we recognize that parents are a child's most significant teachers, and we are honored to partner with families in this role. We strive to be a valuable resource in your child's early learning journey, encouraging family participation to create a strong foundation for lifelong success.

Our program is rooted in the principles of child development and early childhood education, emphasizing a hands-on, experiential approach. Research shows that 90% of brain development happens by the age of five, making these early years a crucial time for learning. Children explore the world using all five senses, and meaningful experiences help them develop cognitive, social, emotional, and language skills essential for future growth.

At Desert Sun, we believe that children learn best by doing. Learning is an active process that requires thinking, experimenting, and constructing knowledge. Traditional academic concepts—such as literacy and math—are introduced in developmentally appropriate ways that engage children's curiosity and excitement. Rather than relying on worksheets, our teachers provide interactive experiences that build a strong foundation for understanding abstract concepts in later years.

Our Curriculum

Desert Sun follows a Reggio Emilia-inspired curriculum, designed to foster independence, self-confidence, and a love for learning. Through purposeful play and exploration, we help children grow in all areas of development:

Social & Emotional – Building relationships, self-regulation, and confidence

Physical – Strengthening fine and gross motor skills

Cognitive – Encouraging problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity

Language – Expanding communication and early literacy skills

To support emotional development and self-regulation, we implement Conscious Discipline, a positive discipline approach that helps children build healthy connections and manage their emotions. Our program aligns with the Arizona State Early Childhood Standards, ensuring a high-quality, research-based education.

Assessment & Growth

To track and support each child's progress, our teachers use a combination of observations and the Creative Curriculum Development Continuum. Additional assessments may be used as needed to provide individualized support, ensuring that every child receives the guidance necessary to thrive.

At Desert Sun, we are committed to creating a nurturing, engaging, and developmentally appropriate environment where children feel safe, valued, and inspired to learn. Together with families, we lay the foundation for a lifetime of curiosity, confidence, and success.

History and Background

Desert Sun Child Development Center has been serving East Valley families since 1978. It was started by Peg Brokaw, who had been a teacher in the Child Development Laboratory at Arizona State University. The school rented various locations until the spring of 1996, when the school purchased the property at 1512 West Elliot Road in Chandler, Arizona.

The property had been the home of the Dobson family when their local farm was in operation. The home was built in 1951 and therefore required extensive renovations to meet state licensing, city code, and school use requirements.

Staff

All staff members are highly trained professional teachers who adhere to Desert Sun's philosophies and programs. All staff members are fingerprinted and background checked. Children are always in the presence of a staff member during school hours. Other support staff and all volunteers must be with and supervised by regularly scheduled teaching staff at all times.

Administration

Trisha Lucas is the school's Educational Director. She is a graduate of Arizona State University with a degree in Family Resource and Human Development. She has worked as an educator for over thirty years and has been at Desert Sun for over twenty-eight years. She has taught Toddlers through Transitional Kindergarten. Trisha served on the Arizona Department of Education's Early Learning Standards Board. The goal of the Board was to revise the Early Learning Standard. Trisha is available to families for parenting support and guidance.

Jennifer Conley is the Primary Director Jenn has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and Special Education. Jenn has taught in the Mesa Public School, China, and has been at Desert Sun since 2014 as a teacher, student specialist, and assistant director. She is excited to expand the school into the primary grades.

Suzanne Scripture is the Business Director. Suzanne has her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Arizona State University. She has been at Desert Sun as a Parent since 2015 and started working in 2024. She has worked with children and families for the past 25 years. Her experience with families, child care, special education, and business is a great asset to Desert Sun.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the primary governing body of Desert Sun and is composed of the Desert Sun Directors, a limited number of Desert Sun Staff, Desert Sun families, and anyone from the community who has an interest in helping guide Desert Sun. The Board is responsible for the establishment of policy, the appointment of Directors, the preservation of the School's mission, strategic planning, finances, and marketing.

Meetings are open to the general membership, and we encourage attendance by any interested parents. Meeting minutes and financial reports are available to members in the Office or by request to the Board of Directors

The members of the 2025/26 Board of Directors are:

Regina Aldridge
Amanda Buckwalter
Linda and Charlie Bueker
Kristin Cox (President)
Elissa Depuydt (Vice - President)
Kayli Lang
Trisha Lucas
Meredith Marks
Cara Walsh-Meaker
Laura Meyer
Laura and Sully Sullivan
Sarah Tanner
Tim and Julie Vasquez

The Board of Directors can be contacted at boardpresident@dscdc.org.

EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

Parent-Toddler Classes:

Through hands-on play, development is encouraged in all areas of learning. The environment enhances the connection between the parent and the child and strengthens their relationship. The environment also supplies parents with connections to other parents to help support a strong sense of community. A parent or caregiver is required to attend the class with his/her toddler. While your child is not required to be potty trained, diapering may not be conducted on campus. Please see the Family Handbook and/or the office if you have any questions. The Parent-Toddler class aligns with the Arizona Toddler Early Learning Standards.

Three-Year-Old

The Three-Year-Old Program at Desert Sun aligns with the Arizona Department of Education Early Learning Standards and emphasizes social development with the support of a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher in every class. Classrooms are thoughtfully designed to foster independence and exploration, featuring accessible materials and learning centers that encourage children to engage in child-led, teacher-led, and group activities. Through hands-on experiences, children build confidence, problem-solving skills, and a love for learning. Daily routines include snack time,

outdoor discovery, and recess, providing opportunities for both structured and free play. Classes are available two or three days a week to accommodate different family needs.

Preschool/Multi-Age:

The Preschool/Multi-age Program emphasizes hands-on learning, discovery, and play, encouraging children to develop in all areas through a variety of classroom materials and experiences. Along with academic growth, students receive social and emotional support with guidance from a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. The curriculum aligns with the Arizona Department of Education Early Learning Standards, ensuring a strong foundation for kindergarten readiness. Daily class periods include snack time, outdoor discovery, and recess, providing a balanced mix of structured learning and play. Families can choose from several class options, including morning sessions offered three or four days a week.

Kindergarten - Primary:

In the Kindergarten-Primary Programs, students engage in both child-led and teacher-led hands-on activities, which encourage them to meet or exceed the educational standards set by the Arizona Department of Education. Their learning experiences are often enhanced through experimentation, exploration, and play, fostering long-term academic success. The curriculum goes beyond traditional subjects, incorporating Music, Physical Education, Mindfulness, Process Art, and Sign Language. Students also have ample opportunities for outdoor discovery. Students are required to bring their lunch and a snack.

Scholarships are available through IBE Scholarships (www.ibescholarships.org).

Extended Day Offerings:

4 and 5 day classes have an option for extended day classes until 3 PM.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR PROGRAM

Student placement

The director will make the final decision on classroom placement. We determine placement by age, boy/girl ratio, and placement from the previous school year. We will accept requests, but we will never guarantee a specific teacher, classroom, or placement with a particular friend.

Discipline

At Desert Sun, we believe that every individual is unique and deserving of respect. This includes respect for their person, belongings, and actions. We understand that young children are still learning emotional regulation, communication, and social skills. Behaviors such as hitting, biting, pushing, or yelling may occur as part of development. Our goal is to teach children safe ways to express feelings while maintaining a safe environment for all students and staff. We adhere to a strict no-violence policy and do not use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion. This includes prohibiting any form of physical punishment (e.g., shaking, hitting, pinching) or psychological punishment (e.g., shaming, ridiculing, threats). Coercion, such as forcing a child into a position or action, is also not permitted unless restraint is needed for safety. Disciplinary actions focus on teaching self-regulation. Children may be temporarily removed from the classroom to

receive support and practice self-control techniques when necessary. If a child's behavior presents ongoing safety concerns and improvement is not seen despite intervention and family partnership, the school reserves the right to suspend or discontinue enrollment.

Circumstances that may lead to dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated injuries to peers or staff
- Parents refusing to partner in the intervention asked
- Behavior requiring **constant 1:1 supervision beyond staffing ability**
- No improvement after behavior plan and outside support are put in place

Tier 1: Typical Developmental Behaviors

In preschool, children are still learning how to manage emotions, communicate their needs, and interact with others. Behaviors such as hitting, biting, pushing, throwing toys, refusing directions, or having emotional outbursts can occur as part of normal development. When these situations arise, teachers respond by first ensuring that all children are safe. The child is then guided to the safe space, the office, and/or a walk where they can regulate their emotions. Teachers use the moment as a learning opportunity by helping the child understand the appropriate behavior and supporting them in repairing the situation. Repair steps may include checking on the friend who was hurt, supporting the development of empathy for peers, or helping bring ice, and practicing how to use words to express feelings or needs. If another child was hurt during the incident, parents are notified so that everyone can work together to support the children in learning positive social skills.

Tier 2: Repeated or Escalating Behaviors

If behaviors continue or begin to intensify, the school will move toward a more structured support plan. This may be triggered by patterns such as multiple aggressive incidents within a week, injury to other children/staff, destructive behavior, or ongoing difficulty calming after becoming upset. In these situations, the school will partner with families by scheduling a parent conference to discuss concerns and next steps. A Behavior Support Plan will be developed, along with ongoing observation and documentation, to better understand the child's needs and identify patterns. The goal is to create consistent strategies between home and school so the child receives clear and supportive guidance in both environments. Possible supports may include accommodations to the environment, or, when needed, temporarily shortened school days, as well as parent assistance during the day. If a child's behavior requires ongoing intervention, the school may place the student on a 2-4 week probation period to evaluate whether the program is the best fit. Parents are expected to work closely with the school throughout this process to help ensure the child receives support and guidance.

Tier 3: Safety Concerns / Intensive Support

If concerning behaviors continue despite support and intervention, additional steps may be necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and staff. Situations that may lead to this level of response include serious injury to other children, frequent aggression, unsafe behavior

toward staff, or an ongoing inability to participate safely in the classroom environment. In these cases, the school may require further support measures, which could include an outside behavioral evaluation to better understand the child's needs, the use of a one-to-one aide, a shortened school schedule, or, in some situations, a temporary suspension while a plan for safe participation is developed. If a plan cannot be put in place, we will help parents find a program that will meet their child's needs. These steps are taken to ensure that the child receives the appropriate support while maintaining a safe learning environment for the entire school community.

Facility Regulated by DHS

The Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), Office of Child Care Licensure regulates Desert Sun Child Development Center. The License states that we may provide only part-time classes during the school year and may provide summer school classes for school-aged children.

DHS may be reached at:
150 N. 18th Ave., Suite 400
Phoenix, AZ 85007-3244
(602) 364-2539

Report Incidents

All incidents (i.e., car, verbal, racial, physical, etc.) are to be reported to the Desert Sun office within 24 hours of the incident. This includes incidents occurring in the building or on the grounds and parking lot.

Inspection and Financial Reports

Upon request, parents may view all fire, health, licensing, and financial reports available onsite in the school office.

Hours of Operation

During the regular school year, the office is open Mon. through Thursday from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and on Fridays from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm.

Equal Rights

Membership and registration for all programs and classes are open to the total community regardless of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, socioeconomic background, age, handicap, or gender.

Confidentiality

Student records are confidential and are only available to parents or legal guardians, regulatory authorities, and school personnel who have been given consent by the parents or legal guardians.

Issue Resolution Procedure

Desert Sun has an open-door policy and wants to work as partners with parents to resolve any issues. To share a concern, please follow these guidelines to ensure clear communication:

1. Speak to the teacher or director about your concern. Please avoid grouping together with parents to discuss situations on campus. This can be destructive to our community.
2. Desert Sun's Board of Directors has an email address that is viewed only by a Board member and is confidential. You may contact the Board at boardpresident@dscdc.org if you feel your concern has not been addressed or resolved.

Notices/Fliers/Posters

All notices, fliers, and posters must be submitted to the Desert Sun office for approval before being distributed or posted at the school. No selling of items or soliciting is allowed at Desert Sun.

Siblings and Visitors

Siblings and visitors are welcome to visit the classroom with parents, but are not allowed to stay in the classroom unless they are registered in the school and ratios are within school guidelines. State licensing only allows a certain number of children in the classroom. Desert Sun's policy is to maintain the same student-teacher ratio both inside and outside the classroom. We are a family-oriented school, and we allow teachers to bring their healthy children to assist the classes as needed.

Birthdays

Birthdays may be celebrated with special snacks. No foods prepared at home may be served. Children are encouraged to bring their favorite healthy foods, which may not be sweets such as cookies or cakes. Children with summer birthdays may pick a special day during the school year on which to celebrate. Due to Fire Department regulations, no candles may be lit.

Party Invitations/Thank You Notes/Gifts

Desert Sun does not allow parents or children to distribute birthday invitations unless everyone in the class is invited. This policy is in place to prevent hurting young children's feelings. Please mail all invitations, thank-you notes, or gifts.

Holiday Celebrations

Desert Sun has determined that in line with its purpose to be a support and a resource to parents with young children, class activities concerning a holiday will be kept matter-of-fact and low-key

leading up to the event. This will allow parents to set the tone for their celebration within the home. It will also allow the very young child, whose emotional system is still growing and maturing, the chance to join the celebration without emotional overload. Family traditions are stressed rather than a specific holiday.

Diapering

No diapering is allowed at any time in the facility. Desert Sun is not licensed for the daycare of infants or toddlers, so it does not have an appropriate area for diapering children. All diapering must be done in a member's family car. If a student has a soiled diaper during school, the directors will support the child in changing or the parent will be phoned and asked to come and change the child.

Restrooms

Children's restrooms are coed. The main restroom doors are to be opened when children are using the facilities. Please close the doors when done. This area is heated and cooled. Children must be accompanied to the bathroom by a fingerprinted, background-checked staff member. If the child has an accident, someone from the administration will assist the child. If the administration is unable to help the child, a parent will be phoned. Teachers will let you know at pick up if your child had an accident.

Field Trips

Each class may plan trips away from the classroom as part of the ongoing curriculum. All field trips will be taken in family cars, which have and use individual seat belts and car seats for each child. Children's emergency cards are to be with the adult in whose car they travel. All Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Child Care Licensure regulations will be followed. Parents are to be notified of field trips two weeks in advance and must sign permission slips for each trip. Staff members do not transport children under any circumstances.

Transportation

Desert Sun does not provide transportation of any type. Parents are required to provide transportation to and from school at the class beginning and ending release times.

Appropriate School Dress for Children

We like creative activities, which are often messy. Therefore, children and parents are encouraged to come to school in "old" clothes appropriate for painting, wet sand play, or pouring juice for snacks. For safety reasons, children and participating parents are asked to wear athletic shoes with closed toes to school.

Please bring to school each day:

- A complete change of clothing, including shoes. Please be sure all items are clearly marked with your child's name. Be sure clothing and shoes are appropriate for each season.
- A backpack for your child to keep their change of clothing in and to carry art projects and handouts home. Be sure to clearly label your child's belongings and the **OUTSIDE** of your child's backpack.

Cell Phone/Social Media Policy

1. The use of cell phones is discouraged at Desert Sun. When entering campus, please turn off your cell phones.
2. To protect children's safety and privacy, we ask that parents and visitors refrain from posting any child's picture on a social media website without explicit permission from that child's family. No videotaping is allowed at the school.
3. Smartphones should only be used in the classroom for photos that do not conflict with policy Number 2.

Teacher/Child Ratio

3-Year-Old Class	1/8
Pre-Kindergarten Class	1/9
Kindergarten	1/12
Primay	1/15

Supporting Children with Developmental and Special Needs

At Desert Sun, we are committed to creating an inclusive environment that honors the diverse needs of all children. If your child has a medical, behavioral, physical, or developmental condition that may affect their participation in school activities or poses a potential for emergency, please notify the Directors. This information allows us to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment. Teachers, aides, and relevant staff may be informed as needed to respond appropriately and interact with your child effectively.

All students receive a 45-day developmental screening administered by their teacher. The results are reviewed by the lead teacher, student specialist, and director to ensure that the school environment supports each child's development. If areas of concern are identified, families will be contacted to discuss next steps. Parents are encouraged to reach out with any questions about their child's development or the screening process.

Some children may require additional support or accommodations to thrive in our program. If needed, families may be asked to provide a full-time aide or pursue outside services such as developmental evaluations or therapy. The student specialist has access to any relevant educational or developmental information to help guide planning and support.

Challenging behaviors or developmental differences can be complex, and meaningful change may happen gradually. Our goal is to partner closely with parents to create a support plan, which may include a behavior plan, outside consultation, or a timeline for developmental goals. In certain cases, a child's behavior may require that they be picked up early or temporarily remain home for the day. These steps are taken to ensure both the child's success and the well-being of the classroom community.

While we do our best to support every child, there may be situations where Desert Sun cannot fully meet a child's needs. In such cases, we will work collaboratively with parents to explore alternative settings that can better provide the necessary services. Decisions regarding a child's placement are made with thoughtful input from the classroom teacher, student specialist, and school directors, always prioritizing the child's best interest.

We believe every child brings unique strengths to the classroom and contributes to the growth of our community. By working together, we aim to nurture independent, self-confident, and curious learners who build strong relationships and thrive in a cooperative environment. We ask families to partner with us in this effort by remaining open, engaged, and supportive as we navigate each child's developmental journey together.

Evaluation/Assessment

The purposes and uses of Desert Sun's student evaluation and assessment include:

- Describing a child's learning and developmental progress
- Communicating with families
- Identifying a child's interests and needs
- Referral for diagnostic screening and assessment when indicated
- Improving the curriculum and adapting the teaching environment and teaching practices
- Planning program improvements

Desert Sun's assessment procedure:

- Teachers and/or the Directors perform assessments during regular class time, during normal class activities
- Assessments will occur throughout the entire school year
- All records are confidential and available to staff and parents only. Student records may be shared with other providers and agencies with written consent from the family
- Assessment and screening records are located in the student's file in the school office and are available to staff and parents upon request
- Families may be involved in planning and implementing assessments
- Results of written assessments are shared with parents during Parent/Teacher conferences or when needed
- The Director and Student Specialist are able to provide some developmental screening. If interested, please come to the office for more information

Library

A library of child development books and a wide selection of children's books are available for checkout. Supplemental articles and pamphlets are also available for checkout. Please check in the school office for more information.

Special Services, Social Groups, and Guest Programs

Throughout the school day, some children may be invited to participate in small social groups or individual sessions that support their growth and development. These groups are led by our student specialist or other trained staff members and are designed to build social-emotional skills, cooperation, and peer interaction.

In addition, children may be pulled from class to work with outside providers such as occupational therapists (OT) or speech-language pathologists. These sessions may be part of ongoing services or evaluations. Parents are notified after their child has participated in any of these services or assessments. If, at any time, you prefer that your child not participate, you are welcome to email the school to let us know.

We also enrich our program with special guests who bring exciting on-site learning experiences to our campus—such as music, theater, mindfulness, sign language, and sports or fitness coaches. All visitors are required to sign in at the office and may be accompanied by a staff member at all times while working with children.

MEMBERSHIP, REGISTRATION AND TUITION

Membership: Membership is required of all families enrolling in the school. Membership is extended to all staff. Membership is open to the community.

Registration: Currently, involved continuing member families are given first choice of available classes, and nonmember families from the community are given second choice of classes on a first-come, first-served basis.

In the event of over-enrollment of a class, the following criteria will be used for registering children in the class:

1. Children currently enrolled in the program
2. Siblings of children currently enrolled
3. Current members of Desert Sun and past members of Desert Sun, ranked according to total number of years of enrollment, Board of Director's service and employment.
4. General public

Tuition: Tuition is based on a yearly rate (not how many weeks of classes are offered each month). For your convenience, the yearly tuition is broken up into monthly payments. Tuition for all classes is due on the first of each month. Tuition is due regardless of attendance. All monthly tuition payments received five working days after the 1st of each month are to include a late fee of \$25.00. An additional \$10.00 will be charged for each week the tuition is late. Students will be withdrawn from the school if tuition is more than 30 days late. We require 30 days written notice for a student leaving the program. Tuition will be prorated for the remainder of their last month. If a check is returned from the bank for insufficient funds, closed account, or other reasons so that Desert Sun is unable to collect the funds, the person or family writing the check will be assessed a \$15.00 fee for the returned check. For additional children in your family, there is a 10% reduction in tuition. This reduction is applied to the lowest tuition. After-school care is not available. If a student is picked up late, there will be a \$10.00 charge for each 15 minutes of late time.

All fees paid at registration are NON-REFUNDABLE and NON-TRANSFERABLE. If a minimum enrollment is not met, the class will not be offered, and all fees will be refunded.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

Child Liability Waiver

By enrolling your child at Desert Sun Child Development Center, you acknowledge and accept that participation in school activities may involve inherent risks. Parents/guardians agree to release and hold harmless Desert Sun Child Development Center, Inc., its staff, volunteers, and representatives from any claims or liabilities arising from participation in school activities, use of school facilities, or volunteer work performed at the school. This waiver applies to both your child's participation and any activities you engage in while volunteering on campus

Emergency Procedures

First aid kits are available and maintained in each classroom and on the outside play areas. A complete First Aid box is also kept in the school office and each bathroom. First aid kits are taken on field trips and outings away from the school. When a child is injured, it is the Master teacher's responsibility to fill out an accident report. A copy of the report will be given to the family within 24 hours.

In case of minor injuries, the child will be cared for, and parents will be told of the incident when they come for the child at the end of the school day. Desert Sun employees do not remove splinters from children. This could result in infection. Parents are called to come and get the child if the splinter cannot wait until the end of school.

In case of a more serious injury, employees will first notify 911, then the parents of a child or adult.

Every effort is made to create a safe environment, including protection from hazards such as electrical shock, burns and scalding, slipping, tripping, and falling. Floor coverings are secured to prevent slipping and falling. No baby walkers are allowed.

Fire drills are practiced on a monthly basis. Children will participate in the drills. Parents will be notified when the drill has taken place. These drills are required to be unannounced prior to the drill. Teachers will do an all-staff emergency drill and lock down twice a year. Children will not participate in these drills.

We have walls and fences around the school property. Desert Sun also has cameras positioned around the school. The front gate access has a locked combination lock on it that is only given to families enrolled and staff. To access the code, contact the office.

Immunizations

Arizona State law mandates that all children enrolled be required to have their immunizations up-to-date before starting classes. Current medical documentation of the child's immunization record must be on file. An exemption form is available in the school office and must be kept in the student's file. If your child is not immunized, and there is an occurrence of a vaccine-preventable disease at the school, the family will be notified and excluded from the school for a period of time determined by the state health department.

Medications

Medications may be dispensed under special circumstances. Please contact the school office for the required paperwork. No medications may be stored in your child's backpack or cubby. This includes sunscreen.

Infectious Diseases

Desert Sun will follow the local, county and state guidelines concerning control of infectious diseases.

Illness - Good Health Guidelines

We know that a child's illness is a difficult time. Because it is frustrating to rearrange schedules to provide care for a sick child at home, we do our best to help eliminate these concerns as much as we are able. Young children are susceptible to colds, flu's and other diseases, and the best way to prevent illness is to prevent exposure. This requires that our classrooms have the healthiest environment possible. We ask parents to assist by making sure their child(ren) are symptom-free of fever, diarrhea, questionable rash, any communicable disease, vomiting, discharge in or around the eyes, green or yellow runny nose, and/or excessive coughing. Children will not be allowed in a classroom if they are exhibiting any of the above symptoms at morning greeting. Parents will be notified promptly if your child becomes ill while at school. We also ask that adults adhere to these same guidelines. As with any situation, we realize there may be exceptions. If your child suffers from a chronic condition such as hay fever, allergies, or any other recurring symptoms, please let us know.

Reporting an Absence

If your child is unable to attend school, please call the Desert Sun office or message administration through brightwheel to report the absence. If your child is ill, please indicate the nature of the illness. State laws require Desert Sun to record this information in an illness log. Children should be symptom-free for 24 hours, without any medication, before returning to school.

Insurance Coverage

Desert Sun carries accident and liability insurance as required by Arizona Law.

School Grounds

The building and grounds are as hazard-free and fire-safe as possible. No smoking is allowed in the facility or on school grounds, or in the presence of children. Firearms are prohibited on school grounds. Desert Sun follows public health requirements to avoid hazards such as air pollution, lead, and asbestos. Outside activity is limited during heat or air pollution alerts. Areas recently painted or renovated should be well ventilated before children occupy them.

Play Yards

Desert Sun has two play yards. The yard on the south is for children enrolled in the preschool and primary school classes, three and older. The north yard is for three and under. Children need to

stay in their designated yard. Each side is set up to meet specific developmental skills appropriate for the ages of the children.

Desert Sun's general rule is that children are not allowed on any of the play yards outside of organized school-sponsored activities. The reason for this policy comes from concern for the safety of the children. Because Desert Sun does not have staffing available to monitor the play-yards outside of school-sponsored activities, we must insist that parents help us monitor and enforce this policy.

Desert Sun is sensitive to the fact that there are occasions when parents are picking up or dropping off a sibling with a different start or release time. If parents have another child with them on those occasions, the parents must assume the responsibility of supervising their child at all times. Please be aware of the fact that children must adhere to the safety rules for the climbers and may not play on climbers that are inappropriate for their age.

To keep children safe on the play yard, here are some guidelines:

- ☐ Children need to be directly supervised by a Desert Sun staff member.
- ☐ Children are not to play behind or inside the storage sheds.
- ☐ No jumping from the second or top level of the climber.
- ☐ Do not allow children to climb the fence. If a ball goes over the fence, an adult may go out the gate and walk around to retrieve it.
- ☐ Sand needs to stay in the sandbox.

Supervision

Teachers supervise children by keeping them in sight. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible as long as the children are in a safe environment and as long as teachers frequently check on children who are out of sight.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Any staff member accused of abusing or neglecting a child in the program will be put on suspension during an investigative period. The staff member's employment will be terminated with sufficient proof of guilt. The investigation will be confidential for the protection of the employee and the child involved.

Any suspicion of child neglect should be reported to the school director, a mandated reporter. The suspected abuse will be documented and reported to Child Protective Services.

Fire Drills

Fire evacuation plans are posted in each room. The procedure is to go quickly to the area north of the parking lot on the West Side of the building. Desert Sun holds monthly fire drills.

Visitors on Site

All visitors are required to check in with the school office immediately upon entering the school. Visitors will be issued a Visitor's Badge and will be asked to sign in and out at the office.

Main Gate Locks

The main gate near the parking lot on the West Side of the building is to be CLOSED AND LOCKED AT ALL TIMES. Parents are asked to be responsible for securing the lock as they enter and exit the facility. Please do not allow children to handle the lock. The code is accessible by calling the office.

Pesticide Application

At least 72 hours' notice will be given before pesticide application by posting signs at the school entrance and each classroom door. The notice will identify the application area and the type and quantity of chemical applied.

Safety

Desert Sun's policy is that families should leave at the end of class. Desert Sun does not have staff available to supervise children outside of school-sponsored activities. Therefore, children are not allowed on school grounds before and after class or on weekends unless it is expressly permitted as a school-sponsored activity.

Children are not allowed to play in the retention area and oilanders west of the playground fence or the parking lot *at any time*. For the safety of the children, we ask that parents keep their child's safety top priority in the parking lot or the grass area west of the fence line.

Brightwheel, Signing in and out Policy

Students need to be signed in and out of school each day. ADULTS ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO SIGN IN AND OUT ON IPAD. Children will not be released to anyone without written authorization from the parent or legal guardian. Parents are asked to inform the school office if there are any special circumstances involving picking up or dropping off a student. Students will not be released to any person appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

Parking Lot Safety

Please park in designated parking spots. Please follow the arrows in the parking lot to make sure everyone is safe. For the safety of our families, we discourage leaving your car idling in the parking lot, leaving children unattended in the car, and leaving purses or valuables in your vehicle. DO NOT HOLD GATE OPEN OR PROP IT OPEN!

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Donations

Desert Sun has a 501 (c) 3 status with the IRS. All donations to Desert Sun can be used for income tax purposes according to the current regulations for donations under this status. Donations of supplies from families are welcome and appreciated.

Parent Visitors in the Classroom

Families are welcome to visit any area of our facility during regular program hours. When visiting your child's classroom, we encourage you to focus your attention on your child—engage in play and interact as your child invites you to. If your child prefers space or does not wish to engage, it's perfectly fine to quietly observe and support from a distance. Your presence is meaningful, whether you are participating or simply watching your child navigate their day.

Volunteering and Family Participation

Desert Sun values the unique contributions of each family and encourages all parents and caregivers to participate in our school community. We welcome involvement from families of all backgrounds, including diverse family structures, cultures, languages, abilities, and beliefs. Sharing your time, skills, or talents helps enrich our program and fosters a stronger connection between school and home.

There are many ways to volunteer throughout the year—whether it's helping with classroom projects, making playdough, assisting during a special event, repairing equipment, participating in a parent workday, or sharing a cultural tradition or family activity. Whatever your comfort level or availability, we're grateful for your support and look forward to partnering with you to enhance your child's experience at Desert Sun.

Volunteer Liability Waiver

By enrolling your child at Desert Sun Child Development Center, you acknowledge and accept that participation in school activities may involve inherent risks. Parents/guardians agree to release and hold harmless Desert Sun Child Development Center, Inc., its staff, volunteers, and representatives from any claims or liabilities arising from participation in school activities, use of school facilities, or volunteer work performed at the school. This waiver applies to any volunteer participation and any activities you engage in while volunteering on campus.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Desert Sun's Birthday Celebration

This event is usually held every year in January. Families are encouraged to bring lunch and a blanket and picnic on the play yard. All gifts given to Desert Sun are tax deductible.

Parent Workday

Each year, parents are invited to participate in a workday. This is the best way of keeping our building and equipment in repair and our yard maintained. We encourage all families to help.

CommUNITY Programs

At Desert Sun, our mission is to empower families by providing them with valuable tools through workshops. Topics may include child development, educational seminars, cognitive development, self-growth, discipline, communication, and more. Through these workshops, we aim to support both children and parents in navigating life's challenges with grace and mindfulness, promoting lifelong health, happiness, and connection.

Occasionally, workshops may be held separately for each class. Signing up is necessary to ensure the seminars are not canceled, as a minimum enrollment is required. This helps us continue offering amazing learning opportunities to all families.

Membership Meetings

A membership meeting is held during the month of April each year. The year's report is presented, and expiring seats on the Board of Directors are filled by a vote of the membership.

Student/Teacher Visits/Conferences

Children in preschool, kindergarten, and primary meet with their teacher before the beginning of the school year. This is a time for the child and teacher to begin to get acquainted and see their classroom. A short visit eases the adjustment to school. Parent conferences are held twice a year. Families are encouraged to raise concerns and work with their teacher to find solutions and incorporate the child's needs into classroom practice. Additional conferences are held when requested or needed.

Other Events

Additional events are sometimes held, such as a Parent Orientation meeting at the beginning of the school year, Fall Festival and Spring Fling, and Picnics throughout the year.

Safety During Special Events

Please be aware that parents are responsible for their children at all special events. Staff members are not available to supervise during events.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

At Desert Sun, we encourage each family to actively participate in their child's education. Families are invited to collaborate with the Master Teachers to plan their involvement, which may include regular class participation (twice a month), creating educational materials, assisting with equipment, supporting special class programs, or helping in the office. Additionally, families can contribute by participating in special events and commUNITY workshops. There are countless ways to engage, and we believe every family's unique contribution strengthens our community.