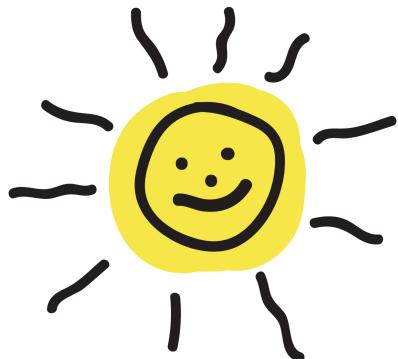


# RISE Center FAMILY HANDBOOK



**RISE Center**  
Where Special Kids Shine  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®

The RISE Center Family Handbook is designed to provide families with an overview of RISE Center and the basic structure and standards of the program. The Handbook is organized so that families can become familiar with the basic philosophy and goals of the center, as well as the policies and procedures that guide our day-to-day operations. On a yearly basis the handbook is revised, and families are asked to review and stay informed of current policies and procedures. Families should feel free to seek additional information or clarification from leadership regarding plans and procedures. Additional information about the RISE Center is available on the website at [www.risecenter.ua.edu](http://www.risecenter.ua.edu).

## **Description of RISE Center**

RISE Center is a nationally recognized early childhood education school that is dedicated to excellence in service, research, and teaching. The school predominately serves young children with disabilities, but also includes children who do not have disabilities. The RISE Model is a unique blend of early childhood education, child development, early childhood special education, and integrated therapy. The purpose of the school is to optimally prepare children for their next educational environment and support families.

## **RISE Mission Statement**

The mission of RISE Center is to:

- provide exemplary services based on recommended practices to young children with diverse abilities and their families
- offer instructional opportunities through collaboration with various academic units in higher education
- engage in research that positively influences practices in the field of early childhood education at the local, state, and national levels
- interface with the community through outreach activities
- disseminate information and provide technical assistance to other community-based agencies
- affect policy and system changes at the local, state, and national levels

## **Program Philosophy and Goals**

The goals of RISE Center are to (a) provide family-centered services designed to meet the individualized needs of all children and families; (b) provide a blend of educational and therapy services within the context of a developmentally appropriate curriculum; and (c) prepare children for their next educational environment.

The school adheres to the philosophy and recommended practices of both early childhood special education and general early childhood education. The philosophy is based on the following premises:

1. Services are family-centered with particular emphasis placed on the family

as the primary decision-maker in each child's school.

2. The assessment process is dynamic and ongoing and includes multiple procedures, information sources, and settings. Assessment is linked to instruction.
3. Services are designed around an individualized plan consisting of goals that are based on families' concerns, priorities and resources, the child's strengths and needs, and expectations of the next environment.
4. Services are offered that vary in intensity and structure based on the individual and group needs of the children and their families.
5. Children's development is promoted in all areas including gross and fine motor skills, independence, cognitive skills, social competence and emotional growth, and communication.
6. Therapy services (i.e., physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and music therapy) are provided within the context of the educational environment using an integrated approach. Therapy goals are educationally relevant and are implemented collaboratively by the therapists and teaching staff.
7. The foundation of the learning environment and activities is based on general early childhood guidelines, which are blended with recommended practices from early childhood special education.

### **Commitment to Teaching and Research**

The RISE Center mission reflects a partnership with higher education in the areas of teaching, service and research. Affiliations with other institutions are important for achieving this mission. RISE Center staff is committed to developing relationships with colleges and universities that benefit both groups. Often, university students assist in the classrooms and work directly with the children. Typically, practicum students and interns are enrolled in course work that focuses on early childhood education, nursing, social therapy, human development and family studies, speech and language pathology, physical and occupational therapy. The obligations of the RISE Center staff in this mission include:

- Orientation
- Classroom assignments
- Sign-in and out procedures to ensure a secure environment
- Supervision
- Evaluation and feedback to promote professional learning and growth

As part of The College of Human Environmental Sciences, RISE Center is also committed to the research mission of The University of Alabama. All research projects completed at RISE Center are approved by the RISE Research Committee. This committee includes the director, assistant director and select members of the CHES Child Development and Family Studies Faculty. Participation of the children enrolled at RISE Center is optional for families. Any participation of children in research at RISE Center must be authorized by the parents. Parents receive a description of the research project, time period for the study and a permission form.

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation**

The University of Alabama's RISE Center was granted reaccreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in June 2017. This recognition is achieved by only seven percent of early childhood programs nationwide. Based on research in the area of the development and education of young children, NAEYC standards define the highest standards for early childhood programs. NAEYC Standards guide the policies and procedures of RISE Center and include:

#### **Positive relationships among children and adults**

RISE Center promotes positive relationships among all children and adults. Staff members encourage each child's sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community and fosters each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member. Warm, sensitive, and responsive relationships help children feel secure. The safe and secure environments built by positive relationships at RISE Center help children thrive physically, benefit from learning experiences, and cooperate with others.

It is important at RISE Center that children and adults feel welcome when they visit the program. RISE Center has an open-door policy for families and are encouraged to visit often to observe children in their classroom environment. Families and teachers work together to develop a separation plan as children transition from home to school. Teachers help new children adjust to the program environment and make friends with other children.

Teaching staff engage in warm, friendly conversations with the children and encourage and recognize children's work and accomplishments. Children are encouraged to play and work together. Teachers help children resolve conflicts by identifying feelings, describing problems, and trying alternative solutions. Teaching staff never physically punish children.

Parents and teachers communicate with each other frequently as the children's needs and accomplishments change. Families are provided with a daily schedule and are notified well in advance if classroom changes are made. Parents and teachers work together to determine a plan for providing positive behavioral supports. Parent's beliefs and preferences are always respected, especially concerning holidays, faith based traditions and other observances. Transition activities are also completed when children move from room to room. This includes a transition meeting between the staff of current classroom teachers and new classroom teachers to share information, class visits to the next teacher's classroom and an opportunity for families to observe in the child's new classroom prior to placement. For children graduating RISE Center, transition books are completed, and transition meetings are scheduled when requested support services are provided in the child's next educational placement to ensure a smooth transition.

In the event that parents become concerned regarding a policy, procedure, or specific incident, we unconditionally encourage this to be immediately brought to the attention of the director. This may be accomplished via email, phone call or in person meeting. When concerns are voiced, parents will meet with the director and other relevant staff members to resolve the concern in the most professional manner possible. It is our hope that through following this practice we are able to maintain the most positive relationships with our families.

### **Curriculum**

A well-planned written curriculum provides a guide for lead teachers, teaching assistants and therapists. It helps professionals work together and balance different activities and approaches to maximize children's learning and development. Children learn and grow through exploration and play. It is important that teachers and therapists provide instruction individually, in small groups and in large group settings. Throughout instruction children are encouraged to develop better reasoning and problems, solving skills, and cooperate with others while using language, and developing growth in all areas of development.

RISE Center uses Creative Curriculum, which is a web-based curriculum program that is best matched to the NAEYC Standards. It is suitable for both typically developing students and students who have special needs. It covers the following developmental areas: social/emotional development, physical development, cognitive development, and language development. It includes goals for developmentally appropriate content for learning, planned activities linked to these goals, daily schedules and routines, and designates materials to be utilized. In addition, Learning Without Tears and The Incredible Years curriculums are implemented in RISE Center classrooms.

Materials and equipment at RISE Center should spark each individual's child interest and encourage them to experiment and learn. Families are encouraged to observe at RISE Center to provide input regarding materials, equipment, and curriculum and to observe their child in a structured setting dictated by the daily schedules. The educational and therapy team include parents when developing adaptations of learning materials and teaching methods to assist the children in making optimal developmental progress.

### **Teaching**

RISE Center uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the curriculum goals. We recognize that children have different learning styles, needs, abilities, interests, and backgrounds. By recognizing these differences and using instructional approaches that are appropriate for each child, Lead Teachers, Teacher Assistants and Therapists are able to promote learning for all our children. To optimize learning, Lead Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Therapists meet regularly to modify strategies and materials to respond to the needs and interests of individual children. This communication and adjustment ensure each child is engaged and learning opportunities are enhanced throughout the school year.

Teachers provide time each day for indoor and outdoor activities (weather permitting) and organize time and space so that children have opportunities to work or play both individually and in groups. During all learning opportunities, RISE Center staff carefully supervise children. Additionally, children's recent work is displayed in classrooms and hallways so teachers can help children reflect on and extend their learning.

The RISE Center facility was designed to make observations of the children easy for families. With the rooms surrounded by windows, families are able to observe any activity of a regular day.

### **Assessment of Child Progress**

RISE Center uses ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to gather information on each child's learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children develop. An important role of the Service Coordinator at RISE is to ensure families have a strong understanding of the timeline and purpose of assessment within the RISE program. Families are encouraged to raise questions regarding how individual assessment methods will meet the needs of their child.

Ongoing assessment procedures and data collection provide information that drives sound leadership decisions, teaching strategies, and program improvement at RISE Center.

Lead Teachers and Therapists use a variety of assessment methods, such as observations, checklists, formal testing and rating scales to plan appropriately challenging curriculum and tailor instruction that responds to each child's strengths and needs. Assessment methods are appropriate for each child's age and level of development and encompass all areas of development, including math, science, cognitive skills as well as language, social-emotional and physical development. RISE Center teachers and therapists are required to participate in trainings that ensure they are qualified to conduct assessments. These trainings are provided by local school systems, offered at professional conferences or during professional development opportunities.

Teaching Strategies Gold is an authentic, ongoing, observation-based assessment system. Lead Teachers use this on line tool to gather and organize meaningful data on individual

children's progress. Electronic, developmental profiles are created for each child and are used to design goals for individual children and monitor their progress throughout the year. Lead Teachers and Therapists also use this information to link assessment and teaching to enhance classroom environments and modify teaching strategies with a goal of creating optimal learning opportunities for each child. Families receive information about their child's development and learning on a regular basis, through meetings or conferences.

#### *Traditional Learners*

Lead Teachers maintain online portfolios of each child's work with monthly additions via Teaching Strategies Gold. Information regarding a child's assessment is shared with families at Family Conferences that are required two times per year. These conferences occur in the Fall and Spring with an additional suggested opportunity at the end of the school year for a Family Conference in July. Families are welcome to request additional family conferences during the year outside of the established meeting schedule to address particular needs and concerns of the child. A Family Meeting note is kept as documentation for each family meeting. Depending on the particular purpose of the conference the Service Coordinator, Assistant Director and/or Director may attend a family conference.

#### *Learners with Special Needs*

All children with special needs are determined eligible for services during an intake evaluation administered by a team of professionals at RISE Center. Using an arena style format – the families provide input to the entire evaluation process as the educator, physical therapist, occupational therapist, lead nurse, speech and language pathologist and service coordinator assess the child in a natural environment. Children are assessed in five developmental areas: cognitive, fine and gross motor, social, adaptive, and speech and communication. The Service Coordinator discusses the results of the assessment with the entire team to determine if the child is appropriate for RISE Center and specific classroom placement. A formal evaluation in all areas of development and the development of an Individual Family Service Plan or Individualized Education Plan is completed by the family, RISE lead teachers, therapists and all invested individuals following an eight-week introductory period in a child's designated classroom.

#### *Birth to Three years of age:*

For Families birth to three years of age, following the introductory period an IFSP is developed to guide and support a child's learning and growth at RISE Center. IFSP meetings are held annually in October and a six month review is held in the Spring. IFSP meetings are presided over by the service coordinator, the child's lead teacher and the RISE therapy team. In addition to formal testing the program uses many ways to authentically assess a child's progress using a portfolio format. The portfolio contains work samples, projects, photographs, therapy notes, daily and/or weekly notes. Fall and Spring Family Conferences ensure families have the opportunity to meet and discuss their child's learning and growth. Children are re-evaluated via variety of standardized tests yearly on their entry anniversary date. Families are welcome to request additional family conferences during the year outside of the established meeting schedule to address particular needs and concerns of their child.

#### *Age Three to Five years of age:*

At age three children with special needs are evaluated to determine eligibility for school services and placement. RISE Center is considered a placement for Tuscaloosa City Schools and Tuscaloosa County School Systems. Individualized Education Plan meetings are presided over by the child's school system and are held according to the Tuscaloosa City or Tuscaloosa County Schools' Special Education Departmental Procedures. IEP meetings are held at least annually, however families are able to request additional IEP meetings at any time. Families may request an additional IEP meeting with the RISE Center Service Coordinator. Additionally families also are encouraged to participate in a family conference two times per year however IEP meetings can replace a family conference.

### **Health**

RISE Center is committed to the health and safety of all students, including our children with compromised immune systems. Healthcare Response Plans are in place to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment where all students can grow and learn. RISE Center Leadership team includes a Lead Nurse who oversees all response plans related to the health and safety of all children and staff. The Lead Nurse will identify the need and implement an Individualized Healthcare Plan on any student with noted health conditions that are verified and documented by a physician. Proper nutrition is essential for healthy growth and development. In addition to the Lead Nurse, RISE Center collaborates with a Registered Dietician to oversee nutrition and upon request can provide support to families regarding nutritional needs.

RISE Center staff is certified in Adult and Pediatric First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Automated External Defibrillator through American Red Cross. All health related services and medical procedures are administered by a licensed nurse. In an effort to limit the spread of germs and contagious illness, the program has protocols in place regarding regular hand washing intervals and the routine cleaning and sanitizing of all surfaces according to the NAEYC Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Frequency Table. Issues related to children who are sick have been outlined in the Illness Section of this handbook.

### **Teachers**

RISE Center employs and supports a teaching staff with educational qualifications, knowledge and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development as well as support families' diverse needs and interests. Lead Teachers at RISE Center are required to have or be working toward a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education or related field. In addition fifty percent of our Teaching Assistants have an undergraduate degree in education or a related field. Employees are required to complete 12 hours of professional development related to skills and knowledge in early childhood development and early childhood special education per year. All staff receives yearly training in the program's curriculum, working as a team, evidence based strategies and family centered practices.

The RISE staff consists of the following positions:

- One (1) director
- One (1) assistant director

One (1) service coordinator  
One (1) parent resource specialist  
One (1) Lead Nurse  
Seven (7) Lead teachers  
Eighteen (21) teacher assistants  
Eight (8) REACH Employees  
One (1) physical therapist  
One (1) occupational therapist  
One (1) speech and language pathologist  
One (1) music therapist  
One (1) LPN, procedure nurse  
Two (2) Teacher Assistant/Floater  
One (1) Program Assistant  
One (1) Student Worker

### **Families**

A priority for RISE Center is to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with every family to help foster each child's development in all settings. These family relationships are sensitive to each individual's family composition, language and culture. Our relationships with families are based on mutual trust and respect, involve families in their child's educational growth and encourage families to fully participate in RISE Center.

RISE Center welcomes all families to become involved in all aspects of our program. Program information is provided in a language that families can understand. A calendar including yearly events and activities is provided to families at the start of the school year in August. Additional follow up communication regarding activities and events is provided via email in the RISE family Weekly Update and Program Wide BrightWheel Messages. Lead teachers also provide information to families in classroom weekly notes via BrightWheel. Announcements are posted on an announcement board at the entrance of the building when important information is shared with families.

RISE Center encourages parents to get involved with daily activities and events however they can. We welcome families to volunteer in the classrooms and at special events. These opportunities might include but are not limited to:

- working with the children
- assisting with art projects
- laminating and copying
- working at fundraisers
- speaking to University classes
- participating in special events at the center
- sharing your families story with the media
- participating in support groups
- helping with front desk coverage
- assisting with teacher appreciation week
- assisting with classroom activities
- helping with the garden
- speaking at RISE and DINE Luncheons

- attending local and district early intervention meetings

If a family has a program wide idea, a need and/or a suggestion for how RISE can better meet the needs of the children and families we serve they are encouraged to meet with the director or a member of leadership to discuss their idea.

RISE Center has a policy of open and honest communication. RISE recognizes that miscommunication, stress, mistakes, and disagreements are all possible within our program. If conflicts and differences arise in interactions between families and program staff families are encouraged to schedule a meeting with their child's lead teacher as a first step. If a resolution is not mutually agreeable the family is encouraged to schedule a second meeting with the Director and Lead Teacher. Additionally depending on the scenario, the Lead Nurse, Service Coordinator and/or Assistant Director may be included in either meeting.

In all meetings the following strategies will be utilized:

- clarity around the issue; listening and valuing all participants contributions
- collaboration among parties for seeking potential solutions
- compromising from all participants for solutions
- established timeline for following up on implementation of solutions

We look forward to hearing from our families so that we can maintain a quality program over time. We value and respect our families and consider them the most important member of their child's team.

If the meetings at RISE Center do not full fill a family's expectations for a resolution. They are encouraged to contact the Dean of Human Environmental Sciences.

### **Community Relationships**

RISE Center is located on The University of Alabama Tuscaloosa campus and an integral part of the College of Human Environmental Sciences. It has been embedded in the Tuscaloosa Service community and has a forty-year history of providing resources to families and early education services to young children. The majority of the children involved at RISE Center have special needs therefore the program strives to establish and use resources in the community to support the achievement of our program goals related to the provision of early childhood and preschool special education services.

RISE Center staff frequently participates in community organizations and agencies that further promote the programs capacity to meet the needs and interests of our children and their families. This includes but is not limited to:

Read and Romp  
 United Way Activities and Events  
 Down Syndrome Alabama  
 Early Intervention Council  
 Tuscaloosa ARC

Hand in Paw  
Project Launch  
Guest Speakers and Civic Organizations  
Alabama Institute for the Deaf and the Blind  
Field Trips to local Museums, Zoo and Athletic Facilities  
Pep Band Performances  
Tuscaloosa County, Tuscaloosa City and private school Student Service Projects

### **Physical Environment**

#### *Public and Secure Areas*

The building of RISE Center is divided into two distinct areas. The front foyer is accessible to the public and houses the reception area, conference room, small kitchen and office space for the director, assistant director and service coordinator. The secure area that includes classrooms, therapist and lead nurse offices, library, indoor play area and access to outdoor play spaces is a designated secure access area. Individuals must use designated FOBs, ACT Cards or be allowed to enter by a designated RISE Center Staff to access this secure area of the building. For safety and security access to this part of the building is documented by The University of Alabama.

#### *Classroom Space*

The indoor primary space of all six classrooms at RISE Center is equal in size, 1200 square feet. Size class is limited to 16 resulting in 75 square feet per child. Each classroom has a separate kitchen and toileting area. Additionally each classroom has an office space for the lead teacher and teaching assistants.

#### *Outside Play Space*

The RISE playground measures over 38,000 square feet with a total of 90 children, with a fence that bisects the playground into a preschool playground and an infant and toddler playground. The classes rarely share playground with one class outside at a time. The square footage for each child is 75 square feet, providing more than enough area for play if the entire group were outside at one time. The Playground was designed and assembled by Grounds for Play. The playground is inspected by a licensed playground inspector in the fall of each year and safety recommendations are addressed by the leadership team of RISE. The findings of the inspection and the remedial results are documented in program reports. The program has a policy in place for daily monitoring for playground safety and playground equipment.

#### *Indoor Play Space*

The Commons Play area has 3,000 square feet and is used by one classroom at a time. Size class is limited to 16 children resulting in 187.5 square feet per child. The Commons Area is inspected and sanitized each morning by the Lead Nurse to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children. The physical therapist monitors the equipment for children on Tuesdays and ensures that it is safe for the children.

### **Leadership and Management**

The RISE model is considered unique and is nationally recognized as a model demonstration program. Presently there are RISE programs in Dallas, Houston, Austin, Denver, Corpus Christi, Stillwater, Oklahoma, and Huntsville, AL. The director attends the Annual RISE Directors Meeting and maintains an ongoing dialogue with other RISE Center Directors and staff.

The director of RISE Center meets monthly with the Dean of the College of Human Environmental Sciences to ensure the program is effectively implementing policies and procedures that support a stable and strong personnel, fiscal management and program management so that children, families and staff have high quality experiences. Additionally weekly Leadership Meetings, bimonthly Lead Teacher Meetings and monthly All Staff Meetings ensure the consistent implementation of policies and procedures, effective management of operations and communication throughout the program is maintained.

The director and leadership team consistently reach out to families regarding current practices to ensure a family centered approach to services is maintained. Each year families are given the opportunity to formally evaluate the program using the NAEYC family survey. The results are integrated into the process of establishing annual goals for RISE Center.

### **Commitment to RISE**

RISE Center is a unique educational setting that provides the opportunity for children with and without special needs to learn and grow together in an inclusive environment. RISE Center is the only RISE Program in the country that is able to offer its services to families who have children with special needs at no cost. We also keep our tuition costs for traditional learners in the lower range compared to other preschools and day cares in the Tuscaloosa area. The cost per student at RISE Center is just under \$18,000 per school year. For this reason, all families that enroll their child in RISE Center are encouraged to support our program and participate in our fundraising activities in the following ways:

*1. Classroom Monthly Supplies*

*Lead Teachers provide families with a supply list each month, parents are asked to purchase requested supplies for the classroom*

*2. BUY for RISE Fundraiser, Fall*

*Annual Sale of Merchandise Donated by local merchants, families are asked to volunteer with set up, work the actual day of the sale, sell tickets or complete other tasks that contribute to the event*

*3. RISE Tournament of Champions, Spring*

*Annual Two Day Golf Tournament and One Day Tennis Tournament , families are asked to volunteer to be a hole monitor, serve lunch, volunteer at CHIP in for RISE, sponsor a team or complete other tasks that contribute to the event*

4. *President's Cabinet Dinner, Fall and Spring*

*Families are asked to volunteer for 3 hours either in the Fall or Spring on a Friday evening to help serve catered dinner to the Presidents Cabinet*

Participation in Fundraising Events is encouraged to maintain a child's enrollment at RISE Center. Families that are challenged by participating in fundraising events listed are asked to speak directly with the RISE director to seek other opportunities.

### **Tuition**

RISE Center does not require tuition for families who have children with special needs. Traditional Learners enrolled at RISE Center are required to pay tuition. Tuition is based on the full year program (\$5,280) and is paid in 12 equal installments. Tuition is not reduced during school breaks, family vacations, and schedule adjustments or for extended absences. Tuition is \$440 per month and is due by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Families sign The University of Alabama Financial Agreement each year and all payments are made via the Student Account Services.

### **Attendance and Operating Hours**

RISE Center is an early childhood education center that serves as a model demonstration school for The University of Alabama; the yearlong schedule is closely aligned with the schedule of The University of Alabama as well as the local school systems. **Children are expected to attend the program year-round.** The projected days of operation for each year are supplied in advance to allow parents to plan alternative childcare options. We understand that some absences are unavoidable at times due to illness, doctor appointments, family vacations, etc. The success of our inclusion model can be impacted if our children are not present daily in our program. Therefore excessive absences will be viewed as grounds for termination from the program. For more information on termination, please refer to the "Termination" section of this handbook.

**The hours of operation for children are from 7:45 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.** Typically, most classrooms start their morning group at 8:30am and

children are expected to be present and ready to participate at that time. Lead Teachers have the option of placing a sign on the classroom door to indicate that late arrivals must wait in the hallway. If you arrive to your child's classroom after 8:30 and the sign has been posted, please wait in the hallway until you are instructed by a staff member to enter the classroom, usually until the end of the current activity.

### **Arrival and Departure of Children**

RISE Center has a special covered area in front of the building for parent parking to drop off and pick up children. To ensure the safety of all children families are expected to follow the signs posted in the parking lot regarding drop off procedures. Families should only park in designated parking spots when dropping off and picking up children. Families are encouraged to turn their vehicles off when entering RISE unless a vehicle needs to idle due to extreme heat or cold to maintain interior temperature. For safety reasons families are asked not leave children unattended in their cars in RISE parking areas.

**Children should arrive between 7:45am and 8:30am and picked up by 2:30 p.m.** For safety reasons, the entrance to the building will remain locked until 7:45am each day. To enter the secure area of RISE Center families must swipe their designated FOB. Families that do not have their FOB will be required to sign in and out on a sign in sheet in order to be given access to the secure access. Each family receives 2 FOBS when they enroll in RISE Center. Additional FOBS may be purchased for \$25.00 for babysitters, grandparents and other individuals that are authorized to pick up children. If a FOB is lost or damaged families are responsible for replacing the FOB for \$25.00.

Each day, parents must sign their children in and out of their classroom. For the sake of safety, children must never be left without direct transfer from an adult to a member of the staff. Additionally an authorized adult must return to the classroom to pick up each child at the end of the day. The *Authorization to Pick Up Form* should be completed prior to enrollment and in place by the child's first day of school. If emergency changes must be made, parents should phone the school to inform the RISE Center of the change and to allow them to prepare the child for the change in plans. The child is released only to authorized persons with a valid form of identification and a car seat.

Should a legal change of family status occur (divorce, legal separation), it is the responsibility of the family to file a court-certified copy of the custody section of the divorce or separation decree with the Lead Teacher and the Service Coordinator. RISE will not be held responsible for failing to honor legal arrangements that have not been communicated in writing.

### **RISE Schedules and Services**

During the typical school day, each child will generally follow a schedule that includes individual activities, large group activities, music therapy, gross motor play in the commons or outdoors, therapeutic services (if indicated), lunch, snacks, and rest (children may or may not sleep). Individual classroom schedules are posted in the classroom and lead teachers ensure each family has their own copy. Within each classroom schedule, each child's schedule is individualized so that the day includes as many learning opportunities as possible.

RISE offers a number of services to families of children with special needs that may include early childhood special education, physical, occupational, speech and language, vision and music therapies using a collaborative/consultation service delivery model. The teachers and teacher assistants, under the supervision of the therapists, deliver many of these services through a transdisciplinary approach in which the therapeutic activities are implemented. The therapists monitor the activities on a regular basis. This approach to therapy allows therapy to be delivered in an efficient manner throughout a child's day. Recommendations are also provided to families for carry-over in the home and other natural environments. Based on individual children's needs, families may be provided information about supplemental direct therapies available in the community. Therapists confer with parents to discuss additional therapy services.

Families are encouraged to share information regarding therapies that take place outside of RISE Center with the service coordinator, therapists and teachers so collaboration can be ongoing and mutually beneficial.

## **Family Communication**

Communication with families is a priority at RISE Center. Families are encouraged to openly and honestly share information with RISE Center while their children are enrolled in the program. A variety of opportunities and methods are implemented to ensure there is ongoing communication between families and the program. A child's Lead Teacher is considered the main point of contact for families. In order to ensure the needs of children and families are addressed in a timely and professional manner the lead teacher who is considered the team leader is responsible for coordinating and communicating information regarding specific children in their class. If English is a family's second language, verbal and written communication will be facilitated by a translator. This translator will be provided by RISE Center. When a child turns three years of age and needs to be served by the Tuscaloosa City or County School System for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting, the school system will provide a translator for the family at the IEP meeting. RISE will continue to provide translation services for other meetings and communications.

Families will notice questions about your family's race, religion, home language, culture, and family structure on your child's admission paperwork and other forms throughout the year. This allows us to gain information about how your family defines these aspects of your child's home life, giving us an awareness that will allow us to better understand your child/children's needs. Families are welcome to discuss these issues further with the child's lead teacher at any time. If a family wishes to decline sharing this information RISE Center will respect a family's decision to do so.

### *Open House Meeting*

The Open House Family Meeting is held in August prior to the start of the school year. This meeting is in place to ensure a smooth transition from home to school for new families to RISE Center and from classroom to classroom for currently enrolled students. During this meeting parents will meet in a school-wide meeting with the director and other staff and then break out to meet with their child/children's classroom teachers.

The school-wide meeting will address:

- Plans and Procedures

- Yearly Fundraising Activities
- Yearly Budget
- Strategic Planning
- Positive Behavior Support – RISE Cares
- Curriculum at RISE Center

The break out classroom portion of Open House will address:

- classroom expectations
- classroom routines
- classroom schedules
- communication systems

*Bright Wheel Communication App* – Lead Teachers communicate with families daily via Bright Wheel. Pictures of children, information about their day, weekly notes, notes from therapists and other important information is shared as needed. Program wide announcements are also made via Bright Wheel.

#### *Family Weekly Email Updates*

RISE Leadership will send a weekly email to families regarding announcements, special events and fundraisers. We *strongly* recommend that parents maintain a current email address with RISE Center as this is the most efficient way for program to contact all families regarding important information. Please note information regarding illness will also be communicated via email distribution lists.

#### *Printed Information in Cubbies and Announcement Boards*

Families are encouraged to check their child's cubby and announcement boards on a daily basis. From time to time valuable printed information is shared with families.

#### **Meals**

Children should eat breakfast before they arrive in the morning. Lunches should be sent with the children each day. There is not sufficient storage space for multiple lunches or snacks to be sent at one time. Items in lunch boxes should be labeled with the date and child's first and last name. Lunch is served each day according to a classrooms individual schedule and

bottle feedings are coordinated directly with the child's Lead Teacher in writing. Gastrostomy tube feedings, when necessary, are implemented by a licensed nurse only. Prior to gastrostomy tube feedings being administered at school, a *School Prescriber/Parent Authorization for Gastrostomy Tube Care* orders must be received from the child's physician. A new *School Prescriber/Parent Authorization for Gastrostomy Tube Care* is required at the beginning of each school year and with any change in feeding orders.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, choking is a very common cause of unintentional injury or death in children under the age of one, and the danger remains significant until age five. RISE children are closely supervised during mealtimes; however, prevention is crucial in minimizing hazards for choking in young children. It is very important that a child's food be cut appropriately prior to sending to school as staff has a very limited time for lunch preparation. This is especially important for food that is round and in the shape of a "coin." Food is to be served according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability, taking into account each child's stage of development. Foods that are listed as a potential choking hazard should be cut into small bite-sized pieces that range in size from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch and are not round in shape. If a food item was not appropriate to serve, a note will be sent home in your child's cubby as a friendly reminder to follow our safe food guidelines.

In an effort to model inclusion and provide a safe learning environment for our students with food allergies RISE Center follows strict protocols related to food and other severe allergies (*see also celebrations and birthdays*). To reduce the likelihood of severe or potentially life-threatening allergic reactions, all food items that are provided at RISE Center as a group will be peanut and tree nut free. This includes community snack, birthday parties and other program wide events. Food labels that say "contains or may contain traces of peanut and tree nut, and/or manufactured on shared equipment with peanut and tree nut products" are included as well. Parent provided lunches may still contain these allergens. Staff are trained and instructed to strictly follow the protocols in the *Allergy/Anaphylaxis Response Plan* during lunch when another child brings food that contains a classroom specific allergen.

Although RISE Center strives to be "allergy aware" and strives to provide a safe and healthy learning environment, exceptions to this policy may occur during the following events:

Muffins for Mom, Doughnuts for Dad, Thanksgiving Feast, Annual Halloween Party and Annual Easter Party. At these events parents are typically present to make food choices for their children, however if they are not present the lead nurse will assist the staff in monitoring food choices for children with allergies. All efforts will be made regarding the safety of our students with food allergies and alternative choices will be provided. Families will be reminded in advance when large events requiring more supervision of food choices are required in the Family Weekly Update.

All other food allergies will be handled on an individual basis and staff will be instructed by the Lead Nurse on how protocols will be implemented in each classroom.

### **Admission**

All children who do not have special needs are typically notified in March and admitted each year in August. Acceptance of these children is prioritized with staff children and siblings of children with special needs being considered first. If any openings remain, siblings of traditional learners are admitted and then community children are considered for admission. The children who do not have special needs are administered a criterion-referenced developmental checklist within the first month of school.

Upon admission to the school, families are required to complete an admission packet. All admission forms and releases must be completed prior to enrollment. Additionally, forms are required to be resubmitted and updated annually to maintain enrollment. This typically occurs in July of each year. Children will be unable to attend RISE Center if forms are not submitted by the deadline determined and communicated by the RISE Center Director. Exclusion from attending school is a possibility if forms are not current and complete.

The contents of the admission packet include:

- School Calendar*
- Student Admission Forms (Pages 1-8)*
- Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form*
- Child Pickup Form*

*Identification Form  
Medical Alert Information Form  
State Health Assessment Form  
Medication Policies and Procedures Acknowledgement Form  
Emergency/Medical Release Authorization Form  
Medical Records Release Form  
Photograph/Videotape Release Form  
OT/PT Evaluation and Treatment Form (if applicable)  
Completion Signature Form  
Financial Agreement for Tuition (if applicable)  
“Blue Card”/Immunization Record (obtain from doctor)  
Comprehensive Physical Exam Form (requires doctor’s signature)  
RISE Center Authorization Form*

### **Medical Information**

Please note due to the population of children served at RISE Center, our protocols and procedures for maintaining the following forms are strictly enforced. The following forms require a physician signature:

*Certificate of Immunization Record formally referred to as a Blue Card  
Comprehensive Physical Exam Form  
(All children upon admission, children with special needs updated annually)  
OT/PT Evaluation and Treatment Form  
(Children with special needs upon admission and updated annually)*

The Lead Nurse will coordinate admission forms regarding health-related services.

**Communication between the Lead Nurse and families will ensure forms are kept up to date throughout a child’s participation in the program. All forms and records must be kept current in order for enrollment to be maintained.** In addition to forms submitted by families, RISE Center uses the Alabama state wide Immunization Patient Registry, ImmPrint to monitor vaccine histories. Any individual reviewing a file must sign in/out on the *Access to Student Records Form*.

Each child two months of age or older enrolled at RISE Center is required by The

Department of Human Resources to have a valid Alabama Certificate of Immunization prior to enrollment or on the first day of attendance. Each child's Certificate of Immunization will need to be updated according to the expiration date indicated on the certificate. The expiration date coincides with the date that the next immunizations are due. The Certificate of Immunization must have the Alabama Department of Public Health seal and include an expiration date.

The State of Alabama does not recognize philosophical, moral, or ethical exemption from vaccination. However, a Temporary or Permanent Medical Exemption may be issued by a physician and an expiration date is required on the form. An Alabama Certificate of Religious Exemption must be obtained from the county health department. However, by State School Immunization Law, a Religious Exemption can only be issued to kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

In the event of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak, children with medical or religious exemptions will be excluded from attending RISE Center.

When a child leaves RISE Center upon graduation, transfer, relocation or otherwise; RISE Center may return the original certificate to the child's parents/guardians and retain a legible copy in the school record.

Prior to the admission of a child with special needs, families will authorize RISE Center to receive any pertinent medical records. Special medical procedures, including but not limited to urinary catheterization, trach care, and gastrostomy tube feeding and medication administration require *School Prescriber/Parent Authorization* Forms to be completed and signed

by the parent and physician prior to admission. These forms are updated at the beginning of each school year. Also families are responsible for notifying the Lead Nurse of any change in physician orders for special medical procedures. An updated School *Prescriber/Parent Authorization* Form is required.

### **Confidentiality**

Children's files are accessible to teachers, teacher assistants, therapists, university students and administrative staff. This access is limited, and professional discretion is used at all times. Charts and records are kept in the teacher's office and are locked in secure cabinets. Information in a child's file is utilized to better serve the children and families enrolled at RISE Center. Referencing files is a crucial part of encouraging the development of our children. University students also benefit from reviewing files to further their understanding of child development and the impact of early childhood special education. Information in a child's file includes, but not limited to, biographical information, medical information, formal and informal assessments, therapy notes, weekly notes, releases, and photographs.

RISE Center staff has the responsibility of safeguarding confidential information to which they have access. A staff member who gains knowledge within the scope of employment may not take advantage of such information for personal gain nor may such information be disclosed to anyone, except as required by the employee's position. Such information includes information regarding children, families, supporters, and volunteers through virtue of employment with RISE is considered confidential and is not disclosed to third parties without the family's or individual's consent. Additionally, employees do not discuss confidential information about children and/or their families in the presence of other children and their families.

### **Supervision**

The RISE Center maintains the highest level of quality by maintaining adult to child ratios that are maximally beneficial. The classrooms have the instructional support of one (1) lead teacher and up to three (3) teacher assistants. Additionally, there are therapists, approved volunteers and university students who provide instruction and assistance in the classrooms to ensure that the children receive individual help if needed.

Lead Teachers and Teaching Assistants remain with their classroom for the entire day 7:45am-2:30pm. Lead Teacher meetings take place every other week, for one hour on Tuesday's during naptime. During this specific time period teacher assistants provide supervision in the classroom. Classrooms teams typically remain together for two years and are assigned to a classroom for a full school year August through July to ensure a stable learning environment through continuity of care. Families are notified when changes in teams are taking place by the Leadership of RISE.

### **Celebrations and Birthdays**

The RISE Calendar traditionally includes a Halloween Party, Thanksgiving Feast, Holiday Open House, and Spring Celebration Party, Muffins with Mom and Doughnuts with Dad. The Lead Nurse monitors and suggests specific foods offered at these events, however, families are directly responsible for the food choices their child makes at the various celebrations. It is difficult for staff to ensure the food monitoring and safety of each child during heightened center activity and numerous outside contributions. If families have specific concerns during these events they are asked to speak directly to the Lead Nurse and their child's Lead Teacher. In partnership with families, RISE Center believes a safe environment for all can be provided during center wide celebrations.

If parents wish to celebrate their child's birthday during a school day, the Lead Teacher should be notified a week in advance so that they can include the party in the planning for the class. In addition, communication with the Lead Nurse is necessary to ensure that a safe

snack is planned in an effort to include all children. Parents are responsible for following RISE Center Protocols for party food and items to be shared with children. The party will take place in the child's classroom or on the playground. Please refrain from gift giving at RISE Center.

### **Additional Safety and Precautions**

Personal toys may not be brought to school unless it is a designated "share" day. Shared toys must be kept in the children's cubbies.

Children are not required to sleep, but must rest for a time on their mats. Mats are provided.

For security reasons, families must enter and exit the building at the front entrance only.

All visitors, except for individuals who are authorized to bring children to school and pick them up in the afternoon, must sign in and out at the entrance of the building and wear a visitor's badge. These visitors must have a specific purpose to their visit.

### **Supplies and Personal Items**

Parents are responsible for sending the following:

1. The child's personal supplies, including:
  - a. extra change of clothing appropriate for the season
  - b. disposable diapers/extrra underwear
  - c. brush and comb
  - d. pillow and blanket
2. The child's lunch and/or bottles each day. If needed, lunches are heated in microwave ovens. Lunches are stored in refrigerators located in each classroom and labeled with date and child's last name. The school provides plates, cups, spoons, and bibs. Frozen foods or lunches that have to be prepared are not appropriate given the time constraints of lunch preparation.
3. Each month, parents will receive a supply list that will include housekeeping items such as cleaning products, paper towels, Kleenex and other items. Snack foods may also be on the list. Due to the incidence of food allergies among our students, please make sure you purchase the exact snack designated on the list. Variations in brand can affect the safety of these products for children with food allergies.

## **Illnesses**

RISE Center is committed to the safety and health of all students and is especially mindful of children with compromised immune systems. Children with compromised immune systems are at a much higher risk of complications due to illness. Families are expected to notify the Lead Teacher of any illness or circumstances indicating an absence by 8:00am via phone or Bright Wheel message. If the absence is due to illness the Lead Teacher will communicate that to the Lead Nurse. Excluding a child with illness from school will be based on the exclusion guidelines, the needs of the sick child and the other children in the classroom. In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, and at the discretion of the Lead Nurse, parents will be notified through the email distribution list of the existence of a contagious illness. The Alabama Department of Public Health defines an outbreak as two or more similarly ill persons who live in different households and have a common exposure. If a child is hospitalized for any reason, including emergency department visits, parents must obtain a release from the physician stating the child is healthy enough to return to school. A copy of the release must be provided to RISE staff before the child may return to school.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to manage their child's illness promptly and with careful consideration of the others in their classroom. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics preschool children average 6 to 8 colds per year as they have not developed the necessary protective immunities. RISE Center makes every attempt to practice standard precautions such as regular hand washing and cleaning toys that have been mouthing and shared between children to limit the spread of illness. Parents/guardians or other caregivers should assist their child with proper handwashing on arrival to the classroom each day.

Children will not be permitted to attend school if the following illnesses or symptoms are present or have been present within the past 24 hours:

- **Severe colds-** exclude until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications. Child must feel well enough to participate to return.
- **Vomiting-** exclude with two or more episodes of vomiting until 24 hours after vomiting subsides or a written release from your health care provider that the cause is not contagious and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- **Diarrhea-** exclude with two or more episodes that are not associated with changes of diet or medication. Must be able to be contained in diaper or toilet. Children with diarrheal illness of infectious origin generally may be

allowed to return once the child has no diarrhea stools for 24 hours. If a cause is identified, exclusion recommended by department of health will be followed.

- **Strep throat**- exclude until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment AND must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- **Measles**- rash appears 3-5 days after initial symptoms. Exclude until 4 days after rash appears. Without vaccine history, one should be excluded for 21 days, after rash appears of most recent case.
- **Mumps**- exclude for 5 days after onset of swelling of salivary glands. Without vaccine history, one should be excluded for 21 days after onset of swelling of most recent case.
- **Chickenpox** – may return when rash has crusted or, in immunized people without crust, until no new lesions appear within a 24 hour period. Without vaccine history, one should be excluded for 21 days after rash appears of most recent case.
- **Pink eye or conjunctivitis**, exclude from the time the child is diagnosed or sent home from school until 24 hours AFTER the ointment/drops are started. Eyes must be free of discharge before the child may return.
- **Fever** (100.4 or greater) accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness until the child is fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- **Head lice**, exclude from the time the head lice are discovered until after the first treatment is complete.
- **Mouth sores** with drooling, unless a health care provider or health department official determines that the child is not infectious.
- **Impetigo or other open, draining or infected skin lesions** – exclude until 24 hours after treatment is initiated. Lesions on exposed skin should be covered with watertight dressing.
- **MRSA**- exclude only if skin lesions are draining and cannot be completely covered with a water tight bandage.
- **Hand, foot, and mouth disease (Coxsackie virus)**- exclude until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.
- **Existence of lingering illness, lethargy or behavior changes** which would inhibit a child's participation in classroom activities or outside play.
- **Any other infectious or potentially infectious illness identified by the school nurse.**

RISE staff and volunteers will adhere to the same exclusion guidelines and will not be permitted to work while sick. These exclusion guidelines apply to RISE Center and are recommended by the following institutions: American Academy of Pediatrics, Mayo Clinic, and Center for Disease Control, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, National Institute of Health, and Texas Children's Hospital.

In the event that a child becomes ill while at school, parents/guardians will be contacted by phone and arrangements made for pick up within the hour of being notified. Parents must provide and maintain an up to date cell, home, work and emergency telephone number.

The following is an excerpt from the Alabama Minimum Standards for Daycare Centers and Nighttime Programs regarding diseases which, when found, require notification to the health department:

**ALABAMA NOTIFIABLE DISEASES/CONDITIONS**

GROUP A DISEASES/CONDITIONS-REPORT TO THE COUNTY (OR STATE) HEALTH DEPARTMENT BY TELEPHONE, TELEGRAPH, OR IN PERSON WITHIN 24 HOURS OF DIAGNOSIS.

Botulism	Pertussis
Cholera	Poliomyelitis, paralytic
Diphtheria	Rabies, human and animal
H. influenzae, invasive disease +	Trichinosis
Hepatitis A	Tuberculosis
Listeriosis	Typhoid fever
Measles (rubeola)	Yellow fever
N. meningitidis, invasive disease + +	Outbreaks

+i.e., meningitis, epiglottitis, sepsis, cellulitis, septic arthritis, osteomyelitis, pericarditis, and type b pneumonia

++ Detection of organism from normally sterile site (e.g. blood and cerebrospinal fluid)

GROUP B DISEASES/CONDITIONS- REPORT IN WRITING TO THE COUNTY (OR STATE) HEALTH DEPARTMENT WITHIN 7 DAYS OF DIAGNOSIS.

Amebiasis	Legionellosis
Anthrax, human	Leprosy

Brucellosis	Leptospirosis
Campylobacteriosis*	Lyme disease
Chancroid*	Lymphogranuloma venereum*
Chlamydia trachomatis*	Malaria
Dengue fever	Meningitis, aseptic
E.coli 0157:H 7 (including HUS & TTP)	Mumps
Encephalitis, viral	Psittacosis
Giardiasis	Reye syndrome
Gonorrhea*	Rocky Mountain spotted fever
Granuloma inguinale*	Rubella
Hepatitis B	Salmonellosis
Hepatitis, other viral	Shigellosis
Histoplasmosis	Syphilis*
Human Immunodeficiency Virus	Tetanus
infection ** (including asymptomatic infection, ARC, and AIDS)	Toxic shock syndrome
Kawasaki disease	Tularemia
Lead, elevated blood levels (> 15 mcg/dl)	Vibriosis

\*Use Sexually Transmitted Diseases report card

\*\*HIV -seropositivity to be reported by laboratories; symptomatic cases to be reported by clinicians to state Division of AIDS Prevention & Control (334)613-5364 or 1-800-344-1153.

State Health Department Telephone Numbers:

Division of Epidemiology (334) 613-5347 or 1-800-338-8EPI (24-hour coverage)

Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control (334) 613-5364 or 1-800-344-1153

Division of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (334) 613-5350

Division of Tuberculosis Control (334) 613-5330

Division of Immunization (334) 242-5023

Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (334) 260-3400 (24-hour coverage)

## **Medications**

Families are encouraged to administer medications to their children at home to the greatest extent possible. Should your child require **prescription, over-the-counter (OTC), or herbal** medication while attending school, the following guidelines must be strictly followed. These protocols were adopted with your child's safety in mind. Any questions concerning the Medication Administration guidelines should be directed to the Lead Nurse.

- **ALL** medications whether prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal **must** be delivered and signed in to the school nurse by the student's parent/guardian or the parent designated adult, and in the original container.
- A **School Medication Prescriber /Parent Authorization Form** must be completed and signed by both physician and parent for each medication, before **ANY** prescription, non-prescription, or herbal medication can be administered at school. A copy of this form can be found at [www.riseschool.ua.edu/forms.html](http://www.riseschool.ua.edu/forms.html) or obtained through the Lead Nurse.
- If the medication order is **changed** during the school year, a **new School Medication Prescriber/Parent Authorization Form** is required. Both the prescriber and parent/guardian must sign the new form. The exception to this is if the prescriber submits a hand written order. It will be attached to the **School Medication Prescriber/Parent Authorization Form** and the parent will sign this.
- For **Prescription** medications, a **current pharmacy labeled** container is required which includes the student's name, physician name, name of medication, strength, dosage, time interval, route and date of drug's discontinuation when appropriate.
- For **over-the-counter** medications, **an original** container is required and all manufacturers' labeling must be clearly legible. The student's name must be written on the container.
- The school nurse will not administer any medication when there is any discrepancy (i.e., expired, label different from instructions or contents, label is unclear or label torn).
- All over-the-counter medication must be supplied by the parent/guardian and accompanied by a **School Medication Prescriber/Parent Authorization Form**. The school will not supply, provide or stock over-the-counter medications (i.e., antibiotic ointment, Benadryl, etc.)
- In accordance with FDA regulations and recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, no over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medications will be administered to children under the age of six without a physician order. **There**

**are no exceptions to this.** If a cough and cold medication is to be administered, a physician's order must be submitted PRIOR to the medication being given.

The administration of medication is documented on the *Medication Administration Daily Record Form*. Medication will be stored in a securely locked cabinet or locked container if refrigeration is required, unless the licensed prescriber authorizes a different arrangement. Only RISE school nurses (RN or LPN) will have access and will carry key on their person. The parent/guardian will pick up and sign out student's unused medication (when medication is completed, expired, or the last day of the school year). The school nurse will properly dispose of medications not picked up by parent/guardian.

Parents must sign *Emergency/Medical Release Authorization Form* at the beginning of each school year. The release specifies the procedures that will be followed in case of a medical emergency or concern. These authorizations include:

- Authorization for RISE Center nursing staff to speak with your child's physician
- Authorization to act in best interest of child if unable to reach parent/guardian
- Parent/guardian financial responsibility for emergency treatment

RISE Center is located next door to University Medical Center and across from DCH Regional Medical Center, a Level III Trauma Center.

### **Inclement Weather and Unscheduled Closings**

RISE Center participates in tornado drills and staff members are trained in emergency preparedness procedures annually. Each classroom has a map indicating evacuation routes and barricade in place areas.

In case of severe weather, RISE Center follows the schedule of the **Tuscaloosa City School System**. If this system closes due to inclement weather, RISE Center will also close. If the threat of inclement weather arises, families should check the Tuscaloosa City School System website, listen to local radio stations for school closings or check local news stations

and make arrangements to pick up their child promptly. RISE Center Leadership also announces closing via the Bright Wheel communication system.

During the summer months when the Tuscaloosa City School System is not in session RISE Center will close at the discretion of the Dean of CHES and recommendations from The University of Alabama. Families will be notified via email and other communication systems as quickly as possible in the event of early dismissal and center closings.

### **Building Emergency Plan**

As an entity of The University of Alabama RISE Center has a Building Emergency Plan that outlines our response plans to unpredictable events. This document is available on our website for families to access.

### **Other Health and Safety Procedures**

The following health and safety protocols are followed at RISE Center:

- Fire and tornado drills are conducted regularly. Evacuation routes are posted in each of the classrooms.
- All classrooms, playground and commons area maintain a first aid kit.
- Adults and children follow *Proper Handwashing Intervals and Protocols* throughout the day.
- Frequently mouthed/shared objects/toys are cleaned and sanitized daily and between uses by the children.
- Diaper changing and toileting are performed in a separate area of the classroom.
  - Gloves are always worn by the staff when diapering or assisting children with toileting.
  - Gloves are changed in between each child.
  - Soiled diapers and clothing are kept in separate, closed containers.
  - Changing tables are sanitized after each use.
- All classroom materials used by the children or staff such as towels, wash cloths, bibs, sheets, and blankets are laundered after each use.
- All electrical outlets in RISE Center are shock-proof.
- All staff is required to receive a physical and TB Skin test initially and then periodically.

- Hepatitis B vaccination series are offered and provided for the staff.

### **Incident Reporting**

An *Unusual Occurrence Report* will be completed by the lead teacher, or by the person having knowledge of the facts in the event of any accident, injury or unusual event. Families will be promptly notified of an accident or injury by phone or BrightWheel message depending on the nature of the injury. The report will be completed within a 24-hour period of the occurrence and shared with the family, lead nurse and director. A copy of the report will be given to the family once all signatures are completed and then filed in the child's white binder.

### **Animal & Pet Policy**

All animal visits to RISE Center must first be approved by the Lead Nurse. Pets or visiting animals must have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animals are fully immunized and that the animal is suitable for contact with children. Teaching staff supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals. Program staff makes sure that any child who is allergic to a type of animal is not exposed to that animal. Reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets because of the risk for salmonella infection.

### **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**

RISE Center staff participates in professional development regarding child abuse and neglect on an annual basis. If a staff member suspects possible child abuse or neglect, observations must be reported following The University of Alabama Policies and Procedures. The staff member must inform the Lead Nurse and Director, who in turn will notify The University of Alabama Police Department.

If a family suspect abuse or neglect at RISE Center, it should be called to the director's attention immediately. The director and CHES Dean will meet with the family and gather information regarding the incident. The Director and Dean will follow The University of Alabama Child Abuse Reporting Policy and Procedures.

### **Guidance and Positive Behavioral Support – RISE Cares**

All staff of the RISE Center provide behavioral support and use discipline strategies that demonstrate kindness and compassion, but also firmness and consistency. Every attempt is made to help children gain the confidence and knowledge that is needed to develop their self-control. Children are not allowed to hurt themselves or others, or to intentionally destroy property.

Promoting positive behaviors in children is a primary goal in the classroom setting. RISE Center uses the RISE Cares Model. It is a Comprehensive, Integrated Three-Tiered Model of Prevention. It includes three tiers of instruction and support for children to achieve success academically, behaviorally, and socially (See Attached Pamphlet). RISE staff participates in yearly training that focuses on the RISE Cares Model, Positive Behavior Supports, and reviews all items in the programs Positive Behavioral Support Guidelines. The RISE Cares Model is shared with families at the start of the school year, utilized at parent conferences and during ongoing communication regarding behavior throughout the school year. A RISE Cares Home program is shared with families so they can utilize the positive behavior support model within their home environment. A parent workshop is scheduled annually to provide information and resources for families regarding developmentally appropriate behavior and the RISE Cares Home program.

*RISE Guidelines for promoting positive behaviors program wide:*

- Classroom Expectations are simple and geared toward the children's developmental level; RISE Cares expectations are posted in each classroom
- Utilizing a predictable daily schedule

- Teaching staff serve as models of appropriate behaviors.
- Teachers frequently remind children what they want them to do. The use of the word “no” is not acceptable as an appropriate reaction to children’s behaviors.
- Children will be reinforced for following the expectations and modeling positive behaviors
- Modifying the classroom environment and or materials to meet the needs of the children
- Children will be encouraged to follow expectations via three positive support strategies: precorrection, instructional choice and positive specific praise.
- Teachers use repetition as a tool in each room, with the children clearly understanding cause and effect relationships.
- Teachers artfully situate children in both large and small group setting to promote successful learning experiences

*The following procedures that are not acceptable at RISE Center when disciplining a child and are not permissible at any time*

- Physical or aversive punishment of any type
- Psychological abuse of any type
- Coercion

#### *Tier 2 and Tier 3 Behaviors:*

When a child’s behaviors interfere with (1) a child’s learning, development, and success at play (2) is harmful to the child, other children, or adults or (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or challenges in a school setting staff members move children to Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 in the RISE Cares Model. The Service Coordinator is notified by the lead teacher and guides teachers, families, and leadership through the process to ensure children and staff are supported and give the resources they need to eliminate or reduce

the behavior. The goal of Tier 2 and Tier 3 is to respond to challenging behaviors and avoid the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures.

### *Challenging Behaviors*

Exclusion from RISE Center will only be considered when all other possible interventions have been exhausted. This would mean the steps taken to provide support in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions have been unsuccessful and the challenging behavior persists. Exclusionary measures will only be taken if there is agreement between the classroom team members, therapy team, leadership team and family that it is in the best interest of the child. At this time RISE Center will aid the family in accessing services and an alternative placement in the community. The Service Coordinator and Lead Teacher will continue to communicate with the family and provide support as needed to ensure the child is successful in their next placement.

### **Mixed Age Groupings**

RISE strives to create the optimal learning environment for all learners that attend the program. Each year lead teachers, therapists and the leadership team meet to discuss each individual child and make a recommendation for placement for the next school year.

RISE Center is NAEYC Accredited and maintains recommended ratios for classroom size and teacher to child ratios. However, the inclusive nature of our program requires the consideration of the variety of needs for each child and their family when determining a child's placement recommendation. Thus, RISE Center focuses each year on creating classroom roles that provide the best opportunity for learning for all of its children while simultaneously considering NAEYC's guidance for appropriate age ranges. The range of ages within each of its seven classrooms can fluctuate from year to year.

As a result of this careful consideration, in RISE classrooms children can be both leaders and followers. Children learn to compromise and collaborate; to plan and negotiate; to work in a group or by themselves. Social Language role models for children with special needs are present in each classroom. Experiences in RISE classrooms prepare all children for their next educational setting. Below are the age ranges recommended by NAEYC that RISE Center uses as a guide when considering classroom placements.

**NAEYC Age Category and Range Recommendations**

Infant – birth to 15 months  
Toddler - 12 to 28 months / 21 to 36 months  
Preschool - 30 to 48 months / 48 months to 60 months

**Transition to Prekindergarten and Kindergarten**

One aspect of the RISE mission is to prepare children for their next educational setting. RISE center is currently working on a well-articulated transitional plan program wide and plans to have this in place and information updated by August 2022 in the RISE Family Handbook.

**Attire Recommendations for Children**

Families are encouraged to dress their children in comfortable clothing and shoes each day. Daily activities include active and messy play. A change of clothes should either be sent to school daily or kept at school in the child's cubby. Children wear oversized t-shirts during messy art activities to help protect their clothing. Every attempt is made to use child friendly, washable supplies that will not destroy clothing, however this cannot be guaranteed.

**Field Trips**

Fieldtrips are optional and provide meaningful learning experiences to support and expand the classrooms curriculum. At RISE Center, fieldtrips are limited to the Preschool A, B and C classrooms. Parents must provide written consent or permission in order for their child to

participate. If a family makes the determination that their child will not participate in a fieldtrip, children are expected to attend school on the designated fieldtrip day.

Children may not participate if written permission is not provided. All field trips are closely supervised and safe staff to child ratios are maintained. A plan for supervision is developed by the Lead Teacher and Lead Nurse. This plan is shared with assistants and families prior to the fieldtrip. At least one staff member must have a cell phone that is fully charged with them at all times. All field trip attendants are made aware of the staff member(s) that is/are in possession of a cell phone so they can immediately be notified in the event of an emergency. It is required that RISE staff members carry a first aid kit. Transportation arrangements are shared with families in advanced. The University of Alabama Transportation systems is utilized for transporting children.

### **Termination**

A child may be terminated from the RISE Center if a pattern of disregard for the established plans and procedures is demonstrated. A written notice will be provided to parents concerning the possibility of termination and is followed by a written notice of termination. Examples of reasons for termination include: (a) extended absences (an unacceptable percentage of days attended); (b) disregard of the school's operating hours, including participation in the year-round schedule; (c) failure to complete required forms; (d) consistent disregard of the *Illness Policy*; (e) tuition delinquency and (f) lack of commitment to RISE Center.

### **Summary**

Families are provided with the RISE Family Handbook annually. Verification of having reviewed its content is secured via signature from each family. The Handbook contains all information pertinent to the participation of the child and family in the RISE program, including the philosophy and goals, rules and expectations, special events, community activities and fundraising activities. Much of this information is included in the web site [www.riseschool.ua.edu](http://www.riseschool.ua.edu).

RISE Center hopes that families find the information contained in this handbook to be helpful. Everyone is encouraged to ask questions and seek additional information as needed. More information on specific policies and procedures is available in the front office of RISE Center. Families may request more information at any time.

### **Contact Information**

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