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2023-2024

Parent Handbook

**Welcome to the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy Family!**

Dear Families,

We are pleased to welcome families to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy for the 2022-2023 school year. We pride ourselves on being a strong and connected community, and as members of that community, we all have an important part to play.

This Parent Handbook is designed as a reference for you to access information about our school’s policies and procedures. We firmly believe the partnership between parents, teachers, and administrators is key to a successful relationship, and our goal is to provide the tools and resources for good communication from the start.

Please take time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook and refer back to it as needed throughout the year. If you lose your copy, an up-to-date version will always be available on our website at [www.texomamontessori.org](http://www.texomamontessori.org). Additionally, if you have questions or comments, please reach out to our Director, Christina Capalbo-Silva, at [director@texomamontessori.org](mailto:director@texomamontessori.org).

We look forward to an exciting, productive, and fun school year. Thank you for allowing us to know and educate your children, and welcome the family.

My Best,

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Christina Capalbo-Silva, Director

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# About Us

## Mission Statement

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy’s mission is to provide a full-day, Montessori-based early childhood and elementary learning experience that is nurturing, educationally rich, and developmentally appropriate to empower students to build life skills and embrace their full potential. Our goal is to prepare our students for a life of purpose, integrity, and academic accomplishment, by developing independent learners, critical thinkers, and tomorrow’s leaders.

## The Philosophy

Our philosophy is rooted in the Montessori method, which fosters self-motivated growth for children and adolescents in all areas of their development with the goal of nurturing each child's natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect. Our goal is to facilitate the development of the whole child, so he or she may reach his/her full potential and achieve personal success and satisfaction throughout life. We strive to develop critical thinkers, independent learners, and problem solvers of the future. We also believe the relationship between the family and the school is essential for children’s success, and we strive to keep open communication and partnerships with each of our families.

During the school day, our programs focus on the development of each child’s full potential, facilitated by teachers specially trained in the Montessori method and philosophy. Our lessons are based on children’s natural curiosity and love of learning, using both concrete lessons and activities through individual instruction. This allows our students to associate abstract concepts with hands-on learning. The three-year age range in each classroom provides numerous benefits that are immediately apparent when observing our classrooms. Our younger students have an opportunity to observe and imitate the older students as they work, while older students are provided opportunities to reinforce their education and mentor and assist younger students. Each child also has the ability to learn and develop at their own pace within a classroom that accommodates various levels of abilities and complexities.

## Accreditation

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is a new program but will strive to distinguish itself as one of the top Montessori schools by seeking an outside accreditation. We need to be in operation for three years before we become eligible for Accreditation. For more information concerning this, please see our director.

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# Operations

## Hours of Operation

The hours of operation are 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The academic school day runs from 8:00am to 3:00pm, drop off is at 7:30 am and pickup is no later then 5:30 pm if you use the aftercare program. We follow the Sherman ISD calendar for severe and inclement weather notifications. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy’s school calendar can be found on our website and will detail days closed and school events.

## Admissions

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy admits students of all races, colors, religions, and national origins. For the 2022-2023 School Year, we offer the following classroom options:

Primary: Age 23 through 5

Lower Elementary: 1st Grade through 3rd Grade;

Upper Elementary: 4th Grade through 6th Grade.

We are required by the State of Texas Health and Human Services to have current and updated information on each child in our school. This is also for your safety. Prior to the start of every year, we will have you reaffirm the important information is correct on the forms or renew and refresh all your paperwork and forms.

## Attendance

Regular attendance is important at all stages of school enrollment; therefore,

attendance is a priority of Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. We encourage children to arrive on time, as children miss a special part of the day when arriving late: classmates greet each other and choose their morning works, and the teachers spend time greeting the children as they enter. Not only does arriving late cause a child to miss those important events, and disrupts the class when entering, a child feels awkward coming into a classroom after missing the regular rituals of the school day.

## Absences

It is important that children are in class for as much of the academic year as possible. Each child plays an essential role in the classroom dynamics, and lessons are planned each day for the classes. However, we do not expect a parent to send their child to school when they are sick or recuperating. Please reference our illness policy and COVID-19 operating plans in this handbook. Absences are also understood in the event of a family death, funeral, religious holiday, or doctor’s appointment. We ask that you please call our office when your child has an unexpected absence for sickness or other reasons.

## Release of Children

## Carpool/Dropoff/Pickup Policy

There are two ways parents and authorized caregivers may drop off and pick up their children: enter the school and escort them to and from their classroom upon arrival & dismissal or participate in the carpool line.

### Carpool/Dropoff

Carpool drop off runs from 7:30am – 8:00am. Staff will be outside to greet children as they arrive for the day and will escort children to their classrooms and ensure a safe hand-off to their teachers. Students will enter the church building at the northern door (not the main covered entry). Traffic flow will be south to north loop around the parking lot that positions vehicles with the passenger side facing the building as they enter and wait in line. Please do not enter the covered driveway while in the carpool line, or drive against the flow of traffic or around the line while carpooling is underway. To ensure a speedy and safe carpool process please we ask the vehicle to be placed in “park” while the staff is helping gather the children to prevent unintentional movement/rolling. Additionally, we ask drivers to not use their cell phones (including hands free) while in the carpool line.

For any arrival or departure outside of staffed carpool times, the parent must park his/her vehicle in designated parking places and escort his/her child to his/her classroom ensuring there is a safe hand-off to the teacher or the director. If you expect your child to arrive late, please send a note to your child’s teacher in advance, or call the school, so we are aware.

**Please note:** Parents must ensure their child does not enter or leave the facility without notifying a member of the staff.

### Carpool Rules and Regulations

• No cell phone use during drive-through for the safety of the children.

• Speed should not exceed 5 mph when entering the parking lot or drive-through.

• Please drive slowly and be aware of all staff members who are assisting children.

• Use turn signals.

• Please follow the designated carpool path to turn your vehicle around so that you enter the drop-off area correctly.

• Upon entering the drive-through, cars must move in the forward direction only. Backing up is not allowed.

• As traffic allows, please pull all the way forward to allow traffic to advance behind you.

• Please put your car in "PARK" when your children are being escorted to your vehicle, and do not drive off until the car door is completely closed.

• Parents are to stay in the car always during carpool. Carpool pickup is a drive-through service only. Our staff will buckle/unbuckle your child and assist them getting in/out of the car.

• Never leave your car unattended in the drive-through line.

• Parking is prohibited in the drive-through line

• Children will be released only to persons listed on the enrollment form.

### Pickup

The academic day ends at 3:00 pm. Staff will be outside to dismiss children and safely escort them to their authorized caregiver’s vehicle from 3:00-3:15 pm. All children must be picked up by an adult and/or person approved by the parent. All children must be clocked out before being picked up from their classroom. Anyone, including all parents, who are allowed to pick the child up, must be listed on the Authorized Pick-Up section of the enrollment form or be approved in writing by a parent. In an emergency, parents may call the school and give verbal approval of an alternate individual. However, this is strongly discouraged. The school reserves the right to not allow any individual onto Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy property for drop-off or pick-up if they have created a problem.

We make every effort to know all parents’ and guardians’ names. Anyone not recognized by sight will be asked for a picture ID. In the event, anyone out of the ordinary is to pick-up the child, please alert the office prior to that time. This is in addition to them being on the Authorized Pick-Up section of the enrollment form or approval as stated above. It is the parent’s responsibility to notify the office and make changes on this form whenever necessary. We appreciate your understanding if a staff member believes additional verification measures are necessary in order to verify one’s authority to receive a child.

**Authorized Pick-Ups**: Upon enrollment Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will obtain the information for a child’s parents as well as any individuals who are authorized to pick up that child. If other, subsequent individuals are to receive authorization, this must be given in writing by filling out the applicable authorization form by the parents of the child. Unexpected, last-minute authorization may be granted with the receipt of an email or phone call from the parent stating the person's name and phone number. This person will be expected to provide their ID before exiting the building with your child. If this person will become a regular authorized release caregiver, the applicable authorization form will be required to be on file.

All authorized caregivers must have the proper safety seats accessible for their child. It is mandated by the state that all childcare workers report if a child life is put in danger if they are not provided the proper safety seat. Also if anyone authorized to pick up is smoking vaping or using corporal punishment on school property we again are mandated to report such incidents.

The regular pick-up designer should have the Child Pilot app accessible to complete check in and check out procedures. The first time a child is picked up by one of the authorized parties the administrative staff will review driver’s license (or other valid, government-issued photo identification) to ensure it matches the information provided on the authorized pick-up form. Custody Issues

Unless a court order is presented to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, no restrictions will be placed on the parents of a child regarding visitation, drop-off, or pick-up. In divorce or custody disputes between parents, it is Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy’s policy not to take sides. The principal interest of our faculty, staff, and owners is to ensure the well-being of the child. It is our policy that no employee will testify or give and opinion in such matters except under subpoena.

### Early Pickup

If your child is to be picked up early, please send a note to your child’s teacher in advance so that lessons can be re-arranged according to his dismissal. To pick up a child early you must sign them out at the office and your child will be brought to you.

### Late or Non-Pick-Up

Any late pick-up after that 3:15pm (and 6:00pm for extended care enrollees only) is subject to a late fee of $1.00 per minute. You will be notified of any fee being added to your account balance. If a parent knows they will be late the notification must be given to the school of the expected time of arrival or if other arrangements have been made for the child. If the parent or other authorized person has not picked- up the child and no additional communication has been received by the parent within a half-hour of the child's regular pick-up time, the following people will be called, and arrangements will be made for the child: emergency contacts listed in the student's file and the director (if not on-site). If you are more than one hour late and we are unable to contact anyone on the pick-up list, the law requires that we contact CPS who will pick up your child for safekeeping. Members of our staff are not permitted to take your children home with them. If late pick-ups become routine Heart of Texoma Montessori reserves the right to request an in-person conference and/or to provide timely notice of disenrollment from our programs with forfeiture of paid tuition.

## Field Trips

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy plans to participate in JOLT camp each year. Parents will be notified in advance and the applicable paperwork will be collected. Parents will provide transportation to and from Camp All Saints.

Should any other field trips be planned transportation will always be provided by parents. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy does not transport students, at this time.

More information about the JOLT program can be found:

<https://www.campallsaints.com/jolt>

## Standardized Testing

Academic progression is a priority at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. In August of each year, our staff will proctor the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) exam for all students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The ITBS is a nationally standardized exam and will be used to design an individual work plan for each student to fill any gaps in their education.

The test is conducted in a no-pressure environment to accurately assess each student’s academic performance and progression. It will be conducted over a few days.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will communicate testing dates and other information in a timely manner prior to the exam. Results will be reviewed with parents/caregivers upon receipt of the assessment at the parents’ request. If you have any questions or concerns related to standardized testing, please contact the director or your child’s lead teacher.

# General Operational Policies and Procedures

**Clothing and Supplies**

Dress for a fun day! The children’s day is filled with activity, and hands-on learning and children often use floor space to play and learn. Clothing should be simple, comfortable, and provide appropriate coverage. If leggings are worn the child’s backside should be covered by their top while standing, bending over, and crawling. Please do not dress your child in clothing that cannot get dirty. Since our learning extends to the outdoors, please dress your child appropriately for the weather.

Belongings should be carried to and from school in a backpack or school bag that is labeled with the child’s name.

## Toys

We ask children do not bring toys from home. Children sometimes have hard-time-sharing toys from home, and it may cause disruption in the classroom. Play guns and other weapons are forbidden. If your child does bring a special naptime friend, this item will be brought out at naptime only and put in their cubby at any other time during the day. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is not responsible for lost or broken toys.

## Videos and Music

We strive to educate and supply wholesome entertainment for children. All movies will be G or PG and related to an educational topic to enhance the learning experience.

It can be difficult to find music that contains lyrics appropriate for children that is also not religious in nature. Inappropriate music will not be played, which means we will often make nursery or instrumental music selections.

## Electronic Devices

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy prohibits children from bringing any electronic devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, iPods, or handheld games from home to school. If such a device is brought on to campus it will be held in the director’s office until dismissal.

## Naps

Maintaining compliance with the minimum standards for the state of Texas all students aged four and a half years and under will have a nap/rest each day while in care. Primary students aged 4.5 years and younger will nap from 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm Monday through Friday. Students should bring a small rollup nap mat for use at nap time. If the nap mat includes a pillow and blanket, they must be attached. All nap items should be clearly labeled with the child’s first and last name & will be sent home each Friday to be washed. For those students who do not fall asleep a book or other quiet, calm activity will be provided.

**Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play is beneficial for children beyond the physical activity it provides. It helps them socialize, understand their bodies better, engage in imaginative play and enjoy the outdoors. In today's busy and complex world, it can be difficult to schedule outdoor time with your child. But it is something you should prioritize for your child's healthy growth and development.

Maintaining compliance with the minimum standards for the state of Texas, students will have no less than one-half hour of outdoor play in the morning and one-half hour of outdoor play in the afternoon (applicable to after-school care). These students will enjoy the play equipment as well as an open field to run and play. The students will be encouraged to participate in organized play, like soccer, football, hopscotch, and 9 square. They will also be encouraged to engage in imaginative and free play. These activities will take place on the playground in the back of the school. The playground will be sectioned off to maintain a visual of all our students.

Minimum standards for the state of Texas require all students to be allowed outdoors in inclement weather, even if it is just to walk from one door to the next. We will refer to the

News and Weather channel to determine if it is safe to playout doors. We will reference the apparent weather, wind chill factor, and heat advisory as our guidelines.

We will take the following into consideration when going outdoors to play:

1. Our student’s needs. Children, especially younger children with some chronic medical conditions, lose body heat more quickly than adults.
2. If the child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Parents, please provide layers of clothing to maximize comfort both indoors and out. Essential items include jackets, long pants, hats, gloves or mittens, socks, and warm shoes or boots. Be cautious about the use of scarves and jackets with strings because these can present a strangulation hazard.
3. If a time limit should be placed on outdoor play.
4. Are the students well hydrated? Plenty of warm fluids will help maintain body temperature and prevent dehydration.
5. Qualify that the student did not forget to apply sunscreen before being dropped off in the morning.

We will limit the duration of time outdoors if it is too hot or too cold if:

We will not go outside if the “apparent weather” and wind chill goes below 15ºF. However, kids need to come inside for breaks every 20 to 30 minutes when the wind chill is below 32ºF. In the United States, the National Weather Service will issue a wind chill advisory or warning when wind chills are low enough to pose a threat to human life. If your area is under such a warning, we will keep the students inside. If we experience extreme weather and cannot go outside, we will use the cafeteria to play.

[We will not go outside in extreme heat, or we will modify our outdoor time to morning. As we all know, very hot conditions can put children at risk of heatstroke, heat exhaustion, burns from hot objects like playground equipment, sunburn, and excessive thirst, especially during active play. We will have our students stay indoors when temperatures are over 35ºC - 40ºC/95ºF - 100ºF and play in the cafeteria as a form of exercise.](https://www.wikihow.com/Know-If-the-Temperature-Is-Safe-to-Play-Outside" \l "/Image:Know-the-Temperature-Is-Safe-to-Play-Outside-Step-3-Version-3.jpg)

It is highly likely that the children will be allowed to play in the rain and have wet clothes in their cubby at dismissal.

### Skin & Sun Protection

Students are welcome to bring hats, but no sunglasses to wear outside during playtime. Parents may also supply sunscreen and bug repellent for their children. Sunscreen and bug repellent should be applied by the parent in the morning time and the teacher will apply the sunscreen again before afternoon playtime. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will not provide sunscreen or bug repellent. Each student will need to provide a bottle of their

own, preferably in a spray form. All items should be clearly labeled with the child’s name. Outdoor activities are to be held in shaded areas whenever possible. No sharing is allowed. Parents are required to sign a form authorizing Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy to apply sunscreen and bug stray.

### Water Play

At this time no water play activities are planned. We will send notification if and when water play is planned. (No pools will ever be used)

## Holidays

Our holiday closure schedule will be posted prior to each school year on our annual calendar.

### Holiday Celebrations

The Montessori curriculum includes learning about the world’s diverse people and cultures.

Celebrations including birthdays, religious, cultural, and national holidays are celebrated at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. We respect, celebrate, and discuss many traditions and holidays that may or may not be a part of most families’ lifestyles. Staff will not teach a particular religious belief, although general, fact-based descriptions and explanations may be provided. This will allow the students to understand other cultures and become more accepting of the diverse world around them.

### Celebration of Life and Birthdays

Each student will have an opportunity to celebrate their birthday with a Celebration of Life. This activity is optional but encouraged as it is an exciting day for the child and helps build relationships and familiarity among peers. Parents who are interested in participating in the Celebration of Life will need to reach out to the Director to schedule the celebration.

This celebration may occur on the child’s birthday; however, if the child’s birthday falls on a weekend or outside of the academic calendar, the Celebration of Life can be held on another day during the week. Please coordinate the date with your child’s teacher, so we do not have multiple celebrations or other scheduling conflicts.

We will be sending home Celebration of Life books for the families to complete. Families will document the stages of their life. This can be one of the first lessons a child will have by creating a timeline as they will begin to see how things in life progress through time. During the Celebration of Life, the child will be asked to show the pictures to the class and share their joy about the photos of themselves.

Parents (or up to a total of four special guests) may attend their child’s Celebration of Life. The child’s family may provide the morning snack or lunch for their child’s class. Please consider any food allergies or sensitivities among your child’s class. This information can be provided by the school. Frosted items such as cupcakes and party favors are not permitted. Please make all plans in coordination with your child’s lead teacher. The class will be notified no later than 3:00 pm the class day prior if a snack or meal will be provided.

A child may distribute birthday party invitations during class time, but all classroom peers must be included and invited.

## Extra Clothing

One set extra of clothing is required. If your child is not reliably potty trained, please provide two sets of clothing. Any extra clothing that is worn from the extra set must be replaced with additional items the next school day.

* Please send the following items that are season-appropriate in a labeled, large plastic zipper baggie that may be kept at school: shirt, bottoms, underwear, and socks
* 1 pair of weather-proof rain boots to be kept at the school throughout enrollment, so children may play outside when the ground may be wet with muddy conditions
* Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will not be responsible for any soiled or lost clothing
* All items brought to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy must be labeled with your child’s name
* Should water activities be planned Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will communicate appropriate clothing requests and procedures in a timely manner. We will never plan enrichment involving swimming pools.
* All items will be returned to the family upon the conclusion of the academic year.

## Emergency Weather Procedures

In the event Sherman ISD closed due to inclement weather, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will also be closed. However, if there is an inclement weather day in which Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy feels the safety of the students &/or staff members is at risk, we reserve the right to close. In the event of inclement weather, we may determine a closure or delay is in the best interest of the staff and students. All attempts will be made to provide as much advance notice as possible.

# Tuition & Payment Methods

Tuition will be due on the first day of each month made by: check, cashier’s check, credit/debit, or scheduled ACH / draft payment. Cash is not accepted. If the first day of the month falls on a day that school is not in session tuition will be due upon the reopening of class. Tuition will be considered late on the fifth of each month. Heart of Texoma

Montessori Academy reserves the right to disenroll your child and fill his/her seat with another student if tuition is not paid by 6:00 pm on the fifth day of the month. A late fee of $5.00 a day will be added to your account for everyday tuition is late. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is not responsible for providing tuition due date reminders.

Tuition for the academic year is due in August-May. Tuition is based upon the total number of instructional, paid teacher in-service, and parent conference days throughout the entire academic year. Tuition is not determined by the days per month; due to holidays

and breaks some months have more on-campus days than others. For your convenience tuition is averaged and divided into ten equal payments regardless of the number of days your child is on campus. Tuition credits or refunds will not be made for any reason including extended illnesses.

The annual calendar will detail the number of instructional, in-service, and conference days. This number may vary slightly from year to year, but a tuition adjustment should not be anticipated.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy may consider an arrangement to divide tuition into two equal payments due on the first and fifteenth of each month. Any request must be made in writing to the director at least by the fifteenth of the month before the family desires to begin such an arrangement. If such accommodation is approved, the “late date” of the fifth does not apply to this payment plan and parents should make the on-time payment on the first and fifteenth of each month (or the soonest day class is in session. For Example, if the 15th is on a Saturday, tuition is due upon arrival on Monday, 17th.) Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to end such an arrangement at any time without notice, especially if tuition is not received on time.

Each academic year, there may be a limited number of financial need scholarships available. Please speak with the Director for more information.

## Registration Fee

A $100.00 non-refundable registration fee is due once per academic year per child, due with registration forms for the academic year. This fee covers administrative costs associated with preparing for each child for the upcoming school year. The child’s classroom reservation will not be finalized until the registration fee is paid. The registration fee is non-refundable regardless of whether a child attends applicable programming.

Separate summer programming registration fees will apply and will be communicated and due prior to the beginning of summer classes.

## Supply Fee

A supply fee will be due each semester. Each year a $125.00 per student supply fee will be due with August and January tuition payments. Summer supply fee will be announced in spring with the roll out of the summer enrichment programs.

## Additional Costs and Fees

Additional fees may include late pick-up fees. Such balances should be cleared promptly as previously detailed in this handbook. Unpaid fees may result in disenrollment from the school without advance notice.

Other expenses that may be proposed throughout the school year are fees related to special activities or costuming for a school celebration or program. Participation will be optional, and any such proposals will be made in a timely manner. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will be mindful to minimize extra expenditures and assure you that any request that asks families to incur additional costs is thoughtfully requested to enhance your child’s enrichment and school spirit.

## Withdrawals

Enrollment is understood to be for one year and renewed each year. No fees are refunded. We require a 30-day written notice prior to your child withdrawing from the school. Once notice has been given, the tuition must be up to date for every day till the last date mentioned on the written notice. Fees for two weeks will be added if a 30-day written notice is not given prior to your child leaving the school. Failure to notify the school will cause all fees to continue until written notification is given. When notification is finally given, 30 days will be added.

## Summertime at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy

The summer months are fun and exciting. Children often need care and/or social interaction with their peers. Our summer program has special activities to enrich and educate during the hottest of our months. Summer plans will be communicated to families during the spring semester and require a separate enrollment process.

# Food & Nutrition Policy

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will not be providing lunch or snacks. Our school encourages healthy, nutritious snacks and lunch. Parents and caregivers, when preparing your child’s lunch and snack foods please provide a variety of nutritional selections that support his/her ability to have a successful school day filled with activity and learning.

Desserts, candy, pudding, and sugary snacks are not allowed Monday - Thursday. A sweet treat as a part of the child’s lunch is permitted on Fridays. Candy and sodas (regular or sugar-free/diet selections) are prohibited at all times.

Any food allergies must be documented by the TXHHS Allergy and Action Plan form that can be provided by the school office. Documentation of a child’s food allergies will require.

a healthcare provider’s signature and completion of the proper form provided to you by the director.

Parents are responsible for packing meals in a lunchbox that is secure and provides for the proper insulation of the child’s food. Please label all lunch boxes, containers, bags, and cups with the child’s full name. Please provide utensils and napkins. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy cannot heat or refrigerate food items provided from home. Daily expectations:

* Filled, labeled water bottle/cup with lid: Please do not send juice or milk. Only water, please.
* Morning snack: recommendations are yogurt, cheese stick, cereal bar, fruit, or vegetable.
* Lunch: please consider nutritious choices and avoid/minimize added sugar
* Afternoon snack: for after-school care students only, recommendations are yogurt, cheese stick, cereal bar, fruit, or vegetable.

Please cut high-risk choking foods such as hot dogs, grapes, and olives lengthwise (longways) to eliminate the round shape that could lodge in a child’s throat.

During drop-off and morning greetings teachers will strive to do a snack and lunch check to ensure each student has that day’s food in his/her possession, but that may not always be possible.

If on rare occasions a child’s snack or meal is not present the staff will make every attempt to contact the child’s parents to make arrangements in a timely manner. If contact and arrangements are not made Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will provide your child, with the missing snack or lunch from available resources including fast food and it will be billable to the parent’s account. If it becomes routine that a child’s food is missing, staff will request a discussion with parents to address any issues and formulate a plan to ensure your child is fed each day.

The staff will notify parents if we observe any significant change in a child’s eating behaviors and/or appetite.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to modify its food policy, restrict the types of foods allowed on campus, or to request a conversation with parents regarding food choices we believe are affecting a child’s ability to have a successful, focused, and energetic school day. Any modifications to our policies will be distributed to parents in writing with 10 days’ notice via email and posted on outside each classroom on the bulletin boards.

## Nut Policy

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy recognizes that many nutritional selections contain nuts. The campus’ and classroom's nut policies and restrictions will be based upon information of known allergies of students and staff in the classroom. The Director will notify parents if a restriction of peanut or nut items is required for the safety of our students and staff.

All students and staff will be asked if they have any known (food) allergies, and this information will be maintained in their records. Depending on the information received, nuts/ peanuts may or may not be restricted from a particular classroom. The director will evaluate all information and will determine policies accordingly.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to amend its nut/peanut policy to ensure the safety of all persons on campus. All efforts will be made to provide timely notification of our policies and each class’s restrictions, but in some circumstances, there may be short notice of any changes/restrictions. Any modifications to our policies will be distributed to parents in writing with 10 days’ notice via email and posted on outside each classroom on the bulletin boards.

# Communication

Parents play a critical role in the education of their children. It is widely accepted that education begins at birth (or before) with the parent in the home environment. Parents play a vital role in a child’s education and is a child's first and most influential teacher! We passionately believe nothing is as important to your child’s schooling as parent involvement, and that a strong relationship between home and school is essential for a solid foundation.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is a natural extension of the home. Healthy and regular interactions between staff members and parents are important for ensuring the best environment and support for the child and the family. We embrace and cultivate the philosophy of open communication between parents and the school and encourage parents to reinforce at home what the child has learned in school.  Our goal is to guide your child through a journey of learning and a lifetime of discovery and that is enhanced with your involvement.

We will be using an app called Child Pilot and MRX, which will allow us to communicate with parents frequently. We will use Child Pilot to share school-wide information, and MRX will be from your child’s teachers and where they are academically. These programs will keep you informed of your child’s progress and function as check-in and check-out systems to ensure your child's safety and wellbeing. Notification will also be posted on the bulletin board outside each classroom.

## Confidentiality

The staff of Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy values the privacy of each family enrolled in our program and will keep personal and confidential information secure. The school will not give out phone numbers, birthdays, addresses, or information on families without their permission. Additionally, staff and parents or guardians at Heart of Texoma Montessori’s Academy are expected to respect the privacy of each child, family, and staff member.

The school also respects the privacy of our staff. We will not give out home phone numbers or addresses of our staff. Teachers may elect to do so but are not required. During the school day, the staff will be given messages when you call. If it is an emergency, please notify the person answering the phone and the teacher will be called to the phone at the soonest available opportunity.

## Conferences

Formal in-person conferences between a child’s family and teachers are scheduled once an academic semester and noted on the school calendar. From time to time, the parent or the teacher may ask for an additional conference to discuss issues that may arise.

## Correspondence with Teachers and Staff

Open communication between staff members and parents is essential. If at any time questions or concerns arise, we urge parents to bring these to the attention of the classroom teacher &/or the administrative staff at the facility.

To facilitate open discussions, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy uses multiple methods of staying in touch with our families, including email through our MRX app, as well as weekly and monthly newsletters**.** Heart of Montessori will provide weekly and monthly newsletters updating families on our activities in your child’s classes and in the school at large. These will be sent by email to the primary address on file.

Lead teachers are available to communicate from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm, Monday – Friday.

The after-school staff is available from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm, Monday – Friday.

The director is available from 8:00 am – 6:00 pm, Monday – Friday.

Contact made outside these hours will not be addressed until the next school day’s operating hours.

If there is a true medical or safety issue that must be addressed outside of available hours, please contact the director at 903-218-2070 call/text.

At Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, we trust the partnership between the school and caregivers; if there is a homework challenge or project deadline that has become unachievable in the evening or outside of operational hours, we trust that the family has handled the situation to the best of their ability. There will be no consequences to your child for roadblocks and incompletions; we will work together the next school day to resolve any questions and reestablish a path moving forward.

If you would like to voice any problems or concerns, please feel free to discuss the situation with our director, who can be contacted at [director@texomamontessori.org](mailto:director@texomamontessori.org) or can be reached at 903-218-2070. Parents are also encouraged to stop by the office with any concerns you may have.

## Parent–Teacher Relationships

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy recognizes that on occasion families and staff will become acquainted and will develop a personal relationship outside of the school.

Please remain mindful that there are professional relationships and boundaries to be maintained. Staff may elect to not engage in personal relationships outside of school.

# Visits and Volunteering

## Visits

Parents are invited the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy at any time, with or without notification. We encourage you to visit your child from time to time to have a meal, share an activity, or simply observe the class. Parents are also welcome and highly encouraged to observe their child’s classroom during the school year, particularly before each Conference. Observations are typically 30 minutes in duration. We encourage a scheduled observation; however, it is not mandatory. You can schedule an observation by contacting our director after your child has been in class for at least six weeks. Please be aware that we host observers year-round, and advanced scheduling is highly recommended. Teachers will generally only have time to acknowledge you, giving their full attention to the class. Please call or email the teacher if you have follow-up questions.

## Volunteering

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and as such we welcome parent volunteers who wish to take part in the school day activities. If you are interested in volunteering at the school, you will be required to undergo a background check and to be cleared of any communicable health issues. The background check may include fingerprints as determined by TXHHS and the expense will be the responsibility of the volunteer.

## Cell Phones and Conducting Personal Communications (parents)

Please do not conduct cell phone communications while inside the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy campus or during carpool. Please silence all devices while inside the school. If you must have a phone or text conversation, please do so inside your vehicle while it is parked in a designated parking spot.

# Safety

For the safety of the students, families, and visitors, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy requests that all individuals within the facility follow the policies of the school. These policies include but are not limited to the following:

* Students, parents, and staff walk in the hallways
* While inside, please use inside voices
* Students must always be accompanied by an adult and cannot walk themselves to class or anywhere else in the building.
* Students are not allowed to exit the building without their parent or authorized pick-up unless he/she is **18 years or older.** This includes siblings, relatives, and other caregivers. Please speak with the director if there are circumstances you face related to this policy.
* Exit doors should be opened by adults only. Also, please do not allow anyone else to come in the door behind you. Do not allow children besides your own to exit an exterior door. We understand you want to be polite and hold the door for others, but you cannot be sure the person you are allowing into the building has legitimate access to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy.
* While in their care, parents shall safely supervise children while in the parking lot. The school is not responsible for children’s welfare in the parking lot and surrounding areas while they are under their parents’ supervision.
* Once you have checked out your child, you are responsible for your child. Please always keep your child with you and do not allow him/her to run around the buildings, the grounds, or the parking lot.

## Emergency Preparedness Plan

The following is the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy Emergency Preparedness Plan, a summary of which is provided below this section, and posted in each classroom:

### Relocation

The first responsibility of the staff is to move the children to a designated safe area or an alternate shelter for all employees, caregivers, and volunteers. In case of a tornado, or other severe weather, the children in each class will take shelter in their classrooms.

If a child is disabled, a teacher will pick up the child and carry them to the designated area. An additional staff member will come to assist as soon as possible.

Each staff member will have an attendance sheet with them during the emergency. The children will either be seated as their names are called or stand up for face-to-face recognition adherence.

The Director will evacuate with the essential documentation including parent and emergency contact numbers and authorization for emergency care. The Director will also have the master list of who is in attendance to compare with the staff’s attendance sheet. The Director will contact authorities, Child Care Licensing, and parents and designate an additional person as needed to contact the parents in case of emergency.

### Evacuation

In case of fire, carbon monoxide detection, or other situations that require the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy buildings to be evacuated, the children and all staff will evacuate the building immediately and meet in the designated area by age group. In the

back of the parking lot away from the street. An Evacuation Plan is posted in each classroom, cafeteria teachers will take attendance and wait for further instructions from the facility Director. The children with special needs will be evacuated as mentioned above.

### Intruders

The safety of our children is our first concern. Although we have an open-door policy and welcome parents to visit their children, we also have a commitment to the parents of other children in the program to keep them safe. Any individual who does not submit to our safety policies concerning “Visitors” and “Volunteers” must be considered an intruder and appropriate steps will be taken to protect our students and staff. In case of a hostile intruder, each teacher is instructed to secure their children immediately. Each teacher has been instructed to hide the children in the far-right corner and secure the door with shelves

and other furniture to prevent the intrude from entering the classroom and stay as quiet as possible.

### Medical Emergencies

Every child will be observed for the symptoms of illness and injury. Any child showing symptoms of illness or injury will be separated from the other children and their parents will be notified. Once the parents are notified, they have 30 to 40 minutes to pick up their child.

If a healthcare professional has diagnosed a child with a communicable disease, there must be medical documentation to indicate the child is no longer contagious prior to returning. The parent must bring a note that states they are free to return to school.

If a child is injured or becomes seriously ill, the lead teacher will take appropriate steps to meet the child’s immediate needs and inform Administration regarding the situation. The following steps will be included:

1. Contact 911 or other emergency medical services
2. Administer CPR and/or First Aid
3. Contact the parent immediately
4. Contact the child's doctor listed on the admission form
5. Contact the Child Caring Licensing

### Communicable Diseases

Parents will be notified no later than 48 hours after being notified of a child having a communicable disease via email and notification will posted outside on classroom bulletin board, such as lice, chicken pox, etc. We will also report this information to licensing within 48 hours.

### Documentation

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy keeps all children's emergency records in a three-ring binder in the custody of the Admin/Director who will be taken while evacuating the school building. The emergency record includes the child's information including parent and emergency contact numbers and authorization for the child to receive medical treatment.

During monthly drills, the procedure described below is exactly followed:

Each classroom teacher prepares a daily attendance sheet for the class and will take it with her during the evacuation to ensure all children are in attendance. A headcount is performed before leaving the building and after reaching the relocation site.

Emergency Preparedness Chart

Each classroom will have the following information posted in a visible area for ease of use.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Facility | Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy | OTHER IMPORTANT CONTACTS | |
| License/Permit #: | 1747726 | Emergency | 911 |
| Street Address: | 5615 N. FM 1417 | Local Police | 911 |
| City / State: | Sherman, TX | Fire Department  Direct Line | 911 |
| Phone: | 903-218-20270 | Poison Control | **800-222-1222** |
| Provider Emergency Phone#: | 810-335-2277 | Local Red Cross Office | 877-843-7090 |
| Email: | info@texomamontessori.org | Local Health Department | 903-416-4000 |
| Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline | 800-252-5400 | Childcare Licensing  550 E. 15th Street, Suite 120  Plano, TX 75074 | 469-229-6900  Ext. 6901 |
| EMERGENCY PROCEDURES | | | |
| Fire: | Call 911- evacuate the building. | | |
| Tornado/Severe Weather: | Relocate all children to both bathrooms in the hall. | | |
| Gas/Chemical Leak | Call 911- evacuate the building. | | |
| Bomb Threat or Explosion | Call 911- evacuate the building. | | |
| Intruder/Hostile Situation | Relocate all children to both bathrooms in the hall | | |
| Loss of Power | Locate flashlights and contact the power company and parents | | |
| EVACUATION LOCATION SITES | | | |
| Fire: | Designated Area – in front of school away from the building | | |
| Shelter-i-Place (i.e., Severe Weather) | Designated Area –in the interior classrooms, with not windows | | |
| Walking Distance | Name of Facility/ Contact Person: Telephone Number  Nick Auto and Stereo 5450 N. FM 1417, Sherman, TX 70592  Phone Number 903-815-0289 | | |
| Away-from-Neighborhood Evacuation: | Name of Facility/ Contact Person: Manager on Duty  Hilton Garden Inn  5015 S Hwy 75, Frontage Rd, Denison, 75020  Phone: 903/463-3331  Mode of Transport: can or school van | | |

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## Behavior Management

### Rationale of Behavior Management

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy believes setting limits for behavior is important for the safety and protection of children, staff, and the environment. Consistency is important to help a child orient themselves in the world, and an atmosphere of clarity and consistency also enhances the staff’s ability to help children to learn and to be safe and secure. Our teaching style aims to help children to learn the consequences of their behavior so that they understand how their actions affect those around them. Children who become self-disciplined and self-directed become aware of their needs and interests become clearer as well as of the needs and interests of those around them. By setting appropriate and consistent limits to behavior we provide a secure environment in which children can explore their physical and social world.

Children have an enormous capacity for social learning. This means that they absorb information all around themselves, including social and cultural “cues” regarding themselves, others, and the environment in which they live. Awareness of self, others, and the environment are vital qualities for all children to develop in order to live harmoniously. Discipline is a means by which children are helped to develop that awareness. Our staff is trained in using positive reinforcement as a means of discipline, and we believe that if an interesting and challenging program is offered to a student, then discipline problems are at a minimum. However, discipline problems will be documented to unearth workable solutions and patterns.

### Underlying Principles of Behavior Management

* We respect ourselves and other people
* We trust staff to observe and guide behaviors to ensure a positive environment
* We demonstrate kindness, patience, and age-appropriate expectations
* We acknowledge the importance of age-appropriate communication and resolution methods
* We provide a stable, consistent, and safe environment that supports children’s ability to self-regulate behaviors
* We are careful with our own work and our friends’ work and belongings
* We are respectful to insects, animals, and plants
* We keep ourselves and our surroundings clean
* We respect our school building and property

### When Discipline is instructive

* It supports self-esteem and allows children to feel capable, competent, and pleasant with others.
* It considers a child’s developmental level of understanding and ability.
* It changes as children’s needs and behavior change (there is change and growth).

It acknowledges caring, cooperative, desirable behavior.

* It is expressed positively. We speak of what we “do” and not what we “don’t do”
* It guides, gives simple explanations, and offers alternatives so that a child can make choices. In time, this will aid the making of appropriate choices.
* It is consistent.
* It is based on self-discipline and self-control (not coercion).

### Setting LimitsHelps Children

* Feel secure and orient themselves in the world
* Find appropriate expressions for feelings that are hard to control
* Build confidence in the self-management of one’s own behaviors, feelings, and expression
* Initiates the joy of lifelong learning

### Prevention Strategies of Behavior Management Used by Our Staff

* Knowing the children: this helps to tailor disciplining instruction to each child
* Prepared, thoughtful environment: this helps create continuity, familiarity, comfort within the classroom, and an environment that accommodates the developmental needs of children
* Awareness of transition time: teachers help children move from one activity to another without disruption
* Modeling good behavior

**If Prevention Does Not Work**

* Try first to redirect or defuse the situation, giving children a new activity to pursue
* Use “do’s” (rather than “don’ts”) and give brief explanations
* Respond in a calm, but firm manner indicating what is expected from the child and what choices the child has
* Help the child to realize the consequences of his or her actions. Consequences may include:
  + Follow through with consequences
  + Redirection is the preferred disciplinary action that Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy employs. “Time Away” is avoided unless necessary and limited to one minute for each year the child is in age.
  + Corporal punishment by staff is strictly forbidden. Parents/guardians are forbidden to use any type of corporal punishment on school property, including biting, pinching, hitting with hand or object.
  + The withholding of outdoor play, nap, or eating time is not allowed.

**Bullying**

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a bully is a person who hurts, frightens, or tyrannizes those who are smaller or weaker. [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bullying) defined the act of bullying is the "abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger, more powerful, etc." Bullying occurs when someone decides to exercise dominance over another person by harming them emotionally or physically. Research has discovered there are three types of bulling.

The three types of bullying are listed below with examples:

* **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
  + Teasing
  + Name-calling
  + Inappropriate sexual comments
  + Taunting
  + Threatening to cause
* **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone’s reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
  + Leaving someone out on purpose
  + Telling other children not to be friends with someone
  + Spreading rumors about someone
  + Embarrassing someone in public
* **Physical bullying**involves hurting a person’s body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
  + Hitting/kicking/pinching
  + Spitting
  + Tripping/pushing
  + Taking or breaking someone’s things
  + Making mean or rude hand gestures

There are [three major factors](https://glasshouse.qld.edu.au/three-components-of-bullying/) that must be present for a situation to be considered bullying:

1. The person who is bullying someone else must be doing it intentionally.
2. The person who is bullying someone must have been bullying this person repeatedly for a significant amount of time.
3. The person who is bullying someone else must be stronger or in a higher position of power than the target.

While general rudeness and other situations involving conflict can seem like bullying, it must meet these three requirements to be considered bullying.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy takes this term seriously. An investigation will ensue if a parent states their student is being bullied at the school. Developmentally appropriate action will be taken to ensure that all children feel safe, connected, and valued while attending Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy.

**Students with Special Needs**

If a student needs an adaptation to our regularly scheduled activities program, the parent needs to provide a written instruction plan (IEP) provided by the child’s physician or

qualified professional affiliated with a local school district or early childhood intervention program. Provide adaptive equipment, if needed, to the school while the student attends the school.

The Heart of Texoma Montessori’s equipment can and will be modified to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of the students. If an outside contractor/specialist is needed or requested, the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is open to the specialist being a part of our team as long as they pass the background check, meet the Minimum Standards requirements, and it is at the parent’s expense.

### Biting

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy’s policy is to collaborate closely with the parent and the child when the child is behaving in a manner that is harmful to himself or herself, other people, or property. Most behaviors are short-term and correctable if the parent works with us and other professionals.

Biting can be a normal behavior during certain developmental ages. When a child bites a detailed report will be sent home to the parents of the child who bit, as well as the child who was bitten. Office copies will be kept in a permanent file. This serves as a notice of the incident and the circumstances surrounding the bite. Neither child’s name will not be revealed by the school due to our confidentiality policy. This applies to all incidents/accidents involving other children.

When a child bite he or she will be sent home for the day if:

1. The child bites more than twice in one day

2. The child bites the face

3. The bite breaks the skin

If a child continues to bite people or oneself despite the teachers and parent’s efforts to stop the biting, the parent may be asked to seek consultation with his/her medical practitioner, to have an in-person meeting with school administration, and/or be disenrolled at the discretion of the director.

What constitutes continual or chronic biting is up to the discretion of the director and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Age, the severity of bites, temperament, cooperation of parents, and the lead teacher’s opinion will all be considered as part of the final decision.

Generally, if a child bites three days in one week the child will be suspended until a plan for behavior modification is determined. All factors will be considered, and Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to modify this policy and plan at any time with 10 day written notice to ensure the safety of all people on campus along with maintaining a comfortable school atmosphere.

If a disenrollment has occurred, readmission will be considered after a period of 3 months, on a case-by-case basis if space is available at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. The possibility of readmission will depend on all the factors in the preceding paragraph.

### Suspension or Expulsion

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy has a zero-tolerance policy for violence and physical or emotional bullying behaviors. School staff will address all incidents along with applicable parents and guardians.

While a suspension or expulsion is the last resort for Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy for the safety and wellbeing of all students enrolled we reserve the right to suspend or expel a child who is physically hurting, biting other students and staff, knocking down furniture, hitting teachers, physically destroying school property, demonstrating any other violent behavior or exhibiting physical or emotional distress that cannot be resolved and is not typical for the child’s developmental age. By definition “suspension" means the removal from the campus of a pupil from ongoing instruction for assessment and resolution purposes for a limited, stated amount of time. An "expulsion" means the removal of a pupil from all programming and staff supervision indefinitely. There may or may not be a plan in place to re-enroll the child.

If behavior is problematic and unable to be resolved we will suspend them for one, three, or five days. If the behavior continues after the suspension, we will choose to allow more time for behavior modification depending on the parents’ plan or to terminate our childcare services with that child. We will work with any parent who is willing to support our efforts to help benefit their child’s growth and development; however, it is our obligation to consider the entire school community, and any plan for improvement must

be a team effort and include the willingness of everyone to be supportive and open-minded.

Any suspension or expulsion forfeits any tuition already paid. No refunds will be issued.

### Dismissal

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to discontinue care for any student and family whose needs we cannot meet. These decisions will be made based on the child’s and family’s ability to succeed in the environment. Furthermore, if the student presents a danger to him/herself, the teacher, or other students, or if their needs are out of

the range of what Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy can provide, we reserve the right to ask the family to make alternative arrangements. We also reserve the right to dismiss any family that becomes belligerent and hostile toward any staff member, towards the administration, for non-payment of tuition, or for behaviors that are disrespectful, inappropriate, and a detriment to the school environment. All attempts will be made to provide timely notice, but this may not always be possible. Dismissal will result in the forfeiture of tuition paid if it is related to a safety or behavioral issue.

## Child Protection

All childcare workers are mandated to report to the Office of Children and Family Services if they have “reasonable grounds to suspect” that a child has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused or neglected. It is highly recommended that the Director is notified; however, it is not mandatory. All childcare workers are required to do one-hour training every year to update themselves on Abuse & Neglect. The staff meetings and posters are used to increase awareness for both parents and staff regarding noticing and the importance of reporting child abuse.

They are encouraged to openly talk about the prevention of such events from happening to children. We encourage an open dialog with the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy family to help facilitate an open-door policy on Reporting Child Abuse within our community. We also encourage staff to attend seminars to learn more about how they can help increase awareness. We also hold parent seminars to bring awareness to our community.

### Child Abuse Reporting Policy

* The State of Texas requires that Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy and all members of childcare institutions be on the lookout for, and report to the State and appropriate authorities all suspected cases of abuse and neglect to a child. Our staff are mandatory reporters of Child Abuse and neglect. All incidents or suspected incidents will be turned over directly to the Child Protective Services for investigation. We are not allowed to

do our own investigation and are required by law to report anything of a suspicious nature. It is advised that families make the staff aware of any lingering bruising or other visible injury to minimize suspicion of possible child abuse or endangerment. Child abuse is defined as “a violation of a child’s body and mind” physically, emotionally, or sexually. Child Neglect is defined as continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, including, but not limited to food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, medical and dental care, and adequate supervision needed for the child’s growth and development.

The following steps are to be taken if a staff member is suspected of child abuse:

* A staff member who has a situation or investigation pending should immediately notify the Director or most senior leadership staff member in the building.
* The supervisor will check on the complaint and if they agree that there may be abuse, the staff member will report the incident to Child Protective Services and our State licensing authority.
* We will then follow their advice regarding whether or not to suspend the staff member If a staff member is found in a case of child abuse, we will take the following steps:
  + We will allow the staff member to appeal the decision
  + The Director or an appointed member of the leadership staff will meet with the individual to go over the incident and form an opinion as to its validity and/or consequences to the school and the individual.
  + Based on the advice of our licensing agent, we will either suspend the staff member or allow them to continue their job until the appeal is completed.
* The staff member will meet with the Director or an assigned member of the leadership staff during this time and steps will be taken to ensure that there will not be any problems.
* If after the appeal the decision is still founded, we will take one of the following steps based on the advice of our licensing agent:
  + The staff member will be terminated from their position at the school; or
  + We will inform the parents that we have a staff member who has a founded child abuse on record. We will also let the parents know what the charge was.

Please note, that any authorized person who attempts to pick up a child from Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy must not be under the influence of any illegal substance. In the case of this occurrence, the school will consider this an act of child abuse/neglect and will notify the local police department immediately.

# Health & Illness Policies

## Health Check

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy recognizes the need to maintain a safe, healthy, stimulating environment for children in our care and ensure practices that prevent the

spread of infectious diseases. Children new to a childcare center or school environment will almost certainly contract more frequent colds and other ailments than they would at home. Be prepared for this and be assured that as your child’s immunities are strengthened by exposure and episodes of illness should become less frequent and less severe.

Each day we do a visual health check of each child in our care. We look for any illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in child-care center activities including outdoor play. We also look at illness resulting in a greater need for care than caregivers can

provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care.

### Exclusion From Care

There are circumstances that may call for a child to be excluded from care at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy:

* The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (including outdoor play).
* The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care.
* Temporal temperature of 100.0 degrees or greater.
* Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater.
* Under-arm temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater
* Lethargy and fatigue
* Abnormal breathing
* Cough (including a persistent dry cough without documentation from a physician about a condition)
* Loss of taste or smell
* Sore throat
* Two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours
* Diarrhea
* Rash with unknown cause
* Mouth sores
* The child’s behavior changes, or the child exhibits other signs that the child may be severely ill.
* If a child has returned to school following an illness and exhibits signs that the illness is reoccurring
* If the child experiences a sudden change of medical status and is showing other signs of illness, we have the authorization to take the child to the emergency room or call 911 at your expense

We are not able to honor requests that children be excluded from certain types of activities related to a temporary medical condition such as recovering from an illness. In the case of

a physical difference, disability, or longer-term condition such as recovery from a broken bone please talk to the director about a plan for your child. School staff must always assess the impact any modifications and accommodations may have on the safety and the activities of other students. We reserve the right to deny any requests that we deem to be infeasible.

### When a Child Becomes Ill While in Care

If any one of the previously listed signs or symptoms occur the following procedure will be followed:

* The child will be removed from the classroom.
* The child’s parents will be called to pick up child
* The parents will have a maximum of 40 minutes to pick up their child
* If the child’s medical status declines quickly including rapidly increasing temperature, we have the authorization to take the child to the emergency room or call 911 at your expense.
* The child will be given appropriate attention and supervision until the child’s parents arrive
* Extra attention will be given to hand washing and sanitation.
* The environment will be disinfected and sanitized as soon as possible.

### Readmitting a Previously Ill Child

Before a child returns to school the following must take place:

* Fever-free without fever-reducing medication (Tylenol, Motrin, and generic equivalents) for at least 24 hours. (Please note the normal/elevated ranges for your exact thermometer device.)
* No vomiting and / or diarrhea for at least 24 hours
* Fatigue and malaise are no longer present
* Child has resumed normal eating, drinking, and toileting routines
* At least 24 hours since the first dose of antibiotics if prescribed
* Resolving signs and symptoms. While congestion and coughs often persist, the other signs and symptoms of illness should be resolved.
* Please follow the guidance of your healthcare practitioner and any illness-specific guidance
* Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to request a medical release from an MD, DO, or nurse practitioner prior to returning to campus

### COVID-19 Policy

Students and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 (until ruled out), or a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 must receive a release from a physician to return to school. Staff students will not be required to quarantine for exposure unless they are showing symptoms.

## Accidents & Mishaps

Minor scrapes or bruises will be handled at school and an accident report will be given to the parent at pick-up detailing the incident. Head injuries, or any more serious injuries will be reported to the parent by phone and an accident report will be given to the parent at pick-up detailing the incident. All accident/incident reports must be signed by the parent to be kept in the child's student file; you may request a copy.

## Vaccination Policy

Vaccination records or exemptions will be kept on file as a part of your child’s records per state-mandated Minimum Standards. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy honors vaccine exemptions, which must be obtained by the Texas Department of State Health Services. If you wish to obtain an exemption, please begin the process at least one month in advance of enrollment to allow for processing time.

More information can be found at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov>

The Coronavirus vaccine is not on the current vaccine schedule for school attendance in Texas. An exemption related to the Coronavirus vaccine is not necessary.

## Staff TB Test and Vaccination Requirements

While we encourage all staff members to stay healthy and get their annual check-ups, we do not require specific vaccines or TB Tests before working at our facility.

## Vision and Hearing Testing Requirements

Any child 4 years and above must have a Vision and Hearing test completed before starting with Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy or within the first 4 months and must be submitted to the school. Please turn it into the front office so it can be placed in your child’s file. These tests are most often obtained during the child’s annual well-child visit with your healthcare provider, and we may periodically provide the screenings on campus for a fee to be paid by the child’s family.

## 

## Medication

Parents will be expected to complete and sign a Medicine Authorization Form if their child is to receive any **prescription medicine**, inhalers, or breathing treatments while in the care of Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. The medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child’s name and with directions to administer the medication, and must be an Rx prescribed by a Physician. **(Over-the-counter medication cannot be administered without an Rx).** Prescribed medication must also include the date and name of the physician. All requests must have a start and end date. No medicine should be taken to the classroom by the parents or students. All medication will be given according to the label provided.

When the child is to be given medication, a designated member of the administrative staff will take the medicine to the child or discreetly call for the child to leave the classroom. Using gloves, the employee will dispense the medication to the child and sign off on the

Medical Authorization Form. All medication forms will be kept in a binder in the front office.

Medication cannot and will not be administered through a child’s food or drink.

# Medical Emergencies

At the beginning of every school year, as part of registration, each student must provide documentation to have keep on file a form with the following:

* name, address, and phone number of the child’s doctor
* name, address, and phone number of a hospital where the child can receive emergency medical attention

## Procedures for Major Injuries

* Administrative staff members will call 911
* Parents will be notified via telephone
* A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and will stay until the parent arrives.
* Parents will receive written documentation of the event once the situation has been handled and the child is safe with his/her parent.

## Procedure for Minor Injuries

* Parents will be notified via telephone
* Parents will receive written documentation of the event upon arrival

## Allergies

Upon enrollment, each family must give written details of any allergies their student may have. This will be kept on file and a copy will be given to the staff members who care for that child. If allergies develop after enrollment, parents must submit a copy of formal documentation from the child’s physician.

A Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan form must be completed and signed by the parent and physician/healthcare practitioner if a child has a diagnosed food allergy. Please request this form at the front desk if applicable. This form must be signed by a physician/licensed healthcare practitioner BEFORE a child can start with our program.

## Infants and Safe Sleeping

Currently, we do not offer care for infants.

## Nursing

We also offer a designated place for nursing mothers (family or staff) to sit in a quiet place to feed her child.

# General Other Policies

**Guide to Parent’s Rights**

• Enter and examine the child-care facility during its hours of operation and without advance notice.

• File a complaint against the childcare facility.

• Review the childcare facility’s publicly accessible records.

• Review the child-care facility’s written records concerning the parent’s or guardian’s child.

• Receive inspection reports and information about how to access the childcare facility’s online compliance history.

• Have the facility comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the child.

• Be given the contact information for the childcare facility’s local Child Care Regulation office.

• Obtain a copy of the facility’s policies and procedures handbook.

• Review the facility’s staff training records and any in-house training curriculum; and

• Exercise these rights without receiving retaliatory action by the facility.

• Inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving their child provided that:

• Video recordings of the alleged incident are available.

• The parent or guardian does not retain any part of the video depicting a child that is not their own; and

• The parent or guardian of any other child in the video receives prior notice from the facility.

**Required Notifications**

• The childcare facility must provide written notice to the parent or guardian of any other child captured in a video before allowing a parent to inspect a recording.

• The childcare facility must provide a parent or guardian with a written copy of the rights no later than the child’s first day at the facility.

## Licensing

We understand the importance of keeping strict compliance with the Texas (DPFS) state licensing regulations in order to ensure a quality environment for your children. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy complies with the applicable state licensing regulations and policies. These requirements cover staff qualifications, facility, playground, health and safety guidelines, and child/staff ratios. A copy of the minimum standards for Licensed Child Care Centers may be reviewed in the school office. Our recent inspection report is posted in the lobby bulletin board. If you have any questions or concerns regarding child-care licensing or minimum standards rules, please contact Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or Texas Health and Human Services.

Local Licensing Office

550 East 15th Street, Ste 120

Plano, TX 75074

512-424-6500

Website: [www.dfps.state.tx.us.and](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us.and) txchildcaresearch.org;

Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

HHS Website: [www.hhs.texas.gov](http://www.hhs.texas.gov).

**Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited anywhere on school property. When entering the parking lot all smoking must be stopped. This includes but is not limited to cigarettes or any tobacco products, e-cigs, vapor cigarettes, etc.

## 

## Firearms and Weapons

Firearms and weapons are prohibited on school property. If you have a license to carry a concealed weapon, you must leave your weapon in your locked vehicle unless you are an officer on duty.

## 

## Gang Free Zone

By law, all childcare facilities are required to include this information in their Parent Handbook. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is in a gang-free zone.

What is a gang-free zone?

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your childcare center. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends?

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. Parents may contact their local municipality or court house for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

What is the purpose of gang-free zones?

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

## 

## Policy Changes

If Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy changes any policies, we will notify you in writing no less than ten days before the change. Policy changes will be emailed and posted at the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy.

**Implied Completion and Agreement**

Please complete and sign the attached form confirming you have read this handbook and agree to abide by Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy’s policies and procedures. Regardless of receiving the signed form, your child’s enrollment and participation in programming imply that you have completely read and agree to the guidelines within.

**Please see the last page of the Parent Handbook. Print, sign, and return with your child’s file**

**HEART OF TEXOMA MONTESSORI ACADEMY**

**Parent Handbook**

I agree that I received and will abide by the Operational Policies outlined above. I have read and agree to abide by the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy’s policies and procedures and agree to all the statements below. I also accept responsibility for sharing this information with any other authorized caregivers, especially those that may be dropping off & picking up my child(ren).

* I agree that I received and will abide by the Operational Policies outlined in the handbook.
* I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with the Operational Policies outlined in the handbook.
* I acknowledge it is my responsibility to ensure all authorized caregivers are aware of Operational Policies.
* I will keep a copy of this handbook accessible for my reference.
* I have read and agree to abide by the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy Agreement.

**Print Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**