



SOAR



*School-Age Opportunities for
Achievement and Recreation*



Parent Handbook

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission at SOAR is to provide children with a loving, stimulating environment where they are free to grow and learn in the guidance of warm and gentle caregivers.

We provide children with a program that enables them to grow physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively at their own pace.

Our curriculum is developmentally appropriate for children's age and skill level and is based on current early childhood best practices. Our curriculum is research based.

We will help all children celebrate their heritage and individuality and we will promote skills for conflict resolution.

AGE RANGE

SOAR provides before and after school care for children aged 5 through 12 years.

INCLUSION

SOAR is committed to providing an environment where every child has opportunities to succeed. We recognize that children come to us with a variety of learning styles and abilities. Upon admission you will be asked to provide us with copies of IFSP/IEP. These documents will help us to work with you, should your child have special needs. At our pre-enrollment meeting is a good time to discuss any strategies or adaptations that work for your child. We will strive to have open communication with you at all times so that we can work together to provide a strong program for your child. Please feel free to share with us any information that is pertinent to the care of your child.

DAYS OF OPERATION

SOAR is open during the school year Monday through Friday. Care is available before and/or after school and whenever school is not in session, including spring and winter breaks, half days, and other days when school is closed except for holidays as noted.

HOLIDAYS

SOAR will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

New Year's Day

Martin Luther Kings B'Day Labor Day

President's Day Thanksgiving

Good Friday Thanksgiving Friday

Easter Monday Christmas Eve

Christmas Day and December 26/31*

*Either December 26 or December 31 will be a holiday based on annual calendar.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Before SOAR can accept any child into care, we must have a completed health inventory and a current immunization certificate that complies with Office of Child Care requirements, signed by a licensed physician.

PROGRAM

SOAR program includes opportunities for outdoor play, homework time, quiet reading time, arts and crafts, games, music and dance, and free play.

Our school age programs are designed to provide children with opportunities to help plan activities and choose what they want to do each day. School age programs provide opportunities for quiet and active play and the opportunity for children to self-select their amount of involvement on a daily basis.

ADMISSION

Before a child is admitted, a pre-enrollment meeting is required to determine if SOAR can meet the needs of you and your child. At the time of the meeting, you and your child will be encouraged to visit the classroom. During the meeting, you will receive all the forms necessary to enroll your child. These forms are required to be turned in on, or before, the first day of care. SOAR does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, disability or special need.

Children are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. In centers owned by Montgomery County Government, priority placement is given to Montgomery County employees. Once you have made the decision to become a part of our SOAR family, a nonrefundable registration fee is required.

If there is no space currently available, your child will be placed on a waiting list, if you so desire. When space becomes available, we will notify you. You will then have the option of filling the space (payment of the registration fee would then be due), having your name removed from the list, or having your name moved to the bottom of the list. The waiting list is available to you at no cost and no obligation.

On the first day of care, you are responsible for paying a 2-week deposit in addition to your first week's fee. The deposit will be credited to your child's last two weeks of care, provided 2 weeks written notice is provided to SOAR

INCLEMENT WEATHER AND EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In the event of closings due to inclement weather, SOAR follows the policy of the Montgomery County Board of Education Administrative Offices. If the offices open late or close early, we will normally follow their schedule. If the Administrative Offices and MCPS open 2 hours late, SOAR will open at 9:00 AM. If MCPS closes and the Administrative Offices offices open 2 hours late we will open at 10:30. If the Administrative offices and/or Federal Government are closed we will generally close. We are bound by our leases to open at these times or later, but no earlier. Further, we are mandated to follow any other delays, closings or early closings as required by MCPS>

If Montgomery County Public Schools open late or are closed due to inclement weather, and the Administrative Offices are open regular hours, we will open one hour late.

We reserve the right to adjust this policy based on current conditions. Please check our answering machine on these days. Unless there is a power outage, we have the ability to update our message daily. Please check with the center for the most current information regarding our schedule. SOAR posts emergency information on our website at www.soarchildcare.com.

Our policy is formed to provide a balance for parents who need to work and staff who need to be able to get to SOAR safely.

PAYMENTS

Payments are due on Monday morning for that week. If paying monthly, payment is due on the first day of the month that your child attends. If your child does not attend on Monday, your payment is due on the first day of the week that your child attends. Payments not made on time will be assessed a \$5 per day late fee. Payments not made by Friday of the week will result in termination of your child's enrollment.,

If any check is returned by the bank unpaid, you will be assessed a service charge, see your contract for details. After the second returned check, all subsequent payments will have to be paid in cash or by money order. You will also be subject to late fees on returned checks.

We accept vouchers from the Working Parents Assistance Program, the Department of Social Services, FEEA, and NACCRRRA. However, you are responsible for paying the difference between the vouchers and our fees on a weekly basis.

For your convenience, you may sign up for automatic withdrawal from your bank account. Please see the center Director for the proper forms.

ABSENCES, VACATIONS, HOLIDAYS AND CLOSINGS

When SOAR determines the rates for the year, it includes consideration for absences, vacations, holidays and emergency closings. You are responsible for the payment of

your weekly fee, in full, each week of the year, regardless of absences, vacations, holidays, or emergency closings.

If your child is absent for 5 days with no notification to SOAR, we will attempt to contact you. If contact can not be made, it will be assumed that you no longer need your space and it will be offered to candidates on the waiting list.

DISCIPLINE

At SOAR, all children and staff will be expected to treat each other with respect. When children consistently exhibit behavior that is not appropriate, SOAR will contact the parent and find a mutually acceptable way to help the child develop the appropriate skills.

It is the goal of SOAR that all children participate in a cooperative manner. We will attempt to teach each child conflict resolution skills that they will be able to use for the rest of their lives.

School Age children, parents and staff will be required to sign the Rights and Responsibilities agreement detailing our expectations for school age behavior.

Discipline is to be handled by SOAR staff, parents should never discipline any child but their own when at SOAR.

ARRIVAL AND PICKUP

SOAR will not accept responsibility for any children before our opening time. All children must be signed in and out each day by the parent. For school age children, SOAR will sign the children in after school each day and will contact parents should a child not arrive from school as expected. Please call us if you know your child will not be attending.

All children must be picked up from the center by 6:30 PM. A late fee will be charged to you for any pickups after the assigned time and is assessed per child. See your contract for details.

You will be billed for late pickups the following morning. The late fee is due immediately. Repeated late pickups will result in termination of your contract.

We take pride in the fact that we are responsible for your children and we will not let them go anywhere unless we are certain that it has been approved by you. If your child is to go home with a friend or to be released to anyone not on your emergency form, you will need to provide us with written notification. Children who wish to leave the center to attend an after-school activity must also bring a note from home or they will not be released.

In order to protect your child, we will only release children to persons who are authorized on the emergency information form. Identification will be required.

COMMUNICATION

SOAR believes that open communication is the key to a successful relationship. Please feel free to discuss any concerns that you may have with us. You may call, email, fax or send a note with your child.

Specifically, please let us know of any things in your child's life (i.e., new baby, separation, divorce, business trip, or illness or death of a family member) that may affect his or her behavior or cause concern. We will keep you informed of any change in your child's behavior or routine at the center. Conferences are available to you at any time and may be scheduled to discuss behavior, programming, special needs and /or any concerns you might have.

NUTRITION

SOAR, at Washington Grove, receives snacks through a special grant that Washington Grove Elementary School has received. We will supplement snacks when necessary to ensure that the children are receiving nutritious snacks with fresh fruits and vegetables. On school holidays, that we are open, you should send in lunch and a drink for your child. Please do not send soda or candy.

HEALTH

SOAR can not accept any child for care who has a contagious illness, has diarrhea, an unexplained rash, is vomiting or has a temperature of 100 degrees or above. If any of these conditions are present in your child, you will be asked to take the child home and not return until he or she has been symptom free for 24 hours. If your doctor provides us with a dated note saying that the child is OK to be in child care they may come back right away. This policy protects the welfare of all of our children and staff.

Should your child become ill during the day, he or she will be isolated from the other children and we will try to keep him or her as comfortable as possible until we can contact you and your arrive to pick him or her up. Once you have been contacted children should be picked up within 90 minutes.

SOAR will abide by any decisions regarding exclusion as determined by the County Health Department.

MEDICINE

In order to administer medication to your child, SOAR needs the following information to be supplied by you, on our form:

- *Name of child
- *Name of medication
- *Dosage
- *Time medication is to be given
- *Reason medication is to be given

*Dates the medication is to be administered

*Signature of authorization

The medication must be delivered to us in its original container. Over-the-counter medications may not be administered without a doctor's signature. These requirements are mandated by state law.

INJURY POLICY

SOAR does its best to protect all of our children everyday, however, sometimes accidents do happen. If your child is injured, an accident report will be completed by our staff and given to you. Our staff is trained in First Aid and CPR. If we feel that medical care is necessary we will inform you by phone (please, make sure your emergency numbers are up-to-date) so that you can pick up your child. We will keep your child as comfortable as possible and apply First Aid until you arrive. If medical treatment is required, your family health insurance policy is primary. SOAR can not be held responsible for injuries that occur during play and/or normal daytime activities.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Parents are welcome to plan birthday celebrations for their children. However, we ask that parents adhere to the following guidelines.

- *Please check with your child's teacher prior to confirming the date of the celebration.
- *The staff at SOAR are here to assist you with minor details of the celebration only.
- *Celebrations should be limited to cake, ice cream and/or goody bags.
- *Celebrations should be planned during lunch or snack times only.
- *Celebrations should include the birthday child's family, classmates and teachers only.
- *Candy may be sent home, but may not be served.
- *Please understand that your child's classmates are not expected to give gifts.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Outside play is part of the daily curriculum. On weather appropriate days all children will go outside. This is a regulation for all children and is important to their physical well being. Children, and adults, need fresh air and the opportunity to use their large motor groups on a daily basis.

CLOTHING

Children should be dressed in clothing that is appropriate for the weather. During the winter, hats and gloves or mittens are necessary for outside play. To avoid confusion and lost items, all clothing should be labeled with the child's complete name.

The children will be spending the majority of their time in play and exploration. Therefore, please do not dress them in anything that cannot be soiled. Also, you are encouraged to provide a change of clothes for your child that can be left at the center for emergencies.

TOYS

Toys, games, records and books are provided at SOAR. If these items are brought from home, the staff cannot be responsible for their loss or damage.

In order to prevent damage, misuse, or hurt feelings (children will be expected to share), caregivers may feel the need to remove individual items from the children. Generally, the items will be returned at the end of the day, or we will, contact you to make arrangements for their return.

Toys that are weapons of any kind are not allowed. Video and electronic games must be rated E for everyone, no games for teens will be permitted.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Here at SOAR, we encourage parents to drop in at any time to see how their child is doing, to eat lunch, or to share a story or talent with our children. Parents are an incredibly important element to our program. We encourage all parents to volunteer/contribute to their child's classroom. There are a variety of ways in which parents can contribute, including time, services and donations. Parents are encouraged to attend parent conferences in the spring and fall as well as "back to school night".

If you are interested in helping out, please do not hesitate to talk to your child's teacher. An extra pair of loving hands is always welcome.

CHANGES TO SCHEDULE

SOAR must be given at least two week written notice of any schedule changes, that will affect your contract. No schedule changes will be allowed for the weeks of Christmas, New Years, Easter, winter and spring break.

TERMINATION BY PARENT

If for any reason, you wish to terminate your child's enrollment at SOAR, you need to submit at least 2 weeks' written notice to the Director. Be sure to include the termination date in your letter. Your deposit will be applied to the final fee. If you do not give 2 weeks' written notice, your deposit is forfeited. Should you decide to return to SOAR at a later date, and if space exists, you will need to repay your registration fee and deposit. Once enrollment is terminated you may not re-enroll your child until 30 days has passed, as space allows. In special circumstances, at SOAR's discretion families may be allowed to re-enroll sooner than 30 days, however tuition back to date of disenrollment will be due.

TERMINATION BY SOAR

SOAR may terminate the enrollment of your child, effective immediately, for any of the following reasons:

- The child's or parent's behavior threatens the physical or mental health of any person at SOAR.
- The parent refuses to follow SOAR policies or behaves in a manner that is deemed unacceptable at SOAR.
- Tuition is not paid by Friday of the week due or late fees, late pickup fees, or returned check fees are not paid within one week.
- The child is picked up late more than two times in any 30-day period.
- Any weapons, alcohol or illegal substance are brought into SOAR.

Termination by the center is a last resort and results in forfeiture of your deposit.

COMMENTS

This handbook is filled with information concerning our policies and procedures- important information that you need to be aware of. However, we want you to know that our primary focus is on providing the best care for your child. We will keep your child busy, happy and well-loved while you attend to the things that you need to do. If you ever have any questions or concerns, just let us know. We like to hear from you.

We look forward to meeting you and getting to know you and your child!!

