

# Policies and Procedures Handbook for Parents



*CHI Montessori Academy*

CHILDREN'S HOUSE FOR INSTRUCTION

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## Philosophy

Montessori education is based upon a profound respect for the individual child and the contribution he/she can give to humanity. It involves a process that seeks to guide the child to his/her own natural potential through the child's "absorbent mind" using special materials that reinforce more permanent learning. The carefully prepared Montessori environment recognizes the spontaneous urge of the child to learn, allowing him to choose his own daily work from a broad curriculum of botany, zoology, geography, art, language, math, and cultural subjects. The child exercises intellectual, physical, and psychic freedom within the controlled Montessori classroom. This environment helps the child to achieve self-discipline and confidence at an early age and is the very foundation for his role as a happy, functioning member of a social community.

## Mission Statement

The mission of CHI Montessori Academy is to offer a culturally rich Montessori environment that provides children with the freedom to explore, learn, grow, and develop their natural gifts and talents supported by trained Montessori teachers and nurturing guides.

## **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY RELATING TO STUDENTS**

The CHI Montessori Academy, Inc. admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, and other school-administered programs.

## History

CHI Montessori Academy officially opened its doors as a home school in College Park on September 8, 2009. It started as a dream two years before when several educators began a conversation about an ideal school. The creators of the school, Sharon Suitt and Elizabeth Bland, were both retired Atlanta Public School educators who believed in the importance of early childhood education and parental involvement. Sharon received her Montessori diploma from North American Montessori Center (NAMC), in November 2007 and her Montessori training for the Primary Class at Kennesaw State University under the direction of Feland Meadows, Ph.D. Dr. Meadows was the Goizueta Endowed Chair of the Early Childhood Department at Kennesaw State University and Founder of the Pan American Montessori Society. CHI Montessori continued to operate as a home school for 4 years in the home of Ms. Sharon. As the waiting list for openings outgrew the available space, Ms. Sharon was encouraged to search for a center location to accommodate several families with infants and toddlers also demanding Montessori education for their children.

## Operational Procedures

CHI Montessori Academy is a school-year academic program that runs from August through May. The school hours are currently Monday through Friday from 8:30 am until 3:00 pm. Morning drop-off is from 8:00 am to 8:30 am and afternoon dismissal is from 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm. There is an after-school program offered at an additional cost, from 3:30 pm until 5:30 pm.

The 2023-2024 school year will begin on Monday, August 7, 2023, and end on Friday, May 24, 2024. CHI Montessori Academy will observe the following holidays/vacation periods during the 2023-2024 school year:

- Labor Day - Mon. September 4th
- Thanksgiving Break - Mon. November 20th - Fri. November 24<sup>th</sup>
- Winter Break - Mon. December 25<sup>th</sup> - Wed. January 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Mon. January 15<sup>th</sup>
- President's Day - Mon. February 19<sup>th</sup>
- Spring Break - Mon. April 1<sup>st</sup> - Fri. April 5<sup>th</sup>

**In the event of inclement weather, CHI Montessori Academy generally follows the Atlanta Public School closing schedule.**

## Enrollment

CHI Montessori Academy accepts children as young as 6 weeks up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Classes are organized into instructional clusters spanning a three-year age range.

- The Nido or Infant Program specifically embraces children ages 6 weeks up to 18 months of age or not yet walking. These children sleep in cribs, drink from a bottle, are nursing, or may be just learning how to drink from a cup. The infants in this program receive loving attention from 5 teachers throughout the day. The infant schedule allows the children to sleep, eat, play, and learn on their own individual schedules. Teachers in the Infant Room are immediately aware of the needs of each child and attend to the child's needs gently and in a caring manner. Diapers are checked and changed at least every hour or more often if necessary. Infants will be changed at the changing station where warm running water is within arm's reach.
- The Toddler Program accommodates children who are walking from around 18 months up to 36 months of age and who have not yet mastered the toilet learning process. These young learners begin to work with the early

Montessori materials with the assistance of a lead teacher and trained assistants. The Toddler Program supports young children learning to use the toilet on their own with guidance as needed. There is a range of developmental practices for children gaining their independence as young walkers and talkers. An emphasis at this level is placed on gross motor, fine motor, and language development in a supportive and nurturing environment. Toddlers are given every opportunity to use the restroom on a modified schedule to encourage the “natural” rhythm of their bodies as they begin to adjust to a routine. At no time is any child chastised for “accidents”. This is to be expected as part of the learning process.

The Toddler Program is divided into two subgroups:

1. Toddler I: Early Learners Group
  2. Toddler II: Pre-Primary Group
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- The Primary Program is for children who have mastered the toilet learning process, 3 years of age up to 6 years of age, which includes children in the kindergarten group. In the Primary program, the teacher encourages each child to work with materials at their own pace and of their own choosing to accomplish the goals established by both the child and the guide together. The child in this program has reached a stage in which repetition and manipulation of the environment are critical to the development of concentration, coordination, independence, and a sense of order. The child learns skills for everyday living, sorting, grading, and classifying – all of which lead to the development of skills in writing and reading, and the formation of the mathematical mind.
  - The Elementary Program is a multi-age learning environment for children 6 to 9 years old or the equivalent of first through third grade and upper elementary students 9 to 12 years old, or the equivalent of fourth through fifth grade. The elementary classroom is a warm

community with materials that invite exploration and research. Maria Montessori summed up the 6 to 12 classrooms thusly: *“The elementary child has reached a new level of development. Before he was interested in things: working with his hands, learning their names. Now he is interested mainly in the how and why...the problem of cause and effect.”* Children learn to face challenges with confidence and begin to find their own place in the world around them.

- The Director, Academic Director, or Lead teacher will conduct an interview for prospective Primary and Elementary students seeking enrollment in CHI Montessori to determine the appropriate placement.
- In the event the team determines that CHI Montessori is not suitable for your child, the Director will assist parents in identifying a learning setting that may be more appropriate for their child’s specific needs.

## Tuition Requirements

CHI Montessori Academy is an academic program that requires tuition payment due on the 1st of each month and payable in guaranteed funds (cash, check, debit/credit card, cash app, ProCare Tuition Express, bank draft) by the 5th of the current month. Should the 1st of the month fall on a weekend or vacation day, tuition will be due on the next business day. Tuition paid after the due date incurs a late penalty of \$50.

Parents may prepay full tuition for the semester (Aug. to Dec. OR Jan. to May) and receive a 5% discount toward their tuition. Families that prepay the entire year’s tuition will receive a 10% discount on tuition. Any family with two or more children attending CHI Montessori may receive a 10% discount on the youngest

child's tuition. Only one of the available discounts may be applied. The tuition costs for the current 2023-2024 school year are as follows:

- Lower/Upper Elementary Programs: 1st - 5th grade \$1,025/month
- Primary Program: 3yrs. - 6 yrs. old \$1,025/month
- Toddler Program: 18mos.- 36 mos. \$1,050/month
- Nido Program: 6 wks.-18 mos. \$1,075/month

In addition to tuition, an annual enrollment fee of \$200.00 is required for each student.

Payment of tuition is expected regardless of vacation days, holidays, illness, absences, or school closures. If you find it necessary to withdraw your child, please provide two weeks' notice to avoid additional charges.

Parents are expected to supply and maintain accurate enrollment/admission information for their child/ren. State regulations require evidence of age-appropriate immunizations or a signed affidavit objecting to such.

## Emergency Procedures

CHI Montessori staff are trained in CPR and Basic First Aid and all staff are trained in emergency operations procedures covering all areas of emergency situations according to guidelines of Georgia Emergency Management. Parents may review these procedures with the director. An incident report will be completed for children that experience a mild scrape or bump. This form provides the time, location, and nature of the injury and will be given to the parent or guardian on the day the injury occurred. Parents must sign when they arrive to pick up their child and leave a copy with the school for their child's file. Minor injuries that do not require immediate medical attention (minor cuts, skinned knees, etc.) will be treated as necessary by the school staff trained in first aid.

Fire/severe weather drills are conducted each month to prepare all the children in the event of an emergency.

- In the event of a fire, gas leak, bomb threat, or physical plant problems: students will be escorted away from the building to the playground area and will remain in place until each parent has been contacted and all children are picked up. All staff will remain with the students throughout any emergency event. No staff will leave the premises until all children are safe.
- Protection of children inside the building in the event of a severe weather occurrence: All Primary and Elementary students will gather on the first floor of the school building and assemble in the Gallery area and hallway away from windows and doors. Infants/toddlers will remain in the area farthest away from the windows in the infant area of the main floor of the school building until the “all clear” signal is given.
- In the event of an intruder situation: all outer doors and classroom doors will be locked and barricaded. Children will shelter in place inside classrooms away from windows and doors. Police will be notified immediately. Parents will be contacted by administrative staff via ProCare emergency SMS alert. All children and staff will remain inside the building until the premises are considered safe by emergency authorities. No staff will leave the premises until all children are safe and have been released to their parents or guardian.

CHI Montessori Academy is required to report any suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation to the Department of Family and Children Services. The parent bulletin board, located in the lobby of the school, will have posted notices to include the school’s license, copy of rules, review of an evaluation report,

communicable disease chart, names of persons in charge, emergency plans for severe weather and fire, and a statement for visitors.

## Illness

For the protection of all children, parents will be notified by email and phone call to work, home, and/or listed emergency contact numbers, in the event your child becomes ill, injured, or exposed to a notifiable communicable disease. A sign posted on the parent communication board and school website will also inform parents of exposure to a communicable disease. Children should be kept away from school if they show any of the following symptoms that are of greater intensity or frequency than what is normally experienced:

- A temperature at or above 100.4°
- A temperature within the last 24 hours (without fever reducer)
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- An unexplained rash
- Nasal discharge or discharging eyes or ears
- Severe sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches and/or pain

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

CHI Montessori is required to report any suspected case of notifiable communicable disease to the local county Health Department. Parents should exercise every precaution and keep their child at home if any of these or other similar symptoms occur. If a child becomes ill during the day, a parent or guardian will be required to pick up their child within one (1) hour after being notified. Until parents have picked up the child, he/she will remain isolated from other children in a separate area with the director.

Should your child require immediate emergency medical attention by a medical professional, children will be transported to the Children's Hughes Spalding Hospital by ambulance with an administrator accompanying them for emergency medical care. The administrator will remain with the child until a parent or guardian arrives. An incident report will be filed with Bright from the Start within 24 hours of the event.

Please make plans now for a backup person to pick up your sick child if you should be temporarily unavailable. No child will be released from school to an unauthorized person (someone not listed on the enrollment form) without written notification from the parent/guardian. Additionally, you must notify the school in writing or by phone prior to the child's release. This is for your child's safety and the school's legal liability.

## Medications

If your child requires medication to be administered at school, follow these guidelines:

1. An *Authorization to Dispense Medicine* form must be filled out completely and signed by the parent, which includes the procedure for delivery and pick up of medication at the school.
2. Medications must be in original packaging. The container must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. Prescription medication must have the prescription number, doctor's name, and pharmacy phone number as well as the times medication is to be administered.
3. Administering medication will be limited to no more than two weeks unless written authorization from the physician is in effect. Staff will monitor and record adverse reactions to the medication given at any time and that information will be shared with parents.

## Food and Rest

CHI Montessori Academy will meet the nutritional needs of the child by serving a morning snack and a well-balanced lunch. Menus will be posted weekly on the school website and will follow the food guidelines provided by *Bright from the Start*. If there are allergies, food restrictions, or medical exceptions to the foods served, parents are asked to notify the classroom teacher and send an alternate meal from home for their child for those days.

An experienced on-site cook will prepare and serve meals, in covered containers (i.e. *Bento Boxes* provided by the school) to each classroom. Morning snacks and lunch will be prepared for toddlers, primary and elementary students to eat together in their classrooms. Toddlers will be encouraged to self-feed as appropriate, with support and guidance from their teachers.

Infants' feeding will follow the written instructions given by the parents for formula or breast milk. Provisions will be outlined for formula/breast milk bottles, identified with the child's name and current date, with updates for the handling of leftover formula/breast milk and the introduction of solid foods. If certain foods on the lunch menu have been introduced, parents can notify the teacher/school whether their infant can participate in the food program on those days. The parent will also indicate, if preferred, the use of a pacifier, labeled with the child's name.

Georgia law requires a supervised nap or rest period during the day for preschool-age children. A crib-sized sheet, for naptime, is required, a light blanket is optional. If your child has a special soft sleep item for comfort, it is permissible to bring it for rest time only. **Please clearly label all items.**

Infants will be put to sleep on their backs in their own designated cribs. Clean crib sheets will be provided by the school daily.

## Clothing

Students at CHI Montessori are expected to dress comfortably in a way that will enable them to move freely and enjoy outdoor play. To encourage independence, choose clothing that is easy for your child to put on and take off with little assistance. This will give children a positive feeling of taking care of their own needs. All children should wear properly-fitting, flat, soft-soled shoes indoors. Staff and students will wear a separate pair of shoes for outdoors (Please do not send flip-flops or open-toe sandals for outside play). All children must have at least two sets of weather-appropriate clothing clearly labeled with their name at the school, at all times. A set of clothes includes a top, bottom, underwear, and socks. If your child has an accident and does not have a suitable change of clothes, you will be notified to bring your child a change of clothes as soon as possible. All articles of clothing

must be labeled with the student's name. For infants and toddlers, families are expected to provide enough diapers and wipes for the week and three to four complete changes of clothes daily.

## Discipline Policies

The Montessori philosophy is such that each person within the environment has certain rights. Ground rules are established by and for the students in each class and are expected to be followed for the social cohesion of the entire group. The aim of the Montessori Method is self-discipline through purposeful activities. The idea behind the method of self-discipline is to like what you do, not necessarily do whatever you like! When the rights of an individual are infringed upon, positive steps for correction are made. Children in the Montessori classroom are encouraged and taught to do the right thing, willingly and with grace and courtesy thereby eliminating any need for external corrective measures.

Planning ahead and thoughtful direction are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem-solving help each child develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, respectful of other people, and of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with grace and courtesy, self-control, and kindness. Each student at CHI Montessori has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect

- Receive help and support from caring adults

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all the children. Our approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to model how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero-tolerance environment for bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report them to the director.

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

If a child's behavior/circumstances are of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable school environment.

## Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is encouraged at CHI Montessori Academy. It is the responsibility of the parents to keep the staff advised of any significant changes in information pertinent to the child and the family, i.e., phone numbers, work location, emergency contacts, family physician, and authorized persons to pick up your child.

In choosing CHI Montessori Academy for your child's educational experience, you have already demonstrated an interest in participating in your child's academic future. There are many opportunities for parent

involvement, including parent workshops, in-person (or phone) teacher/parent conferences, and special classroom performances. As participants in your child's educational experiences, fall and spring conferences will be held to inform you of your child's growth and accomplishments. As individual plans for teaching and learning will be discussed, your input is vital to our work with your child.

We look forward to partnering with the parents of students attending CHI Montessori Academy for many years to come as we embark on a lifelong journey of fun, learning, and growth.

### Addendum: COVID-19 Procedures at School

This section provides details and procedures for COVID-19 Symptoms, Exposure, and Diagnosis within the CHI school community. Students 3 years or older are required to wear a mask throughout the day. Exceptions are made during lunch, nap, and outside time. The mask policy will be reviewed, and a decision will be made closer to the beginning of the school year. This policy is subject to change based on our health and safety committee recommendations and the community spread.

#### COVID-19 Symptoms at School – Children

If COVID-19 symptoms begin while at school, the child must be sent home as soon as possible. Sick children will be kept separate from well children and staff contact will be limited as much as reasonably possible, while ensuring the safety and supervision of the child until they leave. Once the child has left with the parent, the isolation room will be cleaned and sanitized by a dedicated staff member. Materials touched by the child who is sent home will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Families are

encouraged to coordinate decision-making around the child's care with the family health care provider.

In the case of a child who has symptoms that could be COVID-19, and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the child is assumed to have COVID-19 and cannot return to the community until the individual has met the criteria for return under Children or Staff with Positive Case of COVID-19 (see page 17). A child who has exhibited symptoms that could be COVID-19 can return to school if the parent has obtained a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on a negative PCR COVID-19 test and/or an alternate diagnosis.

### COVID-19 Symptoms at School – Staff

Staff are encouraged to monitor their health and are required to perform daily health screenings for symptoms of COVID-19. Staff is encouraged to stay home if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and to contact their healthcare provider. Staff exhibiting new or worsening symptoms of possible COVID-19 at school should:

1. Leave the classroom
2. Obtain a PCR COVID-19 test
3. Follow the recommendations of their healthcare provider

In the case of a staff member who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has met the return criteria for Children or Staff with Positive Case of COVID-19.

If the staff member has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual

for the return based on a negative PCR COVID-19 test and an alternative diagnosis.

### COVID-19 Exposure – Staff and Children

If a staff member or child has been identified as close contact to someone outside the classroom community who is diagnosed with COVID-19, that staff member or child will be required to self-quarantine for 5-7 days per the CDC guidelines. Close contact means being closer than 6 feet apart for more than 15 minutes to the person who was infected.

### Positive Case of COVID-19 in the Classroom Community – Children or Staff

If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member in a classroom community, all persons regularly in that community will be required to self-quarantine for 5-7 days per the CDC guidelines. The following actions will be taken by the school administration:

1. Contact Bright from the Start to report the presence of COVID-19 in our school.
2. Notify the Department of Public Health
3. Notify staff and parents/guardians that a member of the classroom community has been diagnosed with COVID-19. [Confidentiality will be maintained.]
4. Close the specific classroom community for 5-7 days to allow self-quarantine for all children and staff in the classroom community who have been in close contact with the person diagnosed with COVID-19
5. Complete disinfecting procedures.

## Quarantine and Isolation – Definitions

### Quarantine

Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

### Isolation

Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html>

## COMMUNICATION

CHI Montessori Academy will communicate:

- With families, if their child has been in close contact with someone at school who has then tested positive for COVID-19.
- With staff, if a staff member has been in close contact with someone at school who has tested positive for COVID-19.

\*Decisions about extending closure will be made in consultation with the Georgia Department of Health.

Children or staff with positive cases of COVID-19, who have exhibited symptoms and who have stayed home (isolated) can return to school/work when the following criteria are met:

- o At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed since recovery (resolution of fever) without the use of fever-reducing medication; and
- o The child or staff member has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
- o At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and negative PCR COVID test results are obtained from the entire school community if a classroom community has been closed temporarily due to COVID-19 exposure.

### Healthy Hand Hygiene

Washing hands can keep you healthy and prevent the spread of infections from one person to the next. All children and staff will engage in hand hygiene at the following times:

- o Arrival at the classroom and after breaks
- o Before and after each work choice
- o Before and after eating meals or handling food
- o After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom
- o After coming in contact with bodily fluids

- o After playing outdoors or in sand
- o After handling garbage
- o Before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because that is how germs enter our bodies

#### Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

(<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>)

#### Follow these five steps every time.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between fingers, and under nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. (Sing the ABC song or count to 20)
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, warm running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

#### Use Hand Sanitizer for Adults When You Can't Use Soap & Water

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations.

#### How to use hand sanitizer:

1. Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand. “dot, dot, not a lot”
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

CHI Montessori Academy follows the national standards for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfection of educational facilities for children provided by Bright from the Start. CHI Montessori follows this cleaning and sanitization practice and has a detailed plan for each classroom community, including staff responsibilities.

These efforts include the following:

- Staff will routinely clean, sanitize and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.
- All bathrooms will be cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the day, by a dedicated staff member, especially after each child's use, and at a minimum of three times per day.
- Electronic Spraying Technology will be used to disinfect and sanitize our environments at the end of each day. The electrostatic charge ensures that even the hard-to-reach places are coated evenly and effectively.

## Clean and Sanitize Materials

- Materials that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used.
- Materials will be cleaned and sanitized between each use by the assistant.
- Materials that children put in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions will be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. These materials will be sanitized prior to use by the next person.

- Machine washable cloth materials will be used by one individual at a time and will be laundered before being used by another child.
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

### Clean and Disinfect Bedding

Each child's bedding is kept separate and stored in individually labeled bags. Cots are labeled for each child. Bedding is sent home to be cleaned weekly.

### Cleaning and Disinfecting Products

CHI Montessori uses disinfecting products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>