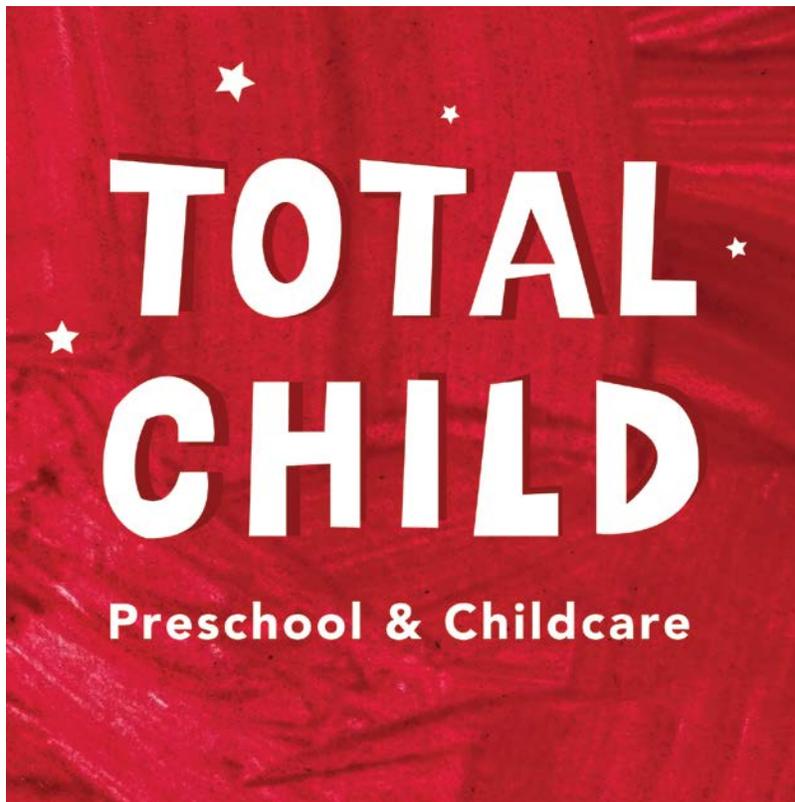


Parent Handbook



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Total Child is a program of the First United Methodist Church

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ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

Mission statement

The mission of Total Child Preschool & Childcare Center, as a ministry of First United Methodist Church of Evanston, shall be to serve the greater community and support families by providing affordable, quality child care in an environment that reflects a commitment to embrace and respect economic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity as a positive value to be nurtured in our children, our community, and the world. The goal of the program is to provide a nurturing, inclusive environment where the staff and Board of the program can work with parents to affirm and encourage children as they develop physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

History

Total Child Preschool & Childcare Center is a program of First United Methodist Church. The program continues the church's tradition of serving children and families in our community. This tradition began in 195two with First United Methodist Nursery School, the predecessor program of Total Child. The program is fully licensed by the State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Total Child is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian, and non-discriminatory program.

Philosophy

We believe that each child should be encouraged to explore, to problem solve, to create, and to develop at his or her own rate. The role of the teacher is to guide, encourage, model behavior, and strive to help children grow physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually by providing the richest possible environment.

We believe that children have different strengths, talents, and interests at each stage of development. In order to learn, children must be presented with concepts in a manner consistent with their unique learning style and their view of the world at the time. Our program, therefore, is based on a developmental philosophy and stresses learning through play and through interaction with teachers and other children. We believe that self-esteem is developed through authentic accomplishment and thrives in an environment that fosters trusting, nurturing, supportive relationships. We strive to create an alliance between our families and the program in order to foster a consistent environment for children in order to develop a sense of community.

Relationship statement

While Total Child is not a religious program we are fortunate to share a beautiful building, as well as a rich heritage within the community, with First United Methodist Church. From time to time Total Child parents and First Church members ask, "What exactly is the relationship between Total Child and First Church?" This statement highlights key aspects of the relationship in the areas of commitment, finances, program and staffing, as well as special events, in response to this question.

The church's support of Total Child evolves out of a theological commitment to diversity and a belief that high quality, affordable, early childhood education is vital to our community. In support of

this commitment, First Church provides Total Child with its classrooms, motor room, playground, kitchen facilities, utilities and insurance at no charge. The church also offers the use of its building for Total Child special events. This financial and in-kind support provides a strong foundation for the program's fiscal operation. Yet the financial operations of the program are independent of, and separate from, those of First Church. The Total Child Board is responsible for establishing and monitoring its annual operating budget. The program also has an annual independent audit of its financial operations.

Total Child, like First Church, respects and welcomes economic, racial, cultural and religious diversity in the families it serves. There are many faith perspectives among the program's children and families. Faith traditions and teachings are not a direct part of Total Child's program; however, the program does encourage families to share their traditions with their child's class. Total Child is responsible for the content of its program and policies, which are determined by its Director with input from the Total Child Board of Directors. The Director is also solely responsible for all the program's staffing decisions.

First Church offers a variety of events in which Total Child families are welcome to participate. Likewise, Total Child holds many events and fundraisers which First Church members are invited to attend. Participation of Total Child families in First Church events and of First Church families in Total Child events is voluntary. Events within the community that may be of interest to families with young children are communicated to both Total Child and First Church families.

In summary, the relationship between Total Child and First Church is one of respect built on shared commitment and a common vision. First Church and Total Child work together to achieve the goal of providing quality, affordable early childhood education for families in our community. It's through this unique combination of resources: some separate, some shared, that this vision is achieved.

Our staff

Our talented, caring, dedicated staff is our greatest asset. Our teachers are chosen on the basis of personal characteristics, academic background, experience, and commitment to working with young children and their families. Staff biographies are posted outside of the classroom and on the Total Child website.

Our Board

The Total Child Board is comprised of parent, staff, and church representatives and meets monthly. The Board sets policy, sets and monitors the school budget, plans parent education programs, oversees fundraising, and acts as a liaison between the church and the program. Parents interested in becoming Board members are invited to contact the Director. Please feel free to contact Board members with your questions and concerns.

PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Part-day classes meet on the days shown below, from 9:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. unless otherwise indicated. The full-day program is available Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Part-Day 2's Meets: Thursday & Friday
Age: Must be 2 by September 1

Part-Day 3's Meets: Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday
Age: Must be 3 by December 31

Part-Day 4's Meets: Monday through Thursday through December, then
Monday through Friday starting in January for children age 4 by
September 1
Age: Must be 4 by December 31

Full-Day 2's Meets: Everyday
Age: Must be 2 at time of enrollment

Full-Day 3's Meets: Everyday
Age: Must be 3 at time of enrollment

Full-Day 4's Meets: Everyday
Age: Must be 4 at time of enrollment

Lunch Bunch (extended day)

The Lunch Bunch program is an option for morning program children who are at least three years old and fully-toilet trained (no pull-ups) and able to manage all toileting related tasks independently. This program begins during the second week of school and ends one week prior to the last week of school. Parents are encouraged to enroll on a pre-registered basis, as the number of drop-in spaces is limited. Lunch Bunch runs from 11:45 a.m. until 1:45 p.m. (Monday through Thursday) with a hot catered lunch. Children may enroll in Lunch Bunch on a drop-in basis if arranged with the Director one day in advance.

Summer Explorers

Summer Explorers is a morning, mainly outdoor program offered during June and July for seven weeks. Children from Total Child families are given priority registration. Other children from the

community are also welcome on a first come, first served basis. This class offering may vary from year to year. Please contact the office for more information.

ENROLLMENT POLICIES

Application

Parents wishing to enroll a child in Total Child will fill out an application and submit a \$50 application fee. Children will be placed on the waiting list in the order in which applications are received. Total Child will begin formally accepting children into the program in late February. Children are accepted in the following order:

- Currently enrolled children (guaranteed enrollment each subsequent year after first year)
- Siblings of currently or formerly enrolled children
- Children certified in the CCPA (Department of Human Services) program
- Children of active members of First United Methodist Church
- All other applicants

Applicants who are not accepted into the program the first year they apply will be kept on the waiting list unless they request to be removed.

Registration

All parents of currently enrolled children need to register for each new program year. In-house registration for currently children and their siblings begins in January for the following school year. Registration for new families begins approximately one month later. Parents are required to sign a new tuition agreement form each year. Registration for Summer Explorers will also take place at this time. Summer Explorers requires a \$25 application fee.

Total Child understands that parents' child care needs and work schedules may change during the year. Although we cannot guarantee openings to accommodate moves from one program to the other (full-day to part-day or vice versa) we will give priority to enrolled families desiring a change if an opening is available.

Deposits

Full day program

A deposit for an amount equal to two weeks tuition per enrolled child will be due when a spot in the program is accepted. The full-day deposit is applied to the child's last two weeks in the program, provided that **one-month advance notice has been given**. If less than one-month notice is given, only a partial credit will be given on a pro-rated basis with at least two weeks' notice (i.e., 50% refund will be given with two weeks' notice, 75% credit with three weeks' notice). There will be no deposit credit given for less than two weeks' notice. If a child enrolled in the full-day program leaves the program for any period of time without making regular payments, further enrollment will

be suspended. The child will be placed on the waiting list for the next available opening. The program cannot hold spaces for families who wish to withdraw for extended trips or vacations without continued payments being made to hold the child's space.

Part day program

A deposit of \$100 per child is required at acceptance. The deposit will be credited to the last payment, which is due in January. Morning program tuition deposits are not refundable, however, with at least one month's notice, morning tuition will be pro-rated as of the withdrawal date and any excess payment refunded **if the child's space is filled. There are no refunds for unfilled spaces.**

Refunds may be given in the case of a medical condition or injury that will prevent the child from continuing his or her enrollment in the program. A note from a doctor must be presented along with a letter requesting refund. Refunds may be pro-rated.

Withdrawal from program

We ask that parents give as much advance notice as possible when withdrawing a child from the program. Advance notice allows the program time to attempt to fill opening but more importantly allows us to help the child and his or her classmates make the smoothest possible transition.

We recognize that children develop social skills and adjust to new environment in varying ways at individual rates and therefore there is a wide range of normal adjustment to a preschool setting. If a child is having an unusual amount of difficulty adapting to the group setting, the program will work with the family to support the child's adjustment. If these attempts are not successful, Total Child reserves the right to suspend or terminate the child's enrollment.

Tuition payments

We prefer that payments be made by check or money order. Prompt payment is appreciated, as tuition covers salaries and overhead. Please contact the office in advance if there will be a problem meeting a payment due date. Children whose tuition is not up-to-date are not guaranteed continued enrollment in the program.

NSF checks

It is Total Child's policy that any check returned NSF (non-sufficient funds) will be assessed a \$25 fee. Any family's whose check is returned due to NSF may be asked to submit future payments by cash or money order.

Payments

Full day-Monthly payments are due on the first Friday of each month. Bi-weekly payments are due on Friday prior to the weeks which the payment will cover. Invoices will be sent out via email approximately one week prior to the due date. These invoices are considered to be reminders; therefore, parents/guardians are responsible for on-time payments regardless of receipt of emailed invoice. A \$5 late fee applies to any payment not received on the day on which it is due, with an additional \$10 per week assessed for every week thereafter. Any child whose tuition is two weeks past due may be dropped from the program. Parents are responsible for tuition and fees for enrolled children regardless of attendance.

Part day payments are due in three installments in June, October, and January. Invoices will be emailed to families at least two weeks before each due date. If payment has not been received within five business days after the due date, a late fee of \$5 applies, with an additional \$10 per week fee for every week thereafter until the payment is made.

Scholarship program

As part of Total Child's commitment to economic diversity we provide financial assistance for families who otherwise would not be able to attend the program. Applications are available from the Director or on the website.

Financial assistance decisions will be made by a committee comprised of the Director, the Board chair and an additional Board member. All information regarding financial assistance applications and decisions will remain confidential. Financial assistance is offered based on need and availability.

IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (formerly Action for Child/TitleXX)

Total Child only accepts CCAP families who attend the program five full days a week. In addition to the family's co-payment there is an additional \$10 weekly fee charged per family. Payments are due on the school's biweekly payment schedule. Fees are subject to late payment fees if not paid by due date. (Please refer to late payment fees above.) Children who are part of the state certificate program need to maintain attendance of at least 80%. Low attendance will jeopardize the child's continued enrollment. If the child's attendance falls below the required 80% attendance rate, Total Child reserves the right to discontinue enrollment with advance notice.

Multi-child family discount

Families with two or more enrolled children will pay the full price tuition for one child and will receive a 5% discount for additional children. Discounts will be given on the lower tuition amount.

Tax information

Full-day families will be issued a yearly statement in January for the previous calendar year. Statements for part-day families are available upon request. Total Child's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) is 36-216-7071.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

English as a second language

Because of our location in a diverse community, Total Child has experience working with children for whom English is, or will be, a second language. We find this to be an enriching experience for both staff and children. To ensure successful communication with the family, we ask that we have access to an adult with a solid grasp of English, if the parents do not. Our goal is to help children acquire English as they progress toward becoming bilingual.

Guidance/discipline

The Total Child curriculum, routines, and classroom environments are designed to provide a child-friendly, safe atmosphere where rules are consistent and clear. We teach the children that, "You can't hurt yourself, anyone else, or the school's environment (toys, materials, room)." Guidance in the classroom focuses on helping children to learn appropriate behavior and to develop social skills, which will be important through their lifetime. Our staff uses a variety of guidance techniques to encourage appropriate behavior, including modeling, positive reinforcement, logical consequences, and redirection. The staff engages children in problem solving – with younger ages, the staff suggests possible solutions while older children brainstorm solutions themselves. In extreme cases, when a child loses self-control, he or she may be asked to go to the "quiet corner" or another safe place where he or she can regain control before reentering the group or continuing with an activity. During this time children will be monitored by a staff member. With younger children such "cooling off" periods are directed by the teacher.

The ultimate goal is for the child to learn when a change of activity or stimulation level is necessary. Rules are posted in the classrooms in simple, understandable language. The staff and children talk openly about the rules and why they are important for everyone to follow. The staff helps children understand the rules by taking natural opportunities to reinforce rules and emphasize the possible consequences of not following our rules. Stories are often used as part of this process. Older children have the opportunity, as a group, to create rules in their own words for their classroom. When issues arise the staff uses these rules to help guide the class through problem-solving and resolution. Parents are kept informed of children's behavior in a variety of ways: informal daily contact with staff, notes, phone calls, emails, and conferences held in the fall and spring. Parents are regularly asked what types of discipline work best at home and for their input about their child's behavior. If a child is experiencing extreme difficulty in adjusting to the group setting, parents are asked to attend a special conference with staff and possibly an outside consultant to facilitate an action plan. The purpose of this plan is to be a tool, created through parent-staff collaboration that will support the child's adjustment to the preschool setting. All staff working with the child will be aware of the plan and will cooperate in its implementation. The services of one of the Total Child consultants may be used in the development of such a plan when needed.

When a child's or parent's needs are not being met or when a child's presence endangers himself/herself or other children, the program reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment in the program.

Under no circumstances will corporal punishment of any kind be administered. Children may not be deprived of food or use of the bathroom. No form of public or private humiliation, shaming, rejecting or isolating a child will be tolerated.

Outside consultants

Total Child occasionally has outside consultants who come to observe classes and offer insights to the teaching staff. All information is used to help provide the best possible environment for the children. Parental permission is required in cases where a consultant will work directly with a child on a regular basis. Parents of children working directly with consultants will be given contact information of consultant to request feedback.

Physically aggressive behavior

Aggressive behavior often occurs when a child is unable to communicate his or her needs. A child may be frustrated by the new experiences of sharing toys or being around other children. When a child acts out physically, the following procedures are followed:

- If another child was injured, that child will first be comforted and cared for. An accident report will be completed if necessary and the parents of both children will be notified.
- The aggressive child will be redirected to appropriate activities. A staff member will talk with the child in child-appropriate language about his or her frustration and alternative ways to respond to frustration.
- The classroom environment will be evaluated by the teachers to determine if any changes are necessary.
- The teachers will discuss the incident with the child's parents to determine possible causes of frustration and ways of dealing with the behavior. The child will be supervised to anticipate and reduce the likelihood of further incidents.

In extreme case and repeated cases of physical aggression where no solution is found, the program reserves the right to ask that the child be withdrawn.

Special needs

Total Child welcomes all children, including those with special needs, if parents and staff agree that the environment can meet the child's needs. In the event that children are receiving services outside the school (speech and language therapy, physical therapy, psychological counseling, etc.), it is important that the program has access to information from these outside services. Access to this information will help Total Child facilitate the child's adjustment and maximize his or her educational experience. Parents are asked to sign a release form allowing the child's teachers and/or the Director to exchange information directly with consultants.

GENERAL OPERATING POLICIES

Birthdays

Birthdays are a special time for young children and we invite parents to come celebrate their child's birthday, or half birthday for children with summer birthdays who are enrolled in the part-day program, with us. Due to the number of children in each class, children can only have one birthday celebration during the year. We ask that parents discuss birthday celebration plans with their child's teachers in advance. Due to DCFS requirements all treats must be pre-packaged; unfortunately we cannot accept homemade treats.

Children love to discuss birthdays and such discussions may cause hard feelings when who is on (or not on) the guest list becomes the focus. For this reason, **we ask that birthday party invitations not be distributed at school.** We will be happy to provide an updated class list so that you can mail or deliver invitations. **In an effort to make the day run as smoothly as possible,**

please do not send goody bags, presents, or other individual items.

Cellphone use

Drop-off and pick-up times are important transitions for children and it is important that they receive the parent's full attention during these times. To achieve this, we ask that cell phones not be used for any communication purposes on the entire second floor, in the motor room, or on the playground.

Drop-off and pick-up time

Parents are required to bring children into the classroom. This ensures the safe arrival of children and provides an opportunity for a *brief* exchange of information with the teachers that may help smooth the transition between home and school. Establishing a consistent drop-off routine is very important in helping most children say "good-bye." Please make sure that you allow yourself enough time at drop-off to spend few minutes getting your child settled without rushing. Reading a short story with your child is an excellent way to give your child some focused attention before you leave for the day. Your child's teachers will be happy to work with you to establish a successful drop-off routine for your child. Please help the staff by reporting anything significant about your child's morning. If a child is upset or excited about a special experience or occurrence, it is helpful for teachers to know so they can talk with the child about it.

The regular school day begins at 9:15 a.m. in both the full- and part-day programs. **All children should be in attendance by 9:15 a.m.** Late arrivals can interrupt the day's routine for both the late arriving child and the other children in the class. If a child is consistently late and the staff feels this is negatively affecting the classroom routine, Total Child reserves the right to temporarily exclude a chronically late child from the program until an arrival plan has been agreed upon with staff and parents.

Pick-up time is an exciting time of day but can also be stressful. Again, a routine is helpful in making this transition as smooth as possible. You may need to give your child a short amount of time to finish and clean up whatever he or she is doing, however, we ask that you not linger too long. For children who are still waiting to be picked up, seeing other parents lingering too long can cause distress because they wonder when they will get picked up. You may pick up your child at the time that works best with your schedule, however, we ask that you avoid picking up your child during naptime, which is daily from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. We understand that there may be a rare occasion when a doctor's appointment or something similar may make naptime pick-up necessary. In this situation, please make arrangements with the classroom teachers prior to pick-up in order to avoid disturbing an entire classroom of sleeping children.

Full-day late pick-up

Out of respect for our teachers and children who are eagerly waiting to be picked up, we request that parents make every possible effort to pick up their child(ren) on time. While we understand that everyone runs late sometimes, it is our expectation that late pick-ups will be extremely rare. Fees for late pick-up are assessed as an incentive to be on time, not as payment for additional childcare, and are therefore substantial.

Late pick-up fees:

- First instance \$1 per minute

- Second instance \$2 per minute
- Third instance \$25 for the first five minutes and \$5 for each minute thereafter

After the third instance, parents will be required to meet with the Director.

An invoice will be issued for all late fees. Like all fees, late fees must be paid in full for enrollment in the program to continue. Total Child reserves the right to discontinue enrollment for any child who is picked up late on a consistent basis. When a parent is running late it is important that he or she contacts the center with an estimated arrival time. If we do not have pick-up information for any child by 6:30 p.m. and are unable to contact the parent or anyone on the child's pickup list after three attempts, we will contact the Evanston Police Department.

Part-day/Lunch Bunch/Summer Explorers late pick-up

Because all part-day children are picked up at the same time, there can occasionally be parking difficulties. In light of this, there is a five minute grace period for part-day late pick-ups after which the full-day late pick-up fees go into effect. Part-day parents who are habitually late to pick up their child will be asked to adjust their schedules to guarantee on-time pick-up. All late pick-up fees need to be paid in full in order to ensure continued enrollment in the program.

Emergencies (weather, power failure, etc.)

Total Child has an emergency plan and periodically conducts emergency drills. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom.

In the unlikely event that the program has to be closed due to an emergency, parents will be notified via our emergency contact system. Should the emergency occur after school is in session, children will be evacuated to an emergency shelter where they will await their parents' arrival. The staff will notify parents as soon as possible. A notice will be posted identifying the alternate site. Parents and staff will be notified of weather-related closings via the emergency contact system. Closings will also be listed on the Emergency Closing Center (www.emergencyclosingcenter.com). In most years weather closures are rare but we make the decision to close in potentially dangerous weather with the safety of our children and staff as the deciding factor.

Holidays

As part of our effort to be sensitive to all families' cultures and religions, we have made the celebration of holidays a family-generated activity, rather than a part of the curriculum. Families are invited to share how they celebrate holidays and to tell the stories upon which the holidays are based. Teachers serve as a resource to help parents determine the most developmentally appropriate ways to present information.

Meals and snacks

Full-day program

The program provides two nutritious snacks for the children daily. In addition, breakfast (cereal and milk) is provided to children who arrive before 8:15 a.m. A hot catered lunch is served. In the summer, two hot lunches per week are replaced by sack lunches to allow classes to enjoy picnics

in nearby parks or at the beach. Please notify us of any dietary restrictions.

Part-day program/Summer Explorers

The children are served a nutritious snack each morning, which is provided by the parents on a rotating basis. Due to DCFS regulations, homemade snacks cannot be served and all snack items must come to Total Child in original, sealed packaging. Please notify the teacher of any dietary restrictions.

Outdoor play

Outdoor play on the school playground is a regular part of the children's school day unless weather dictates that we stay inside. Children should come dressed appropriately for outdoor play throughout the year. Conditions for staying indoors include any of the following:

- Temperature of less than 20 F
- Wind chill of less than 20 F
- Steady, cold rain
- Lightning
- Tornado watch
- Temperature of 95 F or more with high humidity

To be well enough to attend school, children must be able to participate in all activities, including outdoor play.

Safety and security and key fobs

We give highest priority to the safety and security of the children at Total Child. All teaching staff is certified in CPR and first aid. Children are supervised at all times by program staff.

As a security precaution, the second floor doors nearest the Church Street entrance are kept locked and all Total Child families need a key fob to gain entry. A refundable deposit is due for each key fob issued to a family and will be refunded upon return. A key fob should be requested for any person who will pick up your child on a regular basis.

Anyone picking up or dropping off who does not have a key fob this person will be required to sign in and out at the church front desk. Occasionally people feel offended by this process. Please explain this process to anyone picking up your child, emphasizing the need for security.

If someone you do not know asks you to allow them entrance to the building please explain that you cannot do this for security reasons and direct them to the church office. If the church office is not open please notify the Director or your child's teacher.

Sign in/out

Children must be signed in and out by the adult who brings and picks him or her up. Children will not be released to anyone other than the parent unless the person is listed on the "Authorization for Release" form. Adults other than parents will be required to show a form of identification the first time he or she picks a child up. Names may be added or removed from your child's Authorization for Release at any time. Please see the Director or office assistant to amend your child's form. In the event that a child will be picked up by someone who is not on the Authorization for Release, written permission must be given to the Director and/or classroom teacher.

Volunteering

Volunteers are a vital part of our program providing classroom support, putting on social events, attending work days, and fundraising for our financial assistance program. Parents are asked to complete a participation form, committing to volunteering at two events during the program year.

HEALTH POLICIES

Communicable diseases

If a child has contracted a communicable disease (e.g., pink eye, strep infection, Chicken Pox), **parents are required to notify the program immediately** so that we can give written notice to parents of children who may have been exposed. Although head lice is not considered a communicable disease it is a significant nuisance that can be spread in a preschool/childcare environment. A child who has a head lice infestation must be treated before he or she can attend school. Total Child reserves the right to request proof of treatment.

Health forms

An Illinois Department of Public Health form completed by a licensed physician must be on file with Total Child before a child can attend any program. A physical exam, TB skin test, up-to-date immunizations, and a blood lead test must be documented on the form. The physical exam is valid for two years, after which a new form must be completed.

In order to protect our school community as a whole, especially pregnant mothers and younger siblings, the center Board has adopted the policy that **all children attending Total Child must be immunized against the following diseases in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Cook County Department of Health:**

- Diphtheria
- Pertussis
- Tetanus
- Polio
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Haemophilus influenza type B
- Hepatitis B
- Chicken Pox

If a parent has a specific medically documented reason for requesting an exception to the immunization requirements, a written request should be submitted to the Board with a letter from the child's doctor stating that the immunization is medically contraindicated. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

*Religious exemption

DCFS regulations state that if a child is not immunized due to religious beliefs the family must provide documentation from a recognized church organization supporting that doctrine

HIV/AIDS

People with HIV/ AIDS are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. No one except a child's parent or legal guardian has a right to know about a child's condition. No one with AIDS/HIV can be excluded from the program because his or her condition. Parents are urged to share information regarding a child's medical condition with the Director so that decisions may be made that allow the staff to provide best possible care for the child. Confidentiality is guaranteed should information of this nature be shared. Since there is no way for us to know absolutely whether anyone in our school environment is HIV positive, we follow the universal precautions developed by the Center for Disease Control.

Illness at school

Preschool children, as well as the adults who care for them, are susceptible to colds and infections. While we understand that it is often difficult to make arrangements for an ill child to stay home it is in the best interest of the Total Child community. Please do not send a sick child to school. If a child has a fever, vomits or has diarrhea, he or she should remain at home for a full 24 hours after these symptoms have completely subsided.

If a child becomes ill while at school, he or she will be isolated from the rest of the group, supervised by a caring adult, and made as comfortable as possible while we contact the parent(s) to make pick-up arrangements.

If you intend to keep your child home, please call or email the school by 9:15 a.m.

Medication at school/special medical consent form

Per DCFS regulations the program cannot dispense any medication, including over-the-counter medications, without a doctor's written instructions. A medication request form is available from the child's teacher or the Director in the event a child needs to take medication during school hours. No medication can be given unless a parent has completed this form. Medication must be brought in the original container, labeled with the child's name, directions for administering the medication, date, physician's name, prescription number, and pharmacy.

If a child has an allergy or special medical condition that requires special attention or care, parents are also required to submit a medical consent form completed by the child's physician.

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Accident insurance

Children enrolled in the Total Child are covered by the school's group accident policy for injuries occurring during program time.

Assessment

Total Child's philosophy is based on the belief that children learn best through play to foster each child's growth socially, physically, and cognitively. Total Child teachers rely on informal ways of evaluating each child's individual growth in all areas of development for planning and discussions with parents. If teachers feel they need additional information to best serve the needs of a child, a parent would be asked to provide consent for Total Child staff to use ESI-R, a formal assessment tool. Upon completion, results will be shared with parents and an agreement will be made if further referrals are needed to best service the child's needs. Informal assessments include classroom observations and the use of the Evanston Early Childhood Developmental checklist which is aligned with the Early Learning Standards. All of these methods are play-based and are used to facilitate and encourage children's growth and development.

Birth certificate

In accordance with the Missing Children Records Act, DCFS requires all children entering the program submit a certified copy of the child's birth certificate.

Calendar

A calendar for the upcoming year will be emailed to parents in July. Although we try to remind parents of upcoming days off in weekly emails and updates, it is the responsibility of the parents to be aware of these closures. Because we work to create a calendar that fits the needs of parents, staff and most importantly, children, we do not make up days missed because of weather or other situations beyond our control.

Car pools

It is important that our teachers know who is bringing each child to school and who is picking up each day. We ask that parents give a copy of car pool arrangements to the child's teachers. If there is to be any variation from the daily routine, please inform the teachers by written note. Adults must accompany each child they bring to school to the individual child's classroom.

Clothing

Preschool children need to be allowed to explore freely and to experience a wide variety of materials. Therefore, we ask that children come dressed in clothing appropriate for participation in messy projects. Additionally, please consider encouraging independence when selecting clothing. It builds a child's self-esteem and helps prevent accidents when a child can dress and undress with little or no assistance. Velcro, large zippers, zipper pulls, pull-on pants and easy to fasten shoes and boots are options to look for when selection clothing.

Accidents do happen so each child will need to have an extra complete change of clothing. Each article of clothing should be labeled with the child's name and all of the clothing should be kept in a plastic bag in his or her cubby.

Field trips

Our location provides Total Child with numerous options for walking field trips. Classes may walk to the library, beach, or nearby parks based on the readiness of the group. Parents will generally be

notified in advance of these trips but in order to take advantage of good weather or an interesting event, walking trips may be a spontaneous event. These trips are just one of the reasons we ask that children arrive at school no later than 9:15 a.m. Parents will be notified at pick-up of the trip so they can engage their child in conversation about it. All walking trips will be carefully supervised by the staff and in the case of beach trips, extra adults will be encouraged to attend. To help supervising adults easily identify Total Child children, each child is given a Total Child t-shirt to wear on these trips.

Regular communications

A weekly newsletter is sent via email on the last attendance day of each week. The newsletter contains important information about things going on at Total Child as well as news about what has happened that week in each of the classrooms. This is the main source of information and should be read carefully each week.

Although Total Child tries to include all important information in the weekly email, it is occasionally necessary to send additional email notifications. Every attempt is made to minimize emails while keeping parents sufficiently informed.

Brief daily updates are posted outside of each classroom. These updates are meant to give a peek into the child's day and spark conversations at home. Additional information about communication between the classroom and home will be given during the first few weeks of each year and at Parent Night in September.

Two partnership conferences are held between parents and teachers each year: one in the fall and one in the spring. These conferences are held during center hours, usually in the early morning or late afternoon, but we will do our best to accommodate parents who absolutely can't come during these times. Both parents are expected to attend these conferences in order to create the best, most complete partnership. It is in the best interest, even in the case of divorced or separated parents, that both parents attend the same conference. In the rare case that this is not possible, contact the child's teachers or the center Director to discuss alternate arrangements. Parents are welcome to call or contact teachers at any time if a concern arises. If necessary, we will schedule additional time to meet and discuss these concerns.

Communication between home and school is essential. It is extremely helpful to the staff and equally beneficial to the child when information about changes and/or stresses in the child's life are communicated. Examples of these situations are illness or death in the family, a parent travelling, upcoming vacations or special events, house guests, pregnancy, separation, or divorce.

Parent communication process

It is Total Child's goal to work cooperatively with each child and family to provide a positive early childhood experience. In the event of a concern or difference of opinion, we ask parents to use the process outlined below. This process has been established in order to allow for the most appropriate and effective resolution.

- Parent/family first discusses situation with classroom teachers. In most instances, this open communication will lead to resolution. If issue is not resolved...
- Parent/family continues discussion with program Director. If issue is not resolved...
- Parent/family continues discussion with personnel chair of the Board of Directors. If issue

is not resolved...

- Parent/family continues discussion with Board Chairperson

In the event that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached after completing all steps of this process, the Director and Board Chairperson will make a final decision regarding the best solution for the family and program.

Parent/family activities

Total Child's Board of Directors sponsors family events throughout the year. Advance notice of these events will be given via email, weekly updates, classroom communications and/or Evites. These events are intended to strengthen the bonds of the Total Child community and families are encouraged to participate.

Parking

Short-term parking for drop-off and pick-up is permitted in the loading zones on the south side of Church Street (cut out area) and on the west side of Hinman Avenue. Please leave lights flashing while parked in these loading zones and limit time in these areas to 10 minutes or less. For longer visits, please use a legal parking spot on the street or the parking garage on Church Street, where the first hour is free.

Please do not park in any of the following areas as your car may be towed or ticketed:

- On the sidewalk
- In the lot behind the church
- In the alley
- On Church Street, blocking either the driveway of the North Church condo building or the entrance to the alley

Pest management

First United Methodist Church provides pest management on a monthly basis for Total Child. The service is provided by A-Plus Pest Control, Inc. The company uses a chemical-free, natural insect control solution comprised of cedar oil and water. If you are aware of any potential allergic reactions to this, please inform the staff.

Privacy policy/release of information

All information about Total Child families including names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are private and are only to be used for school purposes. This information cannot be used for mailing lists and/or any other type of solicitation.

All information in children's files is **confidential**. Access to the information in children's files is restricted to that child's parents or guardians and Total Child staff. Files are kept for five years at the school as required by licensing standards. Children's files will only be released with written permission from a child's parents or guardian.

Program evaluation

Each spring parents are provided an opportunity to evaluate their family's experience at Total Child through a questionnaire. We welcome feedback at any time, therefore parents should feel free to

call, see or email the Director with comments, questions or concerns.

School library

Resources for teachers, including audiotapes, CDs, and "Big Books" are maintained in the school library. We welcome donations of new books for our library -- teachers will be glad to make suggestions. Parents are invited to check out items from the parent resource shelf located in the school's library.

Separation

For many, preschool is the first experience of spending time independently away from familiar surroundings and people. Helping young children deal with the emotions of separation is important. Therefore, we introduce children to the program gradually, starting with individual pre-visits scheduled before the start of school.

The morning program begins with a shortened session, which allows the children to begin their classes with a smaller group of classmates. This also allows the teachers to get to know the children sooner.

We ask that parents remain in the building during these shortened sessions and in the classroom until the child seems comfortable. It is best if parents try to be an observer as much as possible during the time in the classroom so that the child can begin to bond with the staff. The teachers will be glad to help parents with the separation process. We ask that parents make childcare arrangements for siblings for this day. For children who are new to our program, we expect that the parent or other familiar adult be available to stay with the child until they are comfortable with the teachers and classroom.

Full-day program children joining the program will have a scheduled morning visit before the "official" first day. In addition, families are asked to plan to have a parent present for a portion of the first day the child attends the program (if the child needs extra time to adjust to the program). If this is not possible, please discuss plans with the child's teachers. The goal is to help build a sense of security by having a parent share the process of becoming acquainted with the class. This will help the child understand that Total Child is a good place to be and that he or she is safe with the staff.

Summer

Total Child understands the importance of outdoor play and exploration. Children will spend a significant portion of the day outdoors during summer, weather permitting. It is important for parents to know that format of the day will be different in the summer. Information will be sent before the beginning of summer activities with more information about the summer schedule.

Summer Explorers

Because the daily sessions are short, children should arrive each day with sunscreen already applied.

Sunscreen and insect repellent

Full-day children will need a signed sunscreen and insect repellent application permission form from their parents. Each child will need to have his or her own bottle of sunscreen labeled with his

or her name. Sunscreen will be applied by staff members whenever children will be outside for an extended period of time.

Swimsuits and towels

The children will participate in water activities when weather permits, so each child should have a labeled swimsuit and towel. Full-day children will leave suits and towels at school Monday through Friday. These items will be sent home on Fridays to be laundered over the weekend and returned on Monday.

Things from home (special playthings and toys)

Full-day parents should provide a blanket and pillow labeled with the child's name. Blankets should be taken home on Fridays, laundered and returned on Mondays. Sheets are laundered each week or as needed by the staff. Each child may bring one stuffed animal or similar item for naptime. Total Child asks that parents not encourage children to bring other toys or items from home. These items can cause conflict or get lost, causing distress. If a child needs a comforting item to help with separation, the classroom teacher will work with parents to determine a plan. Total Child cannot be responsible for lost items.

Visiting the program

Although we welcome visitors to the program, it is often stressful for children and disruptive to the program when visitors arrive unexpectedly or too often. If parents want to visit during the day, please discuss the way this will work best for the child and his or her classmates.