





Employee Handbook

Rooted in Faith
Ready for the Future

Monday - Friday
6:30a.m. to 6:00p.m.

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Welcome to Precious Children in the Highlands!

We are grateful you've joined our preschool team and the ministry of Presbyterian Church in the Highlands. We believe God has uniquely equipped each of us with gifts and talents, and we're excited to see how yours will enrich our mission. Together, we'll work to create a loving, nurturing, and Christ-centered environment for the children and families we serve. We are committed to supporting you as you grow in your role and reach your fullest potential in service.

Mission

At Precious Children in the Highlands, we create a nurturing, faith-centered environment where children feel loved, valued, and empowered to learn. Through inclusive and innovative early childhood education, we provide hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences that foster curiosity, creativity, and a love for learning. Our educators model Christ-like compassion and integrity, guiding children to grow spiritually, academically, and socially. By building strong partnerships with families and the community, we cultivate a foundation that prepares children to thrive in school and in life, with faith leading the way.

Vision

We envision a community where every child grows in faith, confidence, and curiosity—prepared to thrive in school and in life. Through Christ-centered guidance, strong family partnerships, and a commitment to excellence in early childhood education, we aim to inspire a generation of compassionate, capable, and purpose-driven individuals.

Goals

To cultivate a nurturing, Christ-centered learning environment where children are spiritually, socially, and academically empowered through hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences, while actively engaging families and the community in their growth journey.

Core Values

- Faith – We keep Christ at the center of all we do.
- Love – Every child is seen, valued, and loved.
- Excellence – We foster curiosity through high-quality, hands-on learning.
- Integrity – We lead with honesty, compassion, and respect.
- Partnership – We work hand-in-hand with families and the community.
- Inclusion – We welcome all children into a place of belonging.

Purpose Statement

Our purpose is to provide quality childcare to our community, serving families and children of diverse backgrounds and abilities. Through our faith-based curriculum, we support each child's spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Our educators are dedicated to nurturing every child with the compassion, care, and kindness we see modeled in Christ.

Introduction Statement

This Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual applies to all PCH employees and provides an overview of our policies, procedures, benefits, and workplace expectations. "PCH" refers to Precious Children in the Highlands, and "employee" refers to any paid staff member.

This handbook is a guide—not a contract—and does not create legally binding obligations. Please read it carefully and follow the standards outlined. If you have questions, the Preschool Director or Preschool Elder Advisory Team can assist.

While we aim to cover key information, this handbook cannot address every situation. PCH may modify policies, benefits, or guidelines at any time, with or without notice. This edition replaces all prior versions. Employees will receive a Job Description upon hire, but compliance with DCF Licensing Requirements, ELC guidelines, and Accreditation standards is mandatory and may take precedence over handbook policies. PCH policies are designed to align with these standards, but regulatory or accreditation requirements will govern in case of conflict.

Parent Handbook as a Guiding Resource

In addition to this Employee Handbook, all employees are expected to be familiar with the Parent Handbook. The Parent Handbook outlines important policies, procedures, and expectations that guide the daily operation of our program. While some sections are written specifically for families, they also provide staff with valuable direction in areas such as communication, child supervision, and program expectations. Staff are encouraged to review the Parent Handbook regularly and use it alongside this Staff Handbook to ensure consistency in practice and clarity for families.

Mandated Reporters

All childcare personnel are mandated by law to report any suspicions of child abuse, including abusive head trauma, neglect, or abandonment, to the Florida Abuse Hotline in accordance with section 39.201 of the Florida Statutes. Reports can be made online at www.myflfamilies.com or by calling 1-800-962-2873.

Administrative staff will not intervene in this process and will be available to any staff member who feels it is necessary to report suspected abuse or neglect. The safety and well-being of the children in our care are our top priorities, and all reports will be handled in strict compliance with legal and ethical guidelines.

Employment at Will

Employment at PCH is based on mutual consent between you and the organization. As an at-will employer in the state of Florida, PCH may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or prior notice, and you have the same right to do so.

This employment-at-will agreement is the full and complete understanding between you and PCH regarding termination of employment. It replaces any prior discussions or agreements, written or verbal. While other PCH policies and procedures may change from time to time, this agreement will remain in effect unless it is modified in writing and signed by you, the Preschool Director, and the Preschool Elder Advisory Team. No oral or implied agreement can alter this policy.

Equal Employment Opportunity

PCH is committed to providing equal employment opportunities for all qualified individuals. We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, medical condition, family care status, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other status protected by law.

This commitment applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, hiring, benefits, promotions, training, discipline, and termination. We also provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities.

We expect every team member to show respect, professionalism, and sensitivity toward others, supporting PCH's equal opportunity values. If you believe this policy has been violated, report it promptly to the Preschool Director. All concerns will be taken seriously, investigated, and addressed appropriately. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Immigration Compliance

PCH complies fully with all federal immigration laws and will not knowingly hire or continue to employ anyone who is not legally authorized to work in the United States. As a condition of employment, all new hires must provide documentation verifying both identity and legal work authorization.

PCH participates in the E-Verify program, an online system that confirms employment eligibility by comparing the information you provide on your Form I-9 with records from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration. Employment is contingent upon successfully meeting these requirements and maintaining ongoing authorization to work in the U.S.

Faith, Values, and Professional Conduct

PCH is a Christian ministry rooted in the teachings of Scripture and guided by the example of Jesus Christ. Our heritage is grounded in the Reformed Tradition, which affirms the sovereignty of God, salvation through Christ, and the authority of the Bible.

As a ministry in today's diverse world, we welcome and respect staff, families, and children from all walks of life. We ask all employees to support our mission and uphold our values by demonstrating integrity, compassion, and respect for others, regardless of background, belief, or life circumstance.

Professional conduct at PCH means more than fulfilling daily responsibilities – it means modeling Christ's love in words, actions, and attitudes. Employees are expected to:

- Treat children, families, coworkers, and community members with kindness, respect, and fairness.
- Maintain honesty, integrity, and confidentiality in all interactions.
- Refrain from gossip, inappropriate language, or behavior that undermines trust.
- Strive to create a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment that reflects the values of PCH.

In our work together, we aim to honor both our faith and the dignity of every individual we serve.

Employee Classifications & Status

The standard workweek at PCH begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday. Preschool staff typically work Monday through Friday unless a different schedule is approved by the Preschool Director and the Preschool Advisory Team.

- Full-Time Employee – A full-time employee averages 30 hours or more per week and works year-round.
- Part-Time Employee – A part-time employee averages less than 30 hours per week.
- Nonexempt Employee – Paid hourly and eligible for overtime pay in accordance with federal and state laws.
- Exempt Employee – Paid a salary and not eligible for overtime pay under federal and state law.

At PCH, exempt status generally applies to administrative staff. If an employee's individual employment agreement differs from the policies in this handbook, that agreement takes precedence.

Staff Support & Leadership

All employees have designated points of contact for guidance, questions, and support regarding daily operations, policies, or concerns:

- Pastor: Serves as the final point of escalation for serious or unresolved issues that require leadership beyond the Preschool Directors.
- Preschool Directors: Oversee the entire preschool program, make operational decisions, and support staff in complex situations. Staff may escalate concerns that cannot be resolved at lower levels to the directors.
- Administrators (Enrollment Specialist, Administrative Assistant): Provide guidance on policies, procedures, licensing requirements, and parent-related matters. They report to the Preschool Directors regarding any concerns or noncompliance.
- Team Leaders: Provide day-to-day guidance and support to classroom staff, including teachers and assistants.
- Lead Teachers: Directly supervise classroom activities, implement curriculum, and support assistant teachers.
- Assistant Teachers: Support classroom activities, assist lead teachers, and help maintain safety and supervision standards.
- Other Staff Roles (Cook, Maintenance, etc.): Support the daily operations and facility needs of PCH.

Staff should communicate directly with the directors or team leaders regarding operational or safety issues in these areas.

All staff are encouraged to follow this order of guidance to ensure clarity, accountability, and efficiency.

Employment of Minors

PCH complies with all state and federal laws regarding the employment of minors. Employees aged 16–17 may work at PCH within the limits of applicable labor laws. Those enrolled in a valid homeschool program may work full-time, as permitted by law.

While our licensing does not currently require employees to be at least 18 years old to work in the classroom, certain accreditation standards may have this requirement. If PCH pursues accreditation again in the future, this standard may be reinstated.

PCH does not require a high school diploma, equivalent, or work permit for minors, provided we have the documentation needed to verify compliance with legal requirements.

Employment of Relatives

Relatives of current employees are welcome to apply and will be considered on the same basis as all other applicants. PCH does not give preferential treatment in hiring or other employment decisions. For reasons of fairness, workplace morale, and security, related employees generally may not work in the same department or be in a direct supervisor–employee relationship.

Exceptions may be granted by the Preschool Elder Advisory Team on a case-by-case basis.

If a conflict of interest or supervision issue arises that cannot be resolved, PCH may require a transfer to another position or, if necessary, resignation from employment.

Background Checks & Drug Testing

In compliance with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) requirements, all PCH employees must successfully complete a Level 2 background screening (local, state, and FBI) and a drug screening prior to beginning employment. PCH is a designated Drug-Free Workplace Employer. Background screenings are repeated at least every five years, or more frequently if required by law or licensing standards.

The initial cost of background screening and drug testing is paid by PCH. If an employee leaves before completing 90 days of continuous employment, the cost of the screening will be deducted from their final paycheck.

Employment is contingent upon maintaining an eligible background screening status as determined by DCF regulations.

Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens & Infectious Materials

PCH is committed to maintaining a safe environment for staff and children. Any exposure to bloodborne pathogens or other potentially infectious materials must be reported immediately to a supervisor. Staff are required to follow all DCF licensing requirements and PCH's exposure procedures to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the facility. Detailed procedures are available separately and must be followed at all times.

Introductory / Probationary Work Period

The first 90 days of continuous employment serve as a probationary period. This time allows both the employee and PCH to adjust and assess fit. Employees will receive feedback and guidance as they learn their role, and at the end of this period, a permanent position may be offered based on performance and suitability for the early childhood environment.

Training & Credentials

PCH follows all state-mandated training requirements for child care personnel. If not already completed prior to hire, employees must complete the following DCF 45-hour mandatory training:

- Part I – 30 hours
- Part II – 10 hours
- Early Literacy – 5 hours

Deadlines:

- Part I and Part II must be started within 90 days of employment and completed within 6 months.
- Early Literacy training must be completed within 6 months, but is not tied to the 90-day start requirement.

CPR, First Aid, AED, and Bloodborne Pathogens:

PCH will provide Pediatric and Adult CPR, First Aid, AED, and Bloodborne Pathogens certification within the first 90 days of employment. Training is currently provided onsite. In the future, employees may be required to obtain certification independently at PCH's expense.

Annual In-Service Requirements:

- Full-time employees: 25 hours of in-service training each year, completed after July 1st and before June 1st.
- Part-time employees: 10 hours of in-service training each year, completed after July 1st and before June 1st.

Costs:

- DCF classes for the 45-hour training are free.
- Required tests must be taken at an approved testing site (e.g., Polk State College) at the employee's expense. See the Preschool Director if assistance is needed.

CDA or College Courses:

- Classroom time is not provided for CDA or college coursework unless covered by the TEACH scholarship.
- See the Tuition Reimbursement section of this handbook for details.

PCH provides time during regular work hours for online mandatory training and compensates employees for required training completed after hours.

Fire Extinguisher Training

All staff must complete Fire Extinguisher Training within 30 days of hire.

Fire extinguishers can be found in the following locations throughout our campus:

- Both Portables (Narwhals and Sharks)
- All Pod Classrooms (Whales, Starfish, Butterflies, and Youth Pastor's Office)
- Main Kitchen in the Church
- Meeting Room in the Church
- The Great Hall
- Both ends of the Hall in the Main Building
- Penguins Room
- Laundry Closet
- Small Kitchen beside the Office
- Both Buses

As part of your enrollment paperwork, you were provided a link to the website with instructions on proper extinguisher use. Please review this resource as part of your training.

We will also review extinguisher use with you in person. Upon completion, you will receive a certificate for your records.

Job Descriptions / Employment Agreements

Employees are provided a job description before starting, outlining duties, responsibilities, and key information about the position. Employees should review it carefully and discuss any questions with their supervisor. PCH may update job descriptions as needed.

An employment agreement, including the attached job description, must be signed and approved by the employee and the Preschool Director, and witnessed by another staff member, before employment begins. This agreement is kept in the employee's confidential personnel file.

Performance Evaluations

Employees typically receive a written performance evaluation after 90 days of service and annually thereafter. Evaluations provide feedback on job performance, recognize strengths, and outline areas for improvement. Performance goals and expectations are set and reviewed within an agreed-upon timeframe.

Personnel Records

PCH maintains confidential personnel records for all employees to document employment history, qualifications, training, and performance.

Keeping your information up to date is important. Please inform the Preschool Director of any changes to your name, address, phone number, or other personal details. Payroll-related updates will also be coordinated with the Church Secretary as needed.

Employees have the right to review their own personnel records upon request. To do so, contact the Preschool Director to schedule a time to review the records in a way that preserves confidentiality.

All personnel records are securely maintained and accessible only to authorized staff, including, but not limited to, Directors, Administrators, and Licensing Inspectors.

Promotion

PCH intends to give qualified employees preference when filling job openings. Depending on experience, education, and job qualifications, we strive to promote from within whenever possible.

However, promotions from within PCH may not always be feasible due to the specific requirements of certain positions. Employees who meet the necessary qualifications and requirements will be given first consideration for lead positions and other qualified roles.

Factors such as past performance, experience, attitude, and potential will be considered when making promotion decisions.

Payday

Employees are paid biweekly on Wednesdays. We strongly encourage direct deposit, which can be set up by completing the required forms with the Preschool Director. Please note that PCH does not cash paychecks.

uAttend Clocking System

Employees are required to use the uAttend system on their phones to clock in and out of work accurately.

Guidelines for Use:

1. Any corrections, missed punches, or updates to your time must be reported immediately to the Preschool Director so that the hours can be verified and corrected as needed.
2. The Preschool Director will review and verify all time entries to ensure accuracy.
3. Abuse of the system, including clocking in/out for another employee, altering the time to make up hours, or attempting to gain unauthorized overtime, is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees are expected to be honest and accurate when using uAttend to maintain trust and compliance with payroll and labor regulations.

Wage & Salary Review

Employees are typically reviewed after 90 days of service and annually thereafter for consideration of a merit increase.

A review does not guarantee an automatic increase; it provides an opportunity to evaluate performance, contributions, and eligibility for a salary adjustment.

Payroll Deductions

Employees are responsible for understanding payroll deductions required by law, including federal and state income taxes, Social Security, and Medicare. Any additional deductions from your paycheck must be authorized in writing.

PCH complies with all applicable state and federal laws regarding wage garnishments and assignments. Each paycheck stub provides a detailed itemization of all deductions. Keep this information for your personal records and tax purposes. Questions about payroll deductions should be directed to the Church Secretary.

Overtime

Nonexempt employees may occasionally be asked to work beyond their regular schedule or on a scheduled day off. Overtime must be approved in advance by the Preschool Director; working unauthorized overtime is not allowed and may result in disciplinary action.

When approved, nonexempt employees will receive overtime pay for hours worked over 40 in a workweek, in accordance with state and federal law.

Please note that employees who take time off are not automatically approved to make up hours on another day, as this can conflict with scheduling and may require paying additional staff. Any request to adjust hours must be approved in advance.

Expense Reimbursement Policy

PCH will reimburse employees for program-related purchases only with prior approval from the Preschool Director. Original receipts must be submitted with an expense voucher.

PCH does not reimburse sales tax; employees should use the PCH tax-exempt certificate for purchases.

Any items purchased and reimbursed by PCH are considered the property of PCH unless explicitly stated otherwise. Employees may not take or retain reimbursed items for personal use unless prior written approval has been granted by the Preschool Director.

Tuition Deduction for Employee Children

PCH offers a 50% tuition discount for employees' children, including biological children, stepchildren, and children for whom the employee has legal custody.

To simplify payroll, your portion of tuition is deducted once per biweekly paycheck. This deduction covers two weeks of tuition at the 50% rate, rather than splitting it weekly.

Example:

- Full tuition: \$200 per week
- Employee pays 50%: \$100 per week
- Biweekly deduction: \$200 per paycheck (covering two weeks at the discounted rate)

Key Points:

- Employees do not pay only one week per paycheck; the deduction always covers two weeks at the discounted 50% rate.
- Deductions continue automatically until you notify the Preschool Director of any changes.
- If the employee's family qualifies for a School Readiness Certificate (SR), PCH will accept the certificate as full payment, and will not charge the difference. To learn more about School Readiness and how to apply, visit www.elcpolk.org.

This ensures the discount is applied consistently and keeps payroll simple and predictable.

School Age & Summer Camp Staff Benefit

After School Program:

PCH offers after school services for school-age children of staff at no additional tuition cost. If your family qualifies for School Readiness (SR) funding, PCH will accept SR as full payment and will not charge the difference.

Summer Camp:

PCH does not charge staff summer tuition for school-age children. However, a one-time registration fee for the summer may apply. Again, if your family qualifies for School Readiness (SR) funding, PCH will accept SR as full payment and will not charge the difference.

Important Note:

This benefit is dependent on the needs and funding of the program and may be modified at any time. In the future, staff tuition for school-age programs may be up to 50% of the standard rate. Any adjustments will be made thoughtfully, with consideration of program sustainability, and communicated in advance.

Worker's Compensation Insurance

All PCH employees are automatically covered under Workers' Compensation Insurance from their first day of employment. PCH pays 100% of the premiums for this coverage.

Benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses include:

- Partial wage replacement during periods of disability.
- Medical care, including doctor visits, hospital care, medicine, x-rays, and medical equipment (e.g., crutches).
- Rehabilitation services, if needed.

Reporting Requirements:

Report any work-related injury or illness immediately to the Preschool Director or your supervisor, no matter how minor.

Seek proper first aid or medical attention immediately after the incident.

Prompt reporting ensures you receive timely care and benefits, and helps PCH maintain a safe workplace.

Health Insurance

Full-time employees who have completed at least 90 days of continuous service are eligible for health insurance through the Presbyterian Board of Pensions. Coverage is provided on a 50/50 cost-sharing plan between the employee and PCH.

Dependents: Employees may also enroll spouses and/or children in the plan; however, the employee is responsible for 100% of the cost for any dependents added.

Employees should contact the Preschool Director for detailed information about enrollment, benefits, and plan options.

Educational Assistance

TEACH Scholarship Support: PCH will sponsor employees for the TEACH scholarship as deemed necessary. This program may cover tuition and, in some cases, provide time during the workday to complete coursework. Employees are encouraged to explore this scholarship for additional support in their professional development. More information can be found at <https://flchild.com/>.

We strongly encourage employees to take advantage of these opportunities to enhance their skills and advance in the Early Childhood field.

Staff & Student Lunch Benefit

A free lunch is provided daily for staff. If your child is enrolled and present for the day, they may also receive lunch at no cost as part of this benefit. Please avoid requesting detailed meal changes unless they are simple to accommodate, as meals are prepared for all children and staff. If you prefer different food options or want leftovers, please arrange this in advance or bring your own lunch.

PCH reserves the right to modify or discontinue this benefit at any time, based upon the needs and funding of the program.

Procedure for Requesting Time Off

All requests for time off—paid or unpaid—must be submitted in Slack using the designated Time Off Request channel/form. Requests should be submitted to the Preschool Director at least two weeks in advance for approval.

Approval is based on adequate staffing coverage and is granted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Because consistent staffing is essential for both licensing requirements and the well-being of the children, taking more time off than the 6 earned personal days in a year is considered excessive. Excessive absences may result in corrective action, up to and including termination.

Tardiness & Absence

Consistent attendance is essential to the smooth operation of PCH and the care of the children we serve. We understand that illness, emergencies, or other unforeseen circumstances may occasionally prevent you from coming to work.

If you are unable to report to work, you must notify one of the Preschool Directors, or both, as soon as possible. Notification should be made via phone call or text message to their personal numbers. Please avoid calling or texting between 9:00 p.m. and 5:30 a.m. unless it is an emergency. In case of an emergency, a direct relative may notify the director on your behalf, but you should confirm the absence as soon as possible. Messaging coworkers is not an acceptable method to report an absence.

Expectations for Nonexempt Employees

- Nonexempt employees must be at their workstations ready to begin work at the start of their scheduled shift and at the end of any scheduled meal breaks.
- Leaving early requires prior approval, except in emergency situations.

Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

- A tardy or absence is considered excused when you call in advance and the reason is compelling. PCH reserves the right to determine what qualifies as a compelling reason.
- A tardy or absence is unexcused if you fail to notify PCH in advance or the reason is not deemed compelling.

Consequences of Excessive Absences or Tardiness

Employees who exceed six personal days per year or show a consistent pattern of unexcused absences or tardiness may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Failure to call in or report to work may also result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Paid Time Off

After completing 90 days of continuous service, full-time employees (30 hours or more per week) begin to accrue Paid Time Off (PTO). PTO accrual is based on the employee's regularly scheduled weekly hours and their length of service with the organization. PTO is accrued each pay period and is available for use once earned.

PTO is awarded according to years of service:

- 0–4 years of service → the equivalent of one week plus one day of scheduled hours per year
- 5–9 years of service → two weeks of scheduled hours per year
- 10+ years of service → three weeks of scheduled hours per year

Example: An employee scheduled for 40 hours per week would earn 48 hours per year at 0–4 years (one week plus one day), 80 hours per year at 5–9 years, and 120 hours per year at 10+ years.

In addition to PTO, full-time employees are also paid for holiday breaks and for the holidays when PCH is closed, which adds additional paid time off throughout the year.

Application of PTO for Hourly (Non-Exempt) Employees:

PTO may be used to replace scheduled work hours up to a maximum of 40 paid hours in a workweek. PTO is not considered hours worked and will not be applied in a manner that results in paid time exceeding 40 hours in a week.

PTO must be requested in advance and approved by the employee's supervisor. PTO may be taken in hourly increments. We encourage staff to use their PTO for rest and renewal during the year it is earned. Any unused PTO does not carry over to the following year, and all balances reset on January 1st.

Vacation

PCH provides two scheduled vacation weeks each year:

- Independence Day week – If July 4 falls on a Saturday, vacation will be the week prior; if it falls on a Sunday, vacation will be the week after.
- The week between Christmas and New Year's Day

Full-time employees who have completed 90 days of continuous service receive paid vacation during these weeks.

Part-time employees are scheduled for these weeks off but will not be paid.

Holiday Pay

Full-time employees who have completed at least 90 days of continuous service are eligible for holiday pay (their regular pay for the day) on the following holidays:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving

Note: Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Independence Day are included in the scheduled vacation weeks. Occasionally, some employees may be scheduled to work on holidays as needed.

Holiday Pay Guidelines

Holidays are observed on the calendar day designated by PCH. If a holiday falls on a Saturday, it is observed on the preceding Friday; if on a Sunday, it is observed on the following Monday. To be eligible for holiday pay, employees must be available to work their last scheduled day before the holiday and their first scheduled day after, unless prior approval for time off is granted by the Preschool Director.

If a holiday falls during an employee's vacation, holiday pay will be provided, and the day will not be counted as a vacation day.

Employees who have not completed 90 days of employment prior to the holiday are not eligible for holiday pay.

Employees on a leave of absence are not eligible for holiday pay during the leave period. Holiday pay does not count as hours worked for overtime calculations.

Bereavement Pay

Full-time employees who have completed at least one year of continuous service with PCH are eligible for up to three (3) paid days away from work to arrange and/or attend the funeral of an immediate family member.

Immediate family members include: spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, stepparents, stepchildren, guardian, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandmother, and grandfather.

Employees needing more than three days away may request earned PTO or a personal leave of absence, following PCH's leave of absence policy.

- Bereavement pay will not count as hours worked for overtime calculations.
- Requires submission of a Time Off Request form to receive pay.

Leaves of Absence

PCH provides various types of leaves of absence in compliance with federal and state law. All leaves must be approved in advance, in writing, by the Preschool Director and/or the Preschool Elder Advisory Team.

1. Personal Leave

For compelling personal reasons not related to medical conditions.

Eligible employees: 3+ years of continuous service.

Length: Up to 60 days unpaid.

Requests: Written request stating reason, start date, and end date.

Return: Employees will normally return to the same position or a comparable one if no opening exists.

2. Maternity Leave

For pregnancy-related disability.

Eligible employees: 1+ year of continuous service.

Length: Up to 4 months unpaid, with a physician's statement certifying disability.

Return: Employees who return immediately after the leave with a physician's release will normally return to the same position or a comparable one.

3. Medical Leave

For non-work-related illness or disability (excluding pregnancy/childbirth).

Eligible employees: 1+ year of continuous service.

Length: Up to 6 months unpaid, with a physician's statement certifying the disability.

Employees may be asked to provide medical updates during leave.

Return: Same rules as maternity leave.

4. Family Care and Medical Leave (FMLA)

For birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child, or care for a child, parent, or spouse with a serious health condition, or the employee's own serious health condition.

Eligible employees: 1+ year of service and 1,250 hours worked in the prior 12 months.

Length: Up to 12 workweeks unpaid in a 12-month period.

Must provide a health provider's written statement.

Employees may use accrued vacation or sick time during the leave.

Return: Same rules as other leaves.

5. Jury Duty

Paid leave while serving on jury duty if jury pay is turned over to PCH; otherwise, jury pay is deducted from payroll.

Unpaid leave available if service exceeds 5 days.

Employees excused early should report to work if practical.

6. Military Leave

Leave granted for required military service.

PCH complies with all applicable federal and state laws.

7. Workers' Compensation Leave

Leave for work-related injury or illness.

PCH complies with all applicable federal and state laws.

General Leave Guidelines

- Employees will normally return to the same or a comparable position.
- Requests for leave extensions must be submitted in writing prior to the original leave's end, with a physician's statement if appropriate.
- Failure to return on the first workday after leave may be considered voluntary termination.
- Continuous service does not accrue for leave beyond 30 days.
- Employees on leave remain subject to layoff like active employees.
- Employees must communicate their status to PCH at least once per month.
- Fitness-for-duty documentation may be required upon return from maternity, medical, or workers' compensation leave.
- Falsifying leave reasons may result in disciplinary action, up to termination.

Work Rules and Performance Standards

Employment with PCH is based on mutual consent. Both you and PCH have the right to terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice.

While it is not possible to list every rule or standard, employees are responsible for understanding and following PCH's expectations. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, as outlined in the Corrective Action policy.

Job Performance: Employees may face discipline for poor performance, including:

- Substandard quality or quantity of work.
- Poor attitude, rudeness, or lack of cooperation.
- Excessive absences, tardiness, or abuse of breaks/meals.
- Failure to follow instructions or PCH policies.

Misconduct: Employees may face discipline for misconduct, including:

- Insubordination.
- Theft, misuse, or unauthorized removal of PCH or personal property.
- Falsifying or omitting information on PCH records, including payroll and personnel files.
- Sharing confidential PCH information with unauthorized persons.
- Disorderly conduct, threats, fighting, or possession of weapons on PCH property.
- Unprofessional conduct while representing PCH or on PCH property that could discredit the organization.
- Violations of law or criminal convictions that make the employee unsuitable for continued employment.
- Violation of PCH's alcohol, drug, or controlled substances policy.
- Violation of PCH's harassment policy.
- Altering or allowing someone else to alter time records.

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive, and PCH reserves the right to take disciplinary action for other actions or behaviors deemed inappropriate or harmful to the workplace.

Gross Misconduct Involving Children

The safety and well-being of children is the highest priority at PCH. All staff are expected to provide active and adequate supervision at all times.

Failure to provide proper care or supervision that results in any of the following, or intentionally neglecting a child's needs, will be considered gross misconduct and is grounds for immediate termination and reporting to the Department of Children and Families (DCF):

- Serious or excessive injury to a child due to negligence (not accidental or unforeseeable)
- Allergic reaction due to negligence (not accidental or unforeseeable)
- Dismemberment
- Failure to recognize or respond to an incident requiring immediate medical care
- Death of a child
- Leaving a child unattended on a bus or at a location other than the school where they are enrolled
- Intentional neglect of a child's needs

If a parent or guardian reports an incident that appears to stem from inadequate supervision, misconduct, or intentional neglect, PCH will conduct a full and proper investigation. During this time, staff involved may be placed on administrative leave until the investigation is complete. Findings will determine whether corrective action, up to and including termination, is warranted.

Corrective Action and Corrective Action Plan

PCH is committed to supporting employee growth and maintaining a positive, professional work environment. To address performance or conduct concerns, PCH uses a Corrective Action Process, which may include coaching, written plans, or, in serious cases, immediate termination.

1. Coaching and Development

- Before formal corrective measures are taken, employees will normally receive guidance through:
 - Coaching and skill development
 - Clear communication of job duties and performance expectations
 - Training or other support as appropriate

2. Corrective Action Plan

- If performance or conduct issues persist, a Corrective Action Plan may be implemented. This plan:
 - Identifies the behavior or performance concern
 - Outlines actions the employee should take to improve
 - Includes a timeline for completion and a date for review
 - Requires agreement and signatures from the employee and the Preschool Director
 - Employees are encouraged to use this opportunity to improve. If you disagree with the plan, you may provide a written response and discuss concerns verbally with the Preschool Director and your supervisor.

3. Escalation of Corrective Measures

- First violation: Notation of the issue in the personnel file; formal write-up may not be required.
- Second violation of the same issue: Formal written warning, signed by the employee, a witness, and the Preschool Director, with a copy added to the personnel file.
- Third violation of the same issue: May result in termination.

4. Serious Misconduct

- Certain behaviors may result in immediate termination without prior corrective steps, including but not limited to:
 - Illegal, immoral, dishonest, or unethical conduct

5. File Maintenance

- Informal notes older than one year may be removed from personnel files if no formal write-up occurred.

6. Employment at Will

- As noted in this handbook, the Employment at Will agreement supersedes all prior agreements and allows PCH to terminate employment at any time, with or without notice.

Termination

Employment at PCH is at-will, which means either the employee or PCH may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice, subject to applicable law.

1. Voluntary Termination

- Voluntary termination occurs when an employee chooses to leave their position.
- Employees are expected to provide at least four weeks' written notice.

Written notice should include:

- The reason for leaving
- The name and address of your new residence, if applicable, for W2 distribution.
- Providing notice helps PCH plan for coverage and ensures a smooth transition for the children and staff.

2. Involuntary Termination

- Involuntary termination occurs when PCH ends the employment relationship for reasons other than business restructuring.

Reasons may include, but are not limited to: performance issues, violations of policies, misconduct, or other factors outlined in this handbook.

3. Layoff

- A layoff occurs due to changing business conditions that require a reduction in staff.

Factors considered when determining layoffs may include:

- Versatility, skills, qualifications, and efficiency
- Job performance and dependability
- Attitude, loyalty, and overall contribution to PCH
- Employees who are laid off will not be subject to recall.

4. Final Pay and Benefits

Upon termination, employees will receive payment for all earned wages and accrued PTO (if applicable) in accordance with state law.

Any outstanding obligations to PCH, such as tuition deductions or equipment return, must be resolved prior to the final paycheck.

Resignation Process

While employment at PCH is “at will” and either party may end the relationship at any time, we ask that employees provide written notice when resigning from their position. Notice periods may vary depending on the role:

- Administrators: Four months to one year’s notice is requested to allow time for transition and training of a successor.
- Teachers and Classroom Staff: Two to four weeks notice is requested to support classroom continuity and allow for staffing adjustments.

Providing notice ensures a smooth transition for the children, families, and team members we serve.

Grievance Procedures

PCH is committed to creating a positive and supportive work environment. If you encounter a problem or concern related to your work, we encourage you to address it promptly so it can be resolved effectively.

Steps for addressing concerns:

- Talk with your immediate supervisor – Most issues can be resolved informally by discussing them directly with the supervisor responsible for your area.
- Meet with the Preschool Director – If the issue is not resolved, you may request a meeting with the Preschool Director to discuss the concern further.
- Escalate to the Preschool Advisory Team – If the matter remains unresolved, you can request a meeting with the Preschool Advisory Team. The team will hear all parties involved and provide a decision within 30 days of notification.
- Final appeal to Session – If necessary, and only in cases involving alleged violations of law, PCH personnel policies, or Presbytery policies, an appeal can be made to Session. Except in these specific cases, the decision of the Preschool Advisory Team is considered final.

PCH encourages open communication and is committed to addressing concerns fairly, respectfully, and in a timely manner.

Whistleblower Policy

PCH is committed to maintaining a safe, ethical, and transparent workplace. Employees are encouraged to report any concerns about misconduct, unsafe practices, or violations of policy without fear of retaliation. Reports may be made to a Preschool Director, administrator, or pastor. All concerns will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and handled with confidentiality to the extent possible. Retaliation against any employee who raises a good-faith concern is strictly prohibited.

Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

PCH is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all employees, children, families, volunteers, and community members. Sexual misconduct or harassment is a serious violation of trust and Christian ethics, and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted sexual advances, comments, or gestures
- Inappropriate physical contact, including overly familiar hugs or touches
- Suggestive jokes, language, or visual materials
- Any conduct that creates a hostile, intimidating, or unsafe environment

Reporting and Investigation:

Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct by a PCH employee, volunteer, pastor, elder, or member should immediately notify the Preschool Director, Pastor, or Preschool Advisory Team.

Complaints should be submitted in writing, clearly describing the incident(s).

Those accused will also have an opportunity to provide a written response.

Investigations will be handled promptly and confidentially by the Preschool Director, Pastor, and/or designated Personnel Team members.

If the Pastor is the accused, the Clerk of Session or an Elder will oversee the investigation.

If the matter cannot be resolved internally, external authorities, including the Presbytery or other professionals, may be involved.

PCH is committed to ensuring that all parties are treated fairly and that victims receive support and protection. Retaliation against anyone reporting misconduct in good faith is strictly prohibited.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Controlled Substances

PCH maintains a drug- and alcohol-free workplace. The use, possession, sale, transfer, or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or controlled substances while on duty, on PCH property, or in PCH vehicles is strictly prohibited.

“Under the influence” means any condition that prevents an employee from performing their duties safely or effectively, or that poses a risk to themselves, coworkers, children, the public, or PCH property.

Off-duty conduct is generally a personal matter; however, any off-duty actions that violate the law or negatively affect PCH’s reputation, operations, or the safety of others may be subject to review and could result in disciplinary action.

For example, social media posts about PCH that compromise confidentiality or professionalism could be addressed under this policy.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Firearms & Weapons

The possession of firearms or other weapons of any kind on PCH property is strictly prohibited. This policy is in accordance with DCF licensing requirements.

The only exception is for law enforcement officers who are authorized to carry a firearm as part of their official duties.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may also involve law enforcement if applicable.

Smoking

In compliance with DCF licensing standards, smoking is prohibited on PCH premises during business hours, which are 6:30 A.M. – 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

This includes all indoor and outdoor areas of the property. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Outside Activities & Social Media

Employees may engage in outside employment or other activities in their personal time, as long as it does not create a conflict of interest or negatively impact PCH. Employees should avoid employment with families or clients associated with PCH, as this could pose confidentiality risks or create conflicts.

All employees are expected to maintain confidentiality regarding children, families, coworkers, and internal PCH matters. This includes social media and online communications. Posting private information about PCH, its employees, children, or families on personal social media accounts is strictly prohibited. Employees should not communicate with families through personal social media, private messaging apps, or unofficial channels about program matters.

Professional communication with families should only be done through authorized channels such as Procure, official PCH email, or other platforms approved by the Preschool Director.

Violations of this policy, including breaches of confidentiality, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Security & Monitoring

PCH utilizes security cameras throughout the facility to help ensure the safety of children, staff, and property. Cameras are not actively monitored in real-time for every moment of the day, but footage may be reviewed as needed to:

- Investigate complaints or incidents
- Confirm compliance with safety and supervision standards
- Maintain security of the premises

Access to camera footage is strictly limited to the Preschool Director, administrative staff, church office staff, DCF, and law enforcement when required. Parents and other employees do not have access to the cameras or recordings.

This system is in place to support a safe environment and protect everyone in our care, while respecting privacy and professional boundaries.

Personal Appearance

Employees' appearance reflects both themselves and PCH. Staff are expected to maintain a clean, professional, and modest appearance while at work or representing PCH. As professional caregivers, your attire and presentation serve as a role model for the children.

- **Staff Shirts:** Each employee will receive 2 PCH staff shirts. Additional plain shirts can be brought in and, for a \$5 fee, we will print the PCH logo on them.
- **Attire:** Knee-length shorts, capris, or pants are acceptable. Leggings are not allowed unless teaching the Athletics Program, and staff must have a change of clothing to wear after the program. Shoes must have closed toes. In the infant room, outdoor shoes must be removed and replaced with socks or shoes that are only worn in that room.
- **Hygiene & Safety:** Fingernails should be kept short, and nail polish should be appropriate for a professional setting. Certain body piercings may need to be removed while working with young toddlers to prevent injury or choking hazards.

This ensures safety, professionalism, and a positive example for the children in our care.

Personal Items & Belongings

PCH provides the materials you need to perform your job duties. Employees may bring personal items to use in the classroom as long as they are appropriate for the setting and intended for proper use, whether for themselves or the children.

Personal belongings, including valuables such as large sums of money or jewelry, should be kept secure in the office or a locked cabinet out of the reach of children. PCH is not responsible for any personal items that are lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed while on the premises.

Access to & Maintenance of PCH Property

PCH maintains the right to access all PCH property, including offices, classrooms, workstations, desks, storage areas, and technology such as computers, tablets, and other electronic devices, at any time, with or without notice or consent. This includes records, documents, and files stored on or accessed through these devices. Employees are expected to keep their work areas and PCH-provided technology clean, organized, and in compliance with licensing and accreditation standards. Supervisors may conduct inspections to ensure these standards are met. Failure to maintain a safe, orderly, and secure work environment or technology may result in disciplinary action.

Security Codes

Upon employment, you will be issued a personal security code for PCH's access control system. This code is for your use only and must not be shared with anyone, including family members.

Security codes are intended for regular business hours use unless otherwise authorized by the Preschool Director or other designated supervisor. In some cases, a code may be temporarily assigned for full access outside standard hours for specific, approved reasons. PCH reserves the right to change or deactivate any security code at any time to ensure the safety of employees, children, and property.

All employees are expected to follow PCH's security policies to maintain a safe and controlled environment at all times.

Emergency Procedures

The safety of children and staff is our highest priority. PCH conducts monthly fire drills and lockdown and tornado drills every three months in compliance with licensing standards.

In the event of a hurricane or other severe weather, PCH will typically follow the closing decisions of Polk County Public Schools. However, the Preschool Director will make the final decision regarding both closure and reopening, taking into account the safety of families and staff.

Phones & Wearables

We understand that occasional personal calls or notifications may be necessary. Personal calls on PCH phones or personal cell phones should be brief (ideally under five minutes) and made during scheduled breaks or meal periods whenever possible. If an urgent call or notification is necessary, employees must notify their supervisor to arrange coverage before stepping out. Employees are expected to exercise good judgment and prioritize their responsibilities while on duty.

One of the biggest challenges in supervision is staying fully present with the children. For this reason, personal cell phone, smart watch, earbuds, AirPods, headsets, and personal speakers are strictly prohibited in classrooms and bathrooms, especially when children are present. Smart watches and personal listening devices can be just as distracting as phones, and employees may be asked to put them away if they interfere with supervision.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employee Parking

Employees must park their vehicles in the designated areas at their own risk. Staff should park under the trees near the front of the church, unless they have a valid handicapped parking tag, in which case they may use the designated handicapped spaces at the front.

Parking in the back of the church is reserved for the Director, Administrator, and for deliveries only.

PCH is not responsible for theft or damage to vehicles parked on or near PCH property, or for personal property left in vehicles that is lost, damaged, stolen, or destroyed.

Use of Church Equipment

PCH equipment, including computers, tablets, printers, and software, is provided for work-related purposes only. Personal use is not permitted unless specifically authorized by the Preschool Director.

Employees may not download or install software, alter hardware or settings, or use PCH devices for personal social media or non-work-related activities.

A signed Technology Agreement must be kept on file for all employees.

Children & Supervision Introductory Statement

The safety and well-being of every child are at the heart of our program. While each position carries unique duties, certain core practices apply to all staff and must be consistently upheld.

This section is not intended to outline every aspect of your role—your job description and daily assignments provide further details. Instead, the following reminders emphasize the essential safety and care standards that guide our work each day.

Employees should also be aware that responsibilities may extend beyond what is listed here. Regardless of role, these practices represent non-negotiable expectations designed to protect children and maintain a safe, nurturing environment.

Respectful Communication

All staff are expected to speak to children and about children in a respectful, positive, and supportive manner. Concerns about a child's behavior, development, or well-being should be discussed only with Team Leaders, Administrators, or Preschool Directors, as appropriate. Staff should model constructive communication and maintain a professional approach at all times.

Child Discipline Policy for Employees

No form of physical or verbal abuse or punishment is permitted. Discipline must never be severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest, or toileting. Acceptable strategies include prevention, redirection, and positive reinforcement.

If a parent requests the use of "time out" as a discipline method, staff must follow the facility guidelines: one minute per year of the child's age. Removal from outside play is never used as a discipline strategy. All discipline actions should include a discussion with the child about the unacceptable behavior.

Zero-Tolerance: Any violation of this policy—including physical or verbal punishment, humiliation, or inappropriate discipline—is strictly prohibited and may result in immediate termination.

Staff are expected to understand and follow these guidelines at all times. Discipline practices comply with Section 402.305(12), F.S., and all relevant DCF Licensing, ELC, and accreditation standards.

Child Supervision & Safety Standards

Supervision and Safety Standards

To protect every child's health, safety, and well-being, staff are required to uphold the following standards at all times:

- Staff must provide constant supervision, follow safety procedures, and maintain a secure, nurturing, and hygienic environment.
- PCH follows NAAC Accreditation staff-to-child ratios whenever possible; DCF minimum ratios apply during early morning, closing, or nap times.
- Children must never be left unattended. Staff must remain attentive, engaged, and within sight and sound of children at all times.
- Bathroom procedures must be followed as directed by Team Leaders to ensure child safety and staff accountability.
- Active supervision is required on the playground. Staff must monitor all areas, interact with children, and remain alert.
- Transitions should be brief, positive, organized, and supportive to minimize disruption and maintain safety.
- Staff must follow all diapering, hand-washing, cleaning, and sanitizing procedures. Safe Sleep practices and Abusive Head Trauma prevention are required at all times.

Safe Sleep Practices

Staff must follow PCH's Safe Sleep Practices to ensure infant safety. Infants are placed on their backs in a firm, safety-approved crib, free of blankets, pillows, toys, or other soft objects. Sleepwear should be appropriate, heads remain uncovered, and infants are actively observed during naps. Cribs are spaced safely, and infants in car seats are moved to cribs for sleep. Pacifiers may be offered but not attached to anything, and infants who can roll are allowed to shift positions. Any medical exceptions require a signed waiver. Supervised tummy time is required while infants are awake. Only children ages twelve months or older are allowed on nap mats.

A more detailed version of these practices can be found in the Parent Handbook.

Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) & Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)

At PCH, staff are trained to prevent, recognize, respond to, and report Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) to protect children and promote healthy development. All staff complete SBS/AHT training during their first week, which covers safe handling of children, coping strategies for crying infants, and recognizing signs of abuse or head trauma. Any form of shaking, tossing, or forceful handling of a child is strictly prohibited. Staff are expected to follow proper response procedures, including notifying the Director, contacting emergency services if needed, and reaching out to the child's family.

A more detailed version of this policy is included in the Parent Handbook.

Children's Challenging Behavior & Positive Discipline

Staff are expected to address challenging behaviors using redirection strategies and positive discipline techniques that align with PCH's philosophy.

- **Initial Support:** Staff should first use age-appropriate strategies in the classroom to guide children toward positive choices.
- **Team Support:** If behaviors escalate or persist, staff should consult with Team Leaders for guidance and support.
- **Behavior Documentation:** Any escalated incidents should be documented objectively in a Behavior or Incident Report in Procure, noting the situation, actions taken, and outcomes.
- **Parent Collaboration:** For continued concerns, staff and Team Leaders may meet with parents to discuss strategies and create a plan for improvement.
- **Preschool Director Authority:** If all interventions are exhausted and progress is not observed, the Preschool Director may implement further measures, including modifying participation in certain activities or, in rare cases, considering disenrollment.

All children are treated respectfully and individually, with a focus on guiding their development in a positive and supportive manner.

Some children may display challenging behaviors that can cause stress, anxiety, or frustration for staff. Employees should recognize when their own emotions may interfere with providing safe and appropriate care. If a staff member feels that a child's behavior or their own emotional state could put the child at risk of inappropriate discipline, they must immediately notify a Preschool Director, Administrator, or Team Lead for assistance. This allows both the child and the staff member a moment to reset and ensures the safety and well-being of all.

Administrators are available to support staff in managing difficult situations, maintaining a calm environment, and providing guidance when needed.

Allergies & Special Needs

PCH is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all children, including those with allergies and other special needs. Key practices include:

- **Enrollment Information:** Allergy and special needs information is collected at enrollment and updated regularly.
- **Classroom Guidelines:** Some classrooms may be designated as allergy-free (e.g., no peanuts, eggs) based on children's needs. Staff should follow posted restrictions and communicate them appropriately.
- **Confidentiality:** Do not share specific allergy or medical details with families. Only general information, such as "this classroom is peanut-free," may be communicated.
- **Allergy Charts:** Allergy and special needs charts are posted discreetly in each classroom. These include allergies, sensitivities, medications, and other special considerations.
 - Red = EpiPen
 - Blue = Inhaler
 - "No" sign symbol indicates that an allergy is present in the classroom.
- **Staff Awareness:** All staff must be familiar with the allergy/special needs chart for the room they are in and review it whenever entering a new classroom.
- **Updates:** Charts are updated quarterly or as needed. Staff are required to sign the chart to confirm they have reviewed and understand the information.

Medication & Topical Products Policy

All medications must go directly to the Director or Administrator before entering a classroom. Staff may not accept or store medications without prior approval.

- Topical Products: Sunscreen, lotions, and creams may be used only with a signed form. Prescription topicals require approval and documentation.
- Administered Medications: PCH only administers EpiPens, Albuterol, and other life-saving medications. Benadryl may be used with an Allergy Action Plan.

Requirements:

- Original packaging, prescription label, valid expiration date.
- Logged by administration in the Medication Log Book and Procare.
- Expired medications sent home.
- Albuterol and Medication that needs to be given to children needs to be logged on the medication log form and on ProCare for the parent.

Parent Role: Parents must demonstrate use with staff and sign the Allergy Action Plan.

Medications found and used in a classroom *without* prior admin approval are grounds for corrective action, up to termination. If a medication is handed to you by a parent, please bring it to administration to look over it appropriately.

Food & Beverages in Classrooms

Staff are expected to model appropriate eating habits and maintain a safe environment during the school day. Meals or snacks should align with scheduled meal or break times. If a staff member has a medical need or special circumstance, this should be communicated to administration.

Fast food or other meals should be eaten during staff lunch breaks, nap time, or other scheduled times—not while children are not eating. Drinks other than water should be poured into another cup, and hot liquids must always be in a cup with a secure lid to prevent spills and burns.

If you must have a small snack outside of children's meal times, please do so discreetly or ask to step out. Staff ordering food should arrange for delivery at appropriate times, and all deliveries must be directed to the front desk to avoid confusion and disruption in the classrooms.

Nurse's Elbow

Staff are expected to prioritize safe handling practices to minimize the risk of injury, including Nurse's Elbow (Pulled Elbow/Radial Head Subluxation) — a common condition in young children that can occur when a child is pulled or lifted by the arm. While our staff are trained on proper ways to lift, guide, and support children, it is understood that children may occasionally resist, drop their weight, or move unexpectedly, which can make safe handling more challenging.

Guidelines for Staff:

- Always use safe and approved techniques when lifting or guiding children (support under the arms/torso rather than pulling hands or wrists when possible).
- Be mindful when holding a child's hand; if the child drops suddenly or resists, avoid pulling upward or sharply.
- If a child appears injured (e.g., refuses to move the arm, cries when touched, or holds the arm close to the body), notify the Director immediately and follow the Injury & Incident Reporting Policy.
- Parents/guardians must be contacted promptly for any suspected injury, and emergency services called if necessary.
- Document all incidents clearly and factually.

Reminder:

While children may act unpredictably, staff are responsible for practicing the safest handling methods available in the moment. Training and good judgment should guide your actions.

Incident & Behavior Reporting

All incidents and behavior concerns must be documented in the Procure app promptly and accurately. Reports should be objective, factual, and free from assumptions or personal opinions.

When completing a report, include:

- Time of the incident
- Location
- Brief, objective description of what happened
- First Aid provided, including TLC if applicable
- Outcome (e.g., "returned to play," "parent was called")

Important Guidelines:

- If a child hits their head, notify the parent immediately by phone or message.
- Do not include assumptions or opinions (e.g., "the child was cranky").
- Do not mention other children by name in reports.
- It is acceptable to quote a child's statements (e.g., "I'm angry") and follow with the steps taken for conflict resolution.

When multiple children are involved in an incident (e.g., one child hurts another), a separate report must be completed for each child—both the child who was harmed and the child who caused the incident.

Release of Children & Parent Identification

For the safety of all children, strict procedures are followed for pick-up:

- **Teacher Responsibility:** The classroom teacher is responsible for verifying who is picking up each child and ensuring the child is properly signed out in Procure.
- **Verification Required:** Anyone picking up a child must be listed and verified in the Procure app or confirmed by a staff member who personally knows them.
- **Photo Identification:** Parents/guardians and approved pick-up persons must present a valid photo ID. Individuals must be 16 years of age or older to pick up a child.
- **Not on the List:** If the individual is not listed in Procure, the parent/guardian must be contacted directly. The parent must then send written authorization through Procure or email with the name of the person approved to pick up.
- **Non-Negotiable:** Children will not be released to anyone who cannot be verified or authorized.

Staff Responsibility:

Failure to follow these procedures—including failure to ID a parent or authorized pick-up person—may result in corrective action, up to and including termination of employment.

Curriculum & Activities

All staff are encouraged to provide activities that are developmentally appropriate for each child's age and ability. Activities should allow for creativity, self-expression, and discovery, while being flexible and adaptable to individual needs. Staff are expected to support learning experiences that focus on the process of exploration, rather than just the final product, and adjust lesson plans as needed to reflect children's growth and interests.

Screen Time

At PCH, screen time is limited and always educational, supporting hands-on learning and social interaction.

- **Infants–2 years:** No screen time; focus on sensory and interactive activities.
- **3-year-olds:** Up to one 15-minute educational video per week, tied to lesson themes.
- **4-year-olds:** Up to 15 minutes daily on center tablets with curriculum-approved apps (e.g., Marco Polo).
- **School-Age (5+):** Up to 30 minutes daily on approved tablets/computers for educational activities or homework.

Screen time is never required, may be canceled at staff discretion, and children may always choose other activities.

Communication via Procare

Procare is used for messaging, tracking children's days, incident reports, sign-in/out, and sharing photos with parents.

- Use Procare daily to communicate professionally and clearly.
- Keep messages brief and focused; detailed or serious matters should be handled via phone call or in-person meeting.
- End all messages with your name.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times—do not share sensitive information with other families or staff outside the appropriate context.

Misuse of Procare, including but not limited to unprofessional communication, sharing confidential information about other children, or copying client data, is grounds for corrective action, up to and including termination.

Chain of Communication for Parents

Teachers and staff should maintain positive, professional relationships with parents. If a parent has a question or concern about policies, tuition, or school operations, staff should refer the parent directly to the Preschool Director or administrative team. Teachers should not attempt to resolve policy or financial disputes independently. This helps ensure that communication is accurate, consistent, and supportive of both families and staff.

Transportation Policy

PCH operates two buses for school routes and field trips. Staff must complete DCF Transportation Training before driving or assisting.

- Drivers must have a valid license, clean driving record, and yearly physical.
- Each bus seats 13 students plus one adult; one adult must always be present.
- All trips require accurate DCF bus logs; falsifying or missing information may lead to disciplinary action.
- Buses must have a working Child Alarm System.
- Drivers must ensure all children exit safely at stops and remain secured with harnesses or seat belts.
- Only essential items for trips are allowed on the bus.
- Required items on the bus: bus logs, emergency contacts, first aid kit, and approved fire extinguisher.

This policy ensures safe transportation and compliance with state regulations.

Field Trips

Field trips are planned for Early Release Days, School Holidays, School Breaks, and Summer Camp. Only school age children go on field trips. All trips prioritize safety, supervision, and child well-being.

Sun Safety & Sunscreen:

- For water activities (e.g., Lake Eva), staff must apply sunscreen at least every hour.
- For other outdoor trips, staff should encourage children to apply sunscreen before leaving the center.
- Sunscreen permission forms are included in summer paperwork; staff may apply sunscreen as needed.

Staffing & Supervision:

- Large trips require a minimum of 4 staff; smaller trips may have 2–3 if ratios, group size, and supervision plans allow.
- All trips must include at least two staff who have completed the DCF 45-hour training.
- All staff on trips must maintain current CPR/First Aid certification.
- One additional adult is required beyond the minimum ratio for added supervision.

Trip Preparation & Safety:

- Post the date, time, and location of each trip at least two working days in advance.
- Bring emergency contact information, first aid kit, attendance book, and a device for Procure/Slack communication.
- Ensure proper staff-to-child ratios and active supervision at all times.
- Limit cell phone use to school-related purposes only.

This policy ensures safe, well-supervised, and enjoyable field trip experiences while following state regulations and PCH standards.

Technology, Communication & Data Security

PCH provides technology resources, including laptops, tablets, computers, email, and approved software platforms, to support program operations. These resources are to be used responsibly and only for business purposes.

Approved Platforms

- **Slack:** Staff may be given access for work-related communication. If accessed on a personal device, this is a privilege and may be revoked at any time. Access will be terminated immediately upon resignation or termination. Slack must be used for professional purposes only.
- **Confidential Systems (Procare, Teaching Strategies GOLD, etc.):** These contain confidential child, family, and staff information. Access from personal devices is not permitted unless specifically authorized by the Preschool Director. Unauthorized use may result in corrective action, up to and including termination.

General Technology Use

Technology should be used with child safety, confidentiality, and professional standards in mind at all times. Personal devices (including cell phones) must not be used in classrooms except in emergencies or with prior permission. Parent communication must never occur on personal devices.

PCH devices, accounts, and IDs are property of PCH and must not be altered, removed from the premises, or used for personal or inappropriate purposes.

Internet, email, and printers are for PCH business only. Excessive or personal use is prohibited. Staff may be held financially responsible for damage to devices caused by negligence or repeated misuse.

Photography and Media Policy

At PCH, the safety, dignity, and privacy of children are our highest priority. To protect children and respect family wishes:

- **Parent Consent:** Parents/guardians set preferences for photography and media use during the enrollment process. These preferences may include classroom photos, school-wide events, or promotional use.
- **Administrator Guidance:** The Administrator will communicate each child's media preference to staff. Employees are required to follow these preferences without exception.
- **No Personal Devices:** Staff may not use personal cell phones, cameras, or recording devices to photograph or video children. All photos must be taken with PCH-approved devices for program purposes only.
- **Confidentiality:** Images of children may not be posted, shared, or distributed on personal social media, messaging apps, or personal accounts.
- **Professional Use Only:** Any photos taken for classroom use (e.g., portfolios, Procare updates, newsletters) must remain within PCH systems and be used only for the child's educational experience or approved program communications.

Violations of this policy may result in corrective action, up to and including termination.

Confidentiality Agreement

As a staff member of PCH and/or PCH Preschool, you may at times become aware of personal, private, or sensitive information. This could include details about:

- Children, parents, and families we serve
- Other staff members, volunteers, or church members
- Performance evaluations or employment matters
- Financial or organizational information related to PCH, the Preschool, or the Pastor
- Individuals seeking pastoral care or counseling

Because of the trust placed in us, all such information must be treated as strictly confidential.

Conversations or details you become aware of—whether intentional, accidental, or overheard—should never be shared outside of what is necessary to perform your job.

If you have a serious concern based on factual evidence of misconduct, professional or personal abuse, or unethical behavior, you must bring it forward appropriately:

- If the concern does not involve the Pastor or the Preschool Director, share it confidentially with either the Pastor or the Preschool Director.
- If the concern does involve the Pastor or Preschool Director, share it with the Clerk of Session or the Personnel Elder.

These concerns will be reviewed carefully and confidentially, and if necessary, investigated and reported to Session and/or Presbytery.

Improper disclosure of confidential information, or failure to follow the proper reporting process, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employee Statement & Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the PCH Personnel Policy Handbook, which outlines policies, procedures, benefits, and rules of conduct. I understand and agree to comply with all provisions in the handbook, including the confidentiality agreement above.

I further acknowledge that both PCH and I have the right to terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or advance notice. I understand this “at-will” employment agreement is the entire agreement regarding termination, and that it can only be changed by a written agreement signed by both myself and the Pastor or Preschool Director of PCH.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understand, and accept all terms of the Employee Handbook and this Confidentiality Agreement.