



Family Handbook



2024-2025

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Illinois 62846

(618) 437-5321 Ext. 1393

Updated and approved August 2023 by the RLC Board, Vice President – Finance & Auxiliary Services, & RLCFCC Director and Staff

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Rend Lake College

Foundation Children's Center

Mission Statement

We value...

- A play-based curriculum that emerges from the needs and interests of children
- Open, honest communication at every level in the Children's Center
- A dedication to our job and the children and families we serve
- A partnership between teachers and families to best meet the needs of each child

We believe...

- In participation of all staff and parents in center wide decisions
- In being role models for fellow teachers, RLC students, parents, and children
- There is always room for improvement
- Each child is an individual and develops at his/her own rate
- Education is a lifelong learning experience

We will promote...

- The highest quality of child care, following the Creative Curriculum, QRS/ExceleRate, and DCFS standards
- Positive relationships with families and fellow staff members through open communication and the fostering of an encouraging, safe environment

We will encourage...

- Parents to be partners in their children's education
- Respect for our center, staff, children, and families
- A sense of community and belonging
- Independence and self confidence in children by motivating them to initiate learning

We will respect...

- Parents, children, and fellow staff members
- Cultural practices and values of all families and staff members

About the Children's Center

History and Purpose

The Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center, part of the Rend Lake College community since 1998, is dedicated to providing the highest quality developmental care possible for each child enrolled. The Children's Center was established: (1) to develop a learning laboratory for the RLC Early Childhood Education students, (2) to provide accessible quality child care for RLC students and staff, therefore supporting families in their educational goals, and (3) to develop a model early childhood education center that will promote quality care for young children in the district community. The center is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center is based on the children's active exploration of the world. Children learn through their play in an environment that provides interesting materials. Therefore, the daily activities of the center will appear very play-oriented. Curriculum is developed from the children's interests, questions, and conversations. Children may choose from a variety of learning centers where activities are introduced. Additionally, children may be engaged in projects in which they will actively explore a topic in depth to discover new information. Active questioning from teachers promotes critical thinking skills. Children may choose to work individually or collaboratively with other children. Daily experiences will include math, language arts, computers, science, music, art, movement, and dramatic play. These interrelated experiences will stimulate and nurture intellectual, social, emotional, creative, language, and physical development. Independence and self-help skills are also fostered as children grow and learn. The environment promotes problem solving, negotiation and positive interaction with peers and adults. Together these combined experiences help to develop a foundation to build a positive self-concept and prepare the children for future learning and provide exposure to multicultural activities to foster diversity.

Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center is governed by the Rend Lake College Foundation Board of Directors. The persons responsible for the Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center are:

- John Gulley, Vice President – Finance & Auxiliary Services, contact information extension 1216
- Corey Phillips, Director of Auxiliary Services, contact information extension 1337
- Christy Jean, Director of Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center, contact information extension 1393

Our Program

Classrooms

Four classrooms are available:

- Infant Classroom ----- Six (6) Weeks – Eighteen (18) Months
- Toddler Classroom ----- Eighteen (18) Months – Thirty (30) Months
- Preschool Classroom --- Thirty (30) Months – Five (5) Years
- Pre-K Classroom ----- Three (3) Years – Five (5) Years

The Pre-K Room is funded through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education. Children qualify for the Pre-K program based upon specific criteria (please see below). Children enrolled in the morning session Pre-K class will never be charged an enrollment fee and will never be asked to pay for and/or provide any supplies and/or materials. To meet DCFS accreditation standards, the Infant classroom is limited to occupancy of eight (8) children, the Toddler classroom is limited to occupancy of ten (10) children, and the Preschool and Pre-K classrooms are limited to occupancy of twenty (20) children each.

Pre-K Criteria:

- ISBE PFA Goal: Illinois' *neediest* children will be identified and served; these children are identified as at-risk for school failure.
- *Highest priority* at-risk children: homelessness, child welfare system involvement, poverty level, current IEP, documented disability, dual-language learner, parental drug abuse, generational illiteracy, domestic violence exposure, etc.
- PFA requires 80% percent of enrolled children to be *at-risk children*.
- Children have to turn three (3) years old prior to September 1 to enroll in a PFA program. **Only the most at-risk children can enroll if they turn three (3) after September 1** (homelessness, child welfare system involvement, poverty level, current IEP, documented disability, dual language learner, parental drug abuse, generational illiteracy, domestic violence exposure, etc.)

Program Study and Research

One of the primary goals of the Children's Center is to provide a training facility for the study of young children by students majoring in Early Childhood Education. Parents must grant permission for their child(ren) to be used in research activities, curriculum plans, and evaluations. These activities will all be under the direction of the Early Childhood instructors and the Children's Center Director. The Children's Center will not identify any child by name or distinguishable characteristics.

Collaboration with Community Partners

Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center plans to utilize the resources within our community throughout the school year in order to support our curriculum and educational resources. We plan to collaborate with the following members:

- Benton Illinois Fire Department
- Caregiver Connections
- Centerstone
- Dental Safari
- Franklin County Regional Office of Education for Hearing and Vision Screening
- Project Child-DHS Subsidy Quality Consultations and Consultations staff training
- Rend Lake College Learning Resource Children's Library
- SIECAT-Southern Illinois Early Childhood Action Team

Admissions Nondiscrimination Policy

The Children's Center is open to all families without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, disability, national origin, citizenship status, ancestry, age, order of protection status, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation including gender identity, arrest record status, military status, and unfavorable discharge from the military. The Children's Center is committed to making all reasonable accommodations to meet every child's needs.

Admission Policy

The Children's Center enrolls children on a priority basis. **The goal of the Center is to enroll at least seventy-five (75) percent of the children of Rend Lake College students.** The remaining twenty-five (25) percent are children from Rend Lake College staff and the community. This allows the Children's Center to remain open throughout the year. Children are enrolled according to the following criteria:

1. **Top priority** ----- Monday – Friday, full day
2. **Second priority** ----- Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
3. **Third priority** ----- Tuesday and Thursday

The Children's Center does not provide "drop off" child care services. Each family must choose the days their child(ren) will attend at the beginning of each semester. Any additional days needed for child care (providing there is room for your child(ren) to attend an additional day) must be pre-approved at least one week in advance by the Director. **Prior to enrollment families are encouraged to observe classrooms during hours of operation.** Completed applications with necessary paperwork must be on file prior to attendance. All contents of the child's file will be kept in the Director's office, accessible to administrators, teaching staff, the parent(s) or legal guardian(s), or regulatory entities. RLC students must provide the Center with a current school schedule at all times. A waiting list is maintained when the Center is full. Placement on the RLCF Children's Center wait list is not a guarantee of a reserved spot for your child. Only a parent or legal guardian is able to enroll a child, have parent and/or director meetings to discuss issues relating to the child, or to make decisions regarding the child. The Children's Center reserves the right to require documentation to prove legal guardianship and to keep this documentation in the child's file.

The Illinois Missing Children Records Act (325 ILCS 50) requires submission of a certified copy of a child's birth certificate upon thirty days of enrollment. The school will make a copy of the certified birth certificate and return the certified copy to the person enrolling the student. If a certified copy is not obtainable, the Missing Children Records Act allows provision of alternate identification (passport, visa, governmental identification), which must be determined acceptable by the Illinois State Police. If alternative identification is not available, the caseworker may also provide a signed and notarized affidavit explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. The Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center is required by law to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency if the parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) fails to submit proof of the child's identity within the thirty-day time frame.

Admission Procedure

The following is a step-by-step procedure for enrolling children in the center:

1. Pre-enrollment - request for care
2. Acceptance of child for care - including registration fee
3. Enrollment - preliminary paper work and forms-schedule, birth certificate, physical, shot record
4. Explore subsidy options
5. Receive remaining paperwork and parent handbook
6. Attend parent orientation meeting

Getting Started

Attendance

Please call if your child(ren) will not be attending on any scheduled day of care by 8:30 a.m. In order for your child to gain full benefits from the programming offered by the Center, it is expected that your child attend all scheduled days. **A child must attend 80% of their scheduled days in order to maintain their enrollment at the Center.** In addition, we expect a mandatory arrival time before 9:00 a.m. for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers and 8:30 a.m. for Pre-K. If your child drops below the mandatory 80% attendance rate, we may terminate their enrollment. If your child is not in attendance for three (3) consecutive days without prior notification given to the Center Director, we may terminate their enrollment. Once enrollment is terminated, your family is no longer eligible to attend the Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center. Families dismissed under this rule may petition for re-instatement by submitting a letter of appeal to the Director of RLCFCC and the Vice President of Finance & Auxiliary Services.

Please be advised that if for any reason, your child(ren) arrive to the Center after 8:45 a.m., breakfast will not be held for them as this disrupts the classroom activities.

If your child(ren) has an appointment that will delay their arrival time to the Children's Center after 10:00 a.m., your child(ren) will not be allowed to attend that day as this disrupts the classroom activities.

Screening

Your child will be screened at the following intervals:

- Upon enrollment (but no later than 2 months post enrolling)
- With the transition into each new classroom/age group
- At the beginning of each school year

You will be given a parent consent form to sign stating that you allow the RLCFCC staff to complete a developmental screening. The RLCFCC staff uses the Ages and Stages screening tool to evaluate the development of children to be performed by the child(ren)'s parents or legal guardians. Screenings will not identify or single out any cultural or religious beliefs and will not show any preference towards economic status.

Screenings will be conducted in the child's primary language. You will be given an opportunity to speak with the screener and discuss the results and any strategies that you wish to begin. If any warning indicators are found during the screening, your child's teacher will discuss with you the possibility of referring your child for other support services. There will be a release for the parent to sign giving permission to the teacher to call the local school district or Child and Family Connection. All screening results are kept confidential in each child's personal file, accessible only to the center Director and classroom teachers.

Hearing and Vision Screening

Each child aged three (3) years through five (5) years will be eligible to have their hearing and vision screened by the Hearing & Vision Specialist from the Franklin County of Regional Office of Education while attending RLCFCC. Prior to the screening, parents and/or legal guardians will be given a permission slip to sign and return which consents to have their child screened. The results will be shared with parents and/or legal guardians through written report. If further testing is needed, the Hearing & Vision Specialist will make the necessary referrals.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that child care providers not discriminate against persons with disabilities on the basis of disability and that children and parents with disabilities are provided an equal opportunity to participate in the child care center's programs and services. If a child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), our teachers will participate in the child's meetings by providing feedback, documentation, or any other information that would be helpful in creating the child's plan. The RLCFCC also invites any therapist into the Center and classrooms to carry out any needed services written into the IFSP or IEP. Our staff will support any necessary requests made by the plan for the classroom setting. The teaching staff will assist in helping the child and family make a successful transition from Early Intervention into the school setting when applicable by attending any transition meetings between Early Intervention and the local school district.

What to Bring and What to Wear

What to Bring

- a SMALL, cot-sized blanket for nap - **4 feet X 5 feet**
- a SMALL pillow that will fit in the top of a cubby - **12 X 12 inches (optional)**
- a couple extra sets of clothing—several if potty-training
- one soft "lovey" – stuffed animal for nap times (optional)
- a labeled toothbrush and labeled toothbrush cover with child's first and last name

What NOT to Bring

- TOYS OF ANY KIND
- Gum, candy, or food
- Sippy cups or drinks

- Backpacks (they take up too much room in the cubbies)
- CDs or DVDs unless authorized by teacher
- Electronic devices, cell phones, iPad, or gaming devices

Clothing

Parents are to provide an extra set of labeled clothing for their child(ren). Just a reminder: children will be actively exploring their environment; therefore, children should wear appropriate play clothes that they can get messy in. Shoes must be comfortable enough for children to participate in all activities, including outdoor play and walks. Flip flops are discouraged. Please choose close-toed shoes or shoes with a strap that goes around the heel of the foot.

Each child will be given a personal cubby to keep personal items in.

Every family will be required to take their child(ren's) blankets home every Friday to wash and return to the Center the next day their child(ren) will attend the Children's Center.

Infant and Toddler Diaper Policy

Parents are required to provide diapers, wipes, and diaper ointment for their child(ren). The teachers will let parents know when their child is running low on these items. After you have received two (2) days of notifications that your needs diapers, wipes, ointment, you will be charged \$1.00 per diaper change beginning the third day you are out of supplies or until you provide the needed items. When this occurs, we are forced to use the Center's supplies and this fee is necessary to maintain our Center diapers, wipes, ointment items. This charge will be added to your childcare tuition.

Outdoor Play

Children play outdoors daily unless weather is extremely severe. Children should wear appropriate outer clothing daily. During cold, snowy weather, the children should dress for outdoor play with a heavy jacket, hat, gloves, and boots. During hot weather, children should be in lightweight clothes with a hat and sunscreen. Children are encouraged to dress and undress themselves; therefore, keep this in mind when selecting jackets and other clothing. If you wish to have your child use sunscreen or bug spray, you will be asked to provide these items. When the children play outside the temperatures are between twenty-five (25) and ninety (90) degrees Fahrenheit (taking into consideration wind chill or heat index).

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Immunizations

Children are required to be up-to-date on all immunizations. Tuberculin (TB) and lead screening tests are also required by DCFS licensing. Parents must provide proof of immunizations before children may begin attending the Center. In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, children who are exempt from vaccination for reasons other than laboratory evidence of immunity may be excluded from school or child care until the risk period for exposure ends. Schools and child care centers should seek guidance from their local county health department before excluding exempted children.

Medication

Only prescription medications may be given to a child by the child's teacher or the center Director, provided the necessary forms are completed. (Most over the counter medications are weight based and potentially mask what could be serious symptoms.) Whenever possible, prescription medication should be given at home. In order to administer prescription medications, the child's licensed medical provider must give the child care center written permission for each separate medication to be kept in the child's file. The written permission must include the following;

- Specific name of the medication
- Dose of medication needed
- Times medication should be given
- Length of time the medication is to be given

- Purpose of the medication

A new permission form must be provided each semester for any medications needed as children's medicines are determined according to their weight and age. Medication should be in the original container, including the prescription labeled box, and clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. Staff members will receive training from the parent on how to appropriately administer medication or provide a medical service.

Sunscreen, bug repellent, diaper rash ointment, and toothpaste are considered non-prescription medication that do not require permission from a licensed health care provider, but a parent or guardian will have to authorize staff to use.

Children starting medication have to be on the medicine twenty-four hours before attending school.

Illness

Parents will be notified if their child becomes ill at the Center. The child will be isolated, with supervision, while waiting for the authorized designated person to arrive. The child's parent(s) must remove their child from the Center within fifteen (15) minutes after notification if a parent is on-campus or within thirty (30) minutes after notification if a parent is off campus. If a child is not picked up within thirty (30) minutes of notification, a \$5.00 late fee will be charged to the child's account. An additional fee of \$1.00 will be charged for every minute after the initial thirty (30) minutes. The payment of this late fee is expected to be paid within ten (10) days of the date the child became ill. In case of emergency, parents will be contacted immediately. If parents cannot be located, the child's medical provider will be contacted, appropriate first aid will be applied (according to the medical provider), and the child will be transferred to the hospital, if necessary.

The following indications, per DCFS, of illness may warrant the child's removal from the center:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit - fever should be normal for twenty-four (24) hours, Tylenol-free and/or Motrin - free BEFORE READMITTANCE
- Vomiting - symptom free for twenty-four (24) hours
- Diarrhea - symptom free for twenty-four (24) hours
- Runny, matted eyes (symptoms of conjunctivitis)
- Hacking Cough
- Rash
- Open Wounds
- **In the event that a health condition should persist for an extended period of time, the child may be asked to see their medical provider for a diagnosis.**
- **If at any time the child visits their medical provider's office, a note will be required stating a diagnosis or clearance to return.**

Additionally, parents should not send their child to the Center if their child shows any of the above symptoms. Please notify the child's Teacher or the Director if the child has been exposed to a contagious disease - strep throat, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, etc., as it needs to be posted for other parents. At the time of pickup, the parent will be required to complete the Illness Verification form that shows you understand the reasons for exclusion and states the time of day that the child may return to the Center. No exceptions can be made for attendance due to illness.

If the enrolled child's sibling(s) has any of the above symptoms, the enrolled child may not attend the Children's Center until the ill sibling(s) are symptom free.

If a child is experiencing any sickness or illness, the "Illness" policy shall be followed. In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 the Children's Center will consult and follow the latest mandates and policies set by Rend Lake College and DCFS Licensing to ensure families, children, and staff have the healthiest environment possible.

COVID-19 Guidelines for Exclusion of Children

- Any child sent home due to exhibiting two (2) or more symptoms, may return to the Children’s Center with a negative COVID-19 test or a medical provider’s clearance note.
- Any child who exhibits or has been in contact with any persons diagnosed with COVID-19, should be kept home or cleared through a negative COVID-19 test.
- Any child who tests positive for COVID-19 five (5) days out has to be fever and symptom free for twenty-four (24) hours to return to the Children’s Center on the sixth day.
- For a list of symptoms, please refer to the symptoms listed under the above “Illness” policy.
- Since enrolling your child into care at the RLCF Children’s Center is voluntary, Rend Lake College or the Rend Lake College Foundation Children’s Center cannot be held liable for any sickness or illness you, your child, or family develops or acquires.

Allergies/Medical Diagnosis

Children’s allergies will be posted in the classroom and the kitchen. This will inform all staff and visitors of the known allergy. We also request that any medical diagnosis be identified in the child’s file in case of needed emergency care.

Head Lice

Children with head lice, or nits are not allowed to attend the center during infestation. If head lice, or nits are discovered while the child is at the Center, the parent will be called and the child will be sent home. The child will be readmitted with proof of effective treatment (note from a medical provider, county health department, or licensed cosmetologist) and must be nit free. Children will be checked periodically at the Center for head lice.

Abuse

As outlined in the Abuse and Neglect Child Reporting Act, all teachers and staff must report suspected or known abuse, neglect, or injury of young children in the center.

Food Program

The Rend Lake College Foundation Children’s Center will participate in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Parents are required to maintain income verification forms. This information is critical to the Center for reimbursement from the food program. Our in-house cook will prepare and serve nutritious meals according to CACFP regulations and serving portions.

Meals

Breakfast is served each day at approximately 8:00 a.m. for infants, 8:20 a.m.; for toddlers and preschool, 8:20 a.m.; for pre-k, 8:30 a.m. Lunch is served each day at approximately 11:30 a.m. Once the cart has been returned to the kitchen, no meal will be served (approximately thirty (30) minutes after the meal has started). After the initial two (2) weeks of each semester, parents are encouraged to join their child for meals. Parents should let the Center Director know on the previous day if they want to eat with their child. An afternoon snack is also offered each day.

Menus

Menus are posted in the classrooms on a monthly basis. Dietary modifications are made for medical or cultural needs. If dietary modifications are based on a medical need, a form must be completed by the child's medical provider indicating that need. Menus are also available outside the Director’s office.

Family-Style Meals

Children will eat nutritious meals in a casual, modified-family-style environment. Conversation will be encouraged, and self-help skills will be promoted.

Breastfeeding

The Children's Center is committed to providing ongoing support to breastfeeding mothers. Sensitivity will be shown to those mothers and their babies. Breastfeeding mothers, including employees shall be provided a private and sanitary place to breastfeed or express milk. There are two options; the infant room has a glider rocker where a mother can sit comfortably in the corner of the room or in the Center break room which on most days is available from 7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Staff shall be trained in the proper storage and handling of breast milk, as well as ways to support mothers. Breastmilk must be labeled with child's full name and date the milk was expressed. Breast milk may be stored up to forty-eight hours in the refrigerator or up to two weeks in the freezer before discarding.

Holiday Celebrations

The Center will celebrate holidays and will also involve the children in seasonal celebrations. Birthdays may be celebrated at the Center. Please coordinate plans with your child's Lead Teacher. If parents wish to bring treats, food items and beverages must be prepackaged and unopened. Parents are encouraged to participate.

Emergency Plan

The Center will hold monthly fire drills and regular tornado drills. Records are maintained on the frequency of such drills. Children participate in the drills to become familiar with the specific procedures.

Weather-Related Closures

In situations where, inclement weather may affect the normal operation of the College or Center, parents should refer to one of the local radio or television stations for information. If the College is closed due to inclement weather, the Children's Center also will be closed. In the instance that the College opens late due to inclement weather, the Children's Center will open thirty (30) minutes prior to the opening of the College. Should the College close early due to inclement weather, the Children's Center will close thirty (30) minutes after the closing of the College. Parents may also find out about weather-related closures by calling the main College phone number (618-437-5321) and listening to the opening message or by signing up for RLC text alert system on www.rlc.edu.

When sirens are utilized during severe weather events, the Children's Center will be in a state of lockdown and will remain in a state of lockdown until the sirens end. While in this state of lockdown, no one may leave the building.

Injury Reports

If a child is injured, a staff member will perform the proper first-aid treatment. The RLCF Children's Center staff is trained in safety, pediatric first aid, and pediatric CPR. An Injury Report is filled out for all injuries occurring at the center. You will be asked to sign your child's injury reports. All reports will remain in the child's file.

Firearm Concealed Carry Policy

As indicated in the Act 430 ILCS 66/65(a) (15), concealed firearms may NOT be carried into "any building, classroom, laboratory, medical clinic, hospital, artistic venue, athletic venue, whether owner or leased, any real property, including parking areas, sidewalks, and common areas under the control of a public or private community college, or university with the following exceptions:

- On or about his/her person within a vehicle in the parking areas of College owned property. Firearms **WILL NOT BE ALLOWED** within vehicles in the parking areas which are **less than 125 yards from the Child Care Center** or any property where Rend Lake College is engaged in providing child care services or events."
- If you would like to see the full Firearm Concealed Carry Policy, please contact the office to request your copy.

Lead Testing in Drinking Water

Any child care center constructed on or before January 1, 2000 is subject to undergo water testing for lead in the drinking water by an IEPA-certified laboratory. All test results will be displayed in a visible location outside the Director's office. Once a reading a less than 2.01 ppb is found, further water testing would no longer be needed until changes in the

buildings water profile were made (i.e., changing the hot water heater, change in the water source, change to or replacement of the water service lines).

Daily Routines Pick-Up and Drop-Off

Children may not, under any circumstance, be dropped off outside the building. An adult must accompany each child to the classroom. When dropping off or picking up, please make sure that you have contacted your child’s teacher so they are aware another child is entering or leaving the classroom. Please do not leave your vehicle idling in the parking lot while you are dropping off or picking up. Please do not leave any child(ren) unsupervised in an unattended vehicle while dropping off or picking up a child from the Center. No child will be released to anyone other than their own parent(s), legal guardian(s) or authorized designated pick up person with permission from parents. A photo ID is required for initial pick up if a new authorized designated person is picking up. We reserve the right to ask for a photo ID at any time the staff feels it is necessary for identification purposes before releasing a child. Please keep your child’s file updated with any new or changed phone numbers so someone can be reached for emergencies or pickup.

Hours of Operation

The Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday and 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Friday during the academic school year. During the summer, the Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The Center is closed on Friday’s beginning the week after spring commencement ceremonies until the week prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

The Preschool for All (PFA) program hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday.

The center is closed on the following school holidays:

January	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	August	Staff Development Week
February	President’s Day Staff In-Service		Each Friday during summer hours
April	Good Friday	September	Labor Day
May	Memorial Day Each Friday during summer hours	October	Columbus Day Staff In-Service
June	Juneteenth Each Friday during summer hours	November	Veterans Day Thanksgiving Day and the day after
July	Independence Day Each Friday during summer hours	December	Christmas Vacation Week

The Children’s Center will provide advanced notice of any additional closings.

Curriculum

The curriculum follows the philosophy of the child development instructional program and the principles outlined in “The Creative Curriculum with Focus on Studies” manuals, which corresponds with all ECE students’ coursework. The curriculum is derived from the children’s interests about their world. Learning occurs through active exploration of the environment. The environment consists of both an indoor and an outdoor learning environment utilizing learning centers. Teachers assist in setting up interesting activities to promote the children’s natural curiosity. Problem solving is an integral part of daily activities. Teachers promote problem solving by asking children open-ended questions. Children also are encouraged to work together on studies in which they may conduct an in-depth investigation of a topic. Art and music are integrated throughout the day. The classroom is considered a part of the curriculum. Therefore, the materials are child-sized and offered for a variety of interests. Cool colors and natural woods provide an aesthetically pleasing classroom for both children and adults. A back-to-basics approach to the outdoor learning environment promotes creativity and play.

The following learning centers may be provided in the indoor and/or outdoor learning environment:
Art, Dramatic Play, Music, Sensory, Language Arts/books, Science Math/manipulative, Computer, Large Motor Blocks

Assessment

We believe that authentic, ongoing assessment of children is the key to planning appropriate early childhood learning experiences and helping all children succeed. Each child's growth and development will be tracked throughout the entire school year using on-line Teaching Strategies GOLD as a way to assist in planning curriculum, identifying children's needs/interests, to adapt teaching practices or learning environments, or to plan program improvements. Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) is fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the state early learning guidelines. Each staff member utilizing TSG has either completed a face to face in-depth training on how to use and interpret the data as well as how to conduct meaningful authentic assessment or has complete the TSG online training within the online program covering the same information. Assessment will be completed in the child's classroom by the child's familiar teacher throughout daily activities and interactions. Teachers document learning through the use of photographs, narratives, and anecdotal records as a means of ongoing evaluation of each child's progress. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice per year (fall and spring semesters). During these conferences, teachers review the child's growth from the previous semester and gives parents an opportunity to discuss any concerns as well as to set goals for the upcoming semester. Each parent is given a printed individual child report showing all documentation from the semester. All portfolios are kept confidential and are only assessable to the classroom teacher and Director. For more information about Teaching Strategies GOLD, please go to <https://teachingstrategies.com/>.

Daily Routine

An example of a typical day in the classrooms is as follows:

Infant Classroom:

Diapering - each hour and as needed

Feeding - As scheduled by parent or on demand

Sleeping - As scheduled by parent or on demand

7:30 - 8:00	Self-directed activities
8:00 - 8:30	Breakfast
8:30 - 9:00	Self-directed activities
9:00 - 10:00	Skills Development Room/Outdoor Learning
10:00 - 11:00	Self-directed/Teacher-directed activities
11:00 - 11:30	Lunch
11:30 - 1:30	Nap time tentatively
1:30 - 2:00	Self-directed activities
2:00 - 2:30	Snack time
2:30 - 5:00	Skills Development Room/Outdoor Learning/Self-directed Activities

Toddler Classroom:

7:30 - 8:10	Free play (all learning centers open)
8:10 - 8:40	Hand washing/Breakfast
8:40 - 9:00	Diapering/toileting/brushing teeth
9:00 - 10:00	Outside or Skills Development Room/Gross Motor/Walk
10:00 - 10:30	Art/cooking
10:30 - 11:10	Free Play (all learning centers open)
11:10 - 11:45	Hand washing/Lunch
11:45 - 12:00	Toileting/Quiet time on cots
12:00 - 2:30	Naptime
2:30 - 3:00	Diapering/Toileting

3:00 - 3:30	Snack
3:30 - 5:00	Free Play/Outdoor Learning Environment or Skills Development Room/Gross Motor

Preschool Classroom:

7:30 - 8:30	Indoor and outdoor learning centers
8:30 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:10	Hand washing, tooth brushing, potties
9:10 - 9:20	Morning meeting
9:20 - 11:00	Indoor and outdoor learning centers
11:00 - 11:05	Hand washing, potties
11:05 - 11:20	Circle time
11:20 - 11:50	Lunch
11:50 - 12:10	Potties, hand washing, reading on cots
12:10 - 2:50	Nap time, reading on cots
2:50 - 3:00	Reading on cots/in book center, potties, hand washing
3:00 - 3:20	Snack
3:20 - 3:30	Hand washing, potties
3:30 - 5:00	Indoor and outdoor learning centers

Pre-K Morning Program

7:30	Center Opens
8:00	Pre-K Begins (Skills Development Room)
8:20 - 8:30	Transition/Wash Hands
8:30 - 8:50	Breakfast Served
8:50 - 9:00	Group Circle Time
9:00 - 10:20	Learning Centers (Free Choice)
(9:30 - 10:00 a.m.)	Small Group Activity
10:20 - 10:30	Clean Up/Transition
10:30 - 11:20	Story Time in the Library on Mondays Outdoor Learning Environment/Outdoor Learning Centers (Free Choice) (*In the event of inclement weather, Gross Motor/ Movement Activities will take place within the building or Campus Gym)
11:20 - 11:30	Whole Group Activity (Wrap up -Language/Music/ Movement)
11:30	Pre-K Ends (All children in the PFA program who are not enrolled in the extended care afternoon program must be picked up at this time)

Extended Care Afternoon Program

11:30 - 11:50	Lunch Served
11:50 - 12:00	Story Read to Class
12:00 - 12:15	Transition to cots (Toileting)
12:15 - 2:15	Rest Time
2:15 - 2:30	Table Toys/Toileting (Free Choice)
2:30 - 2:45	Snack Served
2:45 - 3:45	Outdoor Learning Environment/Learning Centers (Free Choice)
3:45 - 4:45	Learning Centers (Free Choice)
4:45 - 5:00	Clean Up

Library Story Time

Each week, the Pre-K, Preschool, and Toddler classrooms will be going to the library for story time with our RLC Librarian. The children enjoy listening to stories, singing songs, checking out books for the classroom (they must stay in the classroom), and occasionally watching an educational video.

Transitions Enrolling at the Children's Center

Upon enrolling your child at the Children's Center, you will go through a parent orientation. The main orientation in August, that precedes the new the school year, is mandatory for all families. At this orientation, you will receive your child's enrollment packet, meet the teaching staff, visit your child's classroom, and have an opportunity to ask any questions you might have. If you enroll your child during the school year, you will meet individually with the Director to review the enrollment packet, take a tour of the Center, and have an opportunity to ask questions.

Disenrolling your child

If you choose to withdraw you child from the Children's Center, we ask that you give the Director a two (2) week notice. This will give the teachers and administration a chance to forward any information onto the next child care setting (i.e. physicals, immunization record, and birth certificate).

Classroom to classroom

Children moving into a new classroom will begin a transition period two (2) weeks before their scheduled start date in the new classroom. The transition period will begin with the child visiting the new classroom with their current teacher, if needed. The child will spend increasing amounts of time in the classroom during the two (2) weeks building up to a full day by the end of the two (2) weeks. Transitions will be conducted on an individual basis to meet the needs of each child after the child's current teaching staff have conferenced with the parents and/or legal guardians, and the teaching staff of the child's new classroom. Parents will be introduced to the classroom and provided with an information packet on the new classroom.

Into Kindergarten

Parents of children beginning Kindergarten the following school year will be asked to identify the school or school district their child will attend for Kindergarten. During the fall semester, the RLCFCC teacher will contact the home school district in order to align the Illinois Early Learning and Development Guidelines with the child's school districts Kindergarten readiness expectations. The RLCFCC teacher will then develop individualized learning goals for the child based on the child's current skills and Kindergarten readiness skills. The child's progress will be observed and documented in the child's portfolio on learning. At the end of the fall semester, the RLCFCC teacher and child's parents will meet to discuss the child's progress and future goals to prepare him/her for Kindergarten.

During the spring semester, the RLCFCC teacher will invite a local Kindergarten teacher to meet with the parents of the children entering Kindergarten. The guest Kindergarten teacher will provide information on the Kindergarten screening process and address any questions or concerns the parents may have. The RLCFCC teacher will provide the parents with the dates and times of the local school Kindergarten screenings as well as Kindergarten readiness literature, and will also assist with setting up a tour of the home school for the families upon request. The RLCFCC teacher will assist the children with the transition process through literature, discussions, and play opportunities in the classroom. At the end of the spring semester, the RLCFCC teacher and parents will meet again to review the child's completed portfolio on learning and to discuss any questions or concerns. RLCFCC teacher will then provide the parents with the child's portfolio on learning and make sure they have all the pertinent information for registering their child for Kindergarten upon exiting the Pre-K program.

Outside Play

The children in the center (infants through school-age) will be going outside at least once per day to enjoy our outdoor learning environment. The playground will be used, weather permitting. The outdoor temperature needs to be between

twenty-five (25) and ninety (90) degrees Fahrenheit, taking into consideration the wind chill and heat index. Please dress your child accordingly for outdoor play. Extra jackets, gloves, hats, and shoes are needed in the fall and winter time and extra clothes and shoes will be needed for spring and summer play.

Guidance

The Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center will use no form of physical punishment. The goal of guidance is to enable children to manage their own behavior. Problem-solving and negotiation skills are encouraged whereby children learn to manage the situation. Natural consequences also help children understand and take responsibility for their actions. Group meetings are another method used to discuss the situation and how others are affected by the action. If unacceptable behavior persists, the classroom teacher will observe the situation and determine a plan of action using behavior modification. A conference with the parents, teacher, and Director may be called in order to problem-solve any behavior issues.

Biting

Children in their first three years of age are in a developmental phase which is very oral. Biting, while not an acceptable behavior, is typical for toddlers and not unusual for two-year-olds and some preschoolers. Biting is upsetting for children, parents, and staff. The Center manages each circumstance in an appropriate manner that is consistent with accepted practices in the early childhood field.

Staff

The Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center staff consists of a director, lead teachers, assistant teachers, student workers, practicum students, Early Childhood Education instructors, and a cook. The director is responsible for the total operation of the Center, including record keeping, staff development, and supervision of staff. Each lead teacher is responsible for maintaining a developmentally appropriate classroom. Assistant teachers are responsible for assisting the lead teachers in maintaining a developmentally appropriate classroom. Student workers are Rend Lake College students who are employed to assist in the center. The Early Childhood Education instructors provide educational guidance to the teachers as well to the practicum students. The cook prepares and serves nutritious meals according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) regulations and serving portions.

Family Involvement

Newsletters

The staff of the Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center will provide a monthly newsletter to all parents of children in the center. Additionally, all classrooms will have daily written communication with parents.

Parent Involvement Activities

Parent activities will be held throughout the year. Some activities will be educational in nature, while others will be social events. Families are required to attend a minimum of two (2) parent trainings and two-family events throughout the year. Parent involvement activities are mandatory for families attending Pre-K. The Center staff is open to parent suggestions for speakers, issues, topics, or activities.

Advisory Council

Parents are invited to attend and participate in regular advisory council meetings. Parents are an important part of our Center. Parental input is important for the success of the Center.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent conferences are scheduled at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Conferences will also be available as needed or when requested by parent or teacher. Parent-teacher conferences are a required component for the Pre-K program; therefore, parents must attend.

Donations

Donations from parents are always appreciated. Teachers will provide a list of needed supplies for the infant room, the toddler room, and the preschool room that can be purchased or disposable items that can be brought from home. Children enrolled in the morning session pre-k class will never be asked to pay for and/or provide any supplies or materials. The following items are always needed.

Tissues	Plastic grocery bags
Toothpaste/Training Toothpaste	Sandwich zip-lock bags
Baby Wipes	Gallon zip-lock bags
Extra clothing, especially pants	Dixie Cups

Written Communication

All classroom teachers will send home or provide daily notes/newsflashes regarding each child's day. Daily activities are addressed in each individualized note.

Center Resources

The Center provides lending materials, books, and parent resources for child rearing issues for family support. Parents may also request specific materials as needed. Items may be checked out at the lending library. All items must be returned the next day the child attends school. If items are damaged or missing, the family will be responsible for replacing the damaged or lost item(s).

Observations/Visits

Parents are encouraged to visit or observe in their child's classroom any time throughout the day. Parents may also call the direct phone extension into their child's classroom and speak directly to the teacher. To reach the Infant room, dial extension 7626, Toddler room dial extension 7628, Preschool room dial extension 7629, and Pre-K room dial extension 7627. If a parent feels more comfortable viewing the classroom without their child seeing them, parents are welcome to observe through the one-way observation windows in the hallways. Extended family members, such as grandparents, siblings, and other relatives are also welcome to visit the classrooms when accompanied by the child's parent.

Classroom/Center Field Trips

In accordance with DCFS policies and recommendations regarding health and safety, preschool children shall attend two (2) on-site field trips a year.

Parent Grievance Policy

We always welcome your input and feedback toward the care of your child. The Director appreciates questions, or discussions of any kind that affect a positive outcome for your child. However, if you feel that there is a problem concerning the facility or a staff member, please follow the steps as listed:

1. Speak with the educator involved with your child.
2. Allow follow up from the educator to you.
3. If you are still not satisfied with the results of your concerns, please make an appointment to personally talk to the Director.

All comments made to staff members are relayed to the Director, so that the Director is aware of any problems or issues. If a complaint is made, the Director will listen carefully to the issue that the parent has, and will attempt to work with the parent(s) to rectify the problem. At this time, it may be appropriate to discuss any other issues that the Director may feel is important concerning the child in the context of the complaint.

Pest Management

Pest Management Policy

Definition of a pest: arthropods, (insects, spiders, mites, ticks, and related pests), wood infesting organisms such as fungi, mice, rats, nuisance birds and any other undesirable organisms, in, on or under structures, excluding bacteria and other microorganisms on or in humans or other living animals.

Pest Management Objectives

- Manage pests found on school sites to prevent interference with the learning environment
- Prevent injury to students, staff, and other occupants
- Preserve the integrity of school buildings or structures
- Prevent pests from spreading in the community or to plant and animal populations beyond the site
- Enhance the quality of life for students, staff and others

Record Keeping

A complete and accurate pest management log will be maintained for each room in the Center. Pesticide use records also will be maintained to keep a historical account of pesticide use. The District Facility will keep a log book including the following:

- Inspection sheet
- Pest surveillance data sheet
- Pest sighting forms and action taken

Notification

The facility takes the responsibility to notify parents, students, guardians, and school staff of upcoming pesticide treatments. Notifications will be posted two days prior to pesticide application.

Billing and Payments

Payment of Fees

This procedure applies to both student and non-student parents and/or legal guardians who have children enrolled in the Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center. The rate per day that will be charged to both student and non-student parents and/or legal guardians will be based upon the current DHS rates. Children will be enrolled only on a full-day basis with no allowances for partial days of care. This rate is subject to change with proper advance notification given. There will be no free days given to either student or non-student parents and/or legal guardians during the regular school year, with the exception of the allowed tuition exempt vacation. If a child is not in attendance on a day that the Rend Lake College Foundation Children's Center is open, the parent and/or legal guardian will still be required to pay for that day of care.

In the event the Children's Center closes at noon, the Extended Care Afternoon Program session will not be charged for that day.

Children enrolled in the Summer-Age Program will not be allowed tuition exempt vacation days.

Family Vacations

Each family enrolled in the center will be granted five (5) days for a tuition exempt vacation, that may be used consecutively or nonconsecutively.

Rates will be as follows (effective July 1, 2024):

<u>Classroom</u>	<u>Children Ages</u>	<u>Rate Charged Per Day</u>
Infant/Toddler	6 weeks – 23 months	\$47.00
Toddler/Preschool	24 months – 35 months	\$40.00
Preschool	3 years – 5 years	\$35.00
Pre-K	3 years – 5 years	\$18.00 (Extended Care)
Summer-Age	5 years – 12 years	\$35.00

If provided, the summer School-Age program is based on Center and staffing needs.

Payment is due on the first day of the child’s attendance schedule and prior to rendered child care services. If the family is attempting to apply for DHS Subsidy, the parent must provide either the DHS approval letter on the child’s first day of attendance or pay out of pocket until DHS approval has been established. All balances, including service charges, should be paid in full by the end of the current month. If a balance remains on the child’s account after the current month, enrollment may be suspended until all balances including service charges are paid in full, or terminated. If you are experiencing a hardship or need to extend payments past the current month, please contact the Center Director to setup a payment plan. You may pre-pay tuition fees if desired. The classroom teachers cannot accept payments. All copayments must be paid in full by the fifteenth of each month.

Rend Lake College students will have a hold placed on their RLC account which will stop all services (registering for classes, receiving grades, receiving transcripts, etc.) until their balance is paid in full.

The failure of any payment will result in suspended childcare services until payment is made. Past-due balances will be submitted to a debt recovery program, which may result in the garnishment of paychecks, tax refunds, lottery winnings, and other payments.

Personal payment(s) made in the form of cash, check, and/or money order will be accepted at the Center. Personal payment(s) made using a debit card or credit card will be accepted at the Business Office located in the Administration Building. Please be advised there is an additional processing fee when paying by debit card or credit card. Rend Lake College staff members may make personal payments by utilizing payroll deduction. Payment(s) are expected to be made at the beginning of the week on Monday before child care services are provided. If payment(s) have not been received by Friday of the same week, child care services may be suspended until payment(s) and any applicable late fee(s) are paid in full.

Before registering for the next semester of school, all outstanding balances must be paid in full.

Fees will automatically increase as necessary to correlate with DHS standards. A nonrefundable registration fee of \$50.00 will be collected at the time of pre-enrollment, with the exception of the morning Pre-K session. This nonrefundable registration fee will be credited towards future child care payments after the child has been in regular attendance for three (3) months.

Subsidies for Payment

A variety of subsidies are available for child-care services. The criterion for each program that subsidizes child-care varies. Therefore, the Center Director can assist parents in the process of exploring the various possibilities.

Parents are responsible for becoming familiar with the policies of the subsidies and meeting all financial obligations.

DHS has an 80% attendance policy which states that your child must be in attendance 80% of your enrolled days. If your child has excessive absenteeism, DHS will not cover those days and you are **required to pay for it out of pocket.**

Late Fee

Parents will be charged an initial late fee of \$5.00 if their child is picked up after closing. An additional fee of \$1.00 will be charged every minute thereafter. The payment of this late fee is to be paid within ten (10) days of the date the child was picked up after closing.

Picking up a child after closing hours

No child shall be picked up late more than two times. A child who is picked up late for the third time *may be terminated from enrollment* at the Children's Center. Although there are unexpected events in all our lives which do make us late, we will be unable to excuse any parent from this policy. In this way, all parents will be charged fairly and equally.

If your child is still present after the Center has closed, the staff will try to contact the parent(s) and any other approved persons listed on the authorized pick-up sheet. The Children's Center staff will attempt to call each person on the child's approved pick up list a minimum of three (3) times within the first ten (10) minutes after closing. If no one has been reached by thirty (30) minutes past the closing hour of the Center, the Children's Center staff will contact the Ina Illinois Police Department and will be forced to file an abandoned child report. The Ina Police Department will then take your child into custody and call the DCFS hotline to begin an abandoned child report.

We request that a current phone number be kept on file for all approved pick up persons so that an abandoned child report is not filed in error due to not having a correct phone number. The Children's Center staff acknowledges that we are responsible for the care and safety of your child until either an approved pick up person or an outside authority arrives. Children's Center staff will not hold the child responsible for the late pick up situation and will only discuss the issue with the parent or guardian and never with the child.

Moving on Withdrawal

At least two-weeks' notice of withdrawal is required to avoid a penalty fee. If two-weeks' notice has not been given, parents must pay a two-week tuition penalty fee and the child will not be given enrollment priority for following semesters. All personal belongings and clothing must be picked up within thirty days of withdrawal or the Children's Center will either donate the items or use the items as extras for the Center.

Dismissal from RLCF Children's Center

According to Public Act 100-0105, the following actions may be followed in the dismissal from the RLCF Children's Center; If a child is found in need of dismissal from RLCFCC, there shall be a planned transition to a setting that is better able to meet the child's needs.

Prior to dismissal, RLCFCC staff will;

- Document the steps taken to ensure that the child can participate safely in the program, including observations of challenging behaviors, strategies for remediation and intervention plans (including, but not limited to modifying the classroom or materials, changing the classroom schedule or environment, etc.), and communication with the parents or legal guardians in planning the decision making.
- RLCFCC will gain consent from the parent or legal guardian to request/complete developmental screenings, referrals to programs and services of local educational agency or early intervention agency, and consultation with a mental health consultant.
- If there is documented evidence that all available interventions recommended by a qualified professional have been exhausted, RLCFCC can make a professional judgement to transition the child to another program for the wellbeing of the child and their peers.
- A parent can voluntarily withdraw their child from RLCFCC by submitting a written statement with the reason for their decision to withdraw the child.

- Temporary removal of the child may be utilized when a serious safety threat to a child or others occurs. Temporary removal of a child shall trigger the process detailed in above sections.

Release of Personal Information

RLCF Children's Center must keep and maintain records as required by DCFS as well as various grants facilitated by RLCF Children's Center. RLCF Children's Center abides by all applicable laws and regulations with respect to the access and release of child records. RLCF Children's Center will not disclose any type of record or document containing child information on file without written parental consent. A parental consent form is utilized for parents and/or guardians who wish to authorize the release of child records to designated person(s) containing information regarding the following but not limited to; educational progress, behavioral traits, overall child development, enrollment status, financial records, child well-being, and attendance. Signed parental consent is also required and obtained for field trips, research activities, curriculum plans, and evaluations.

Teaching Pyramid Model

In our program, we have established the following program-wide expectations for all children and adults. All staff members teach all children about these expectations and link classroom rules to these core values. The expectations can also be taught at home and link to the rules that you might have for your child(ren) at home and in the community. We find that when we are all on the same page with our expectations, children are more able to understand and meet those expectations.

Our staff members use only positive methods of child guidance including natural and logical consequences, redirection, anticipation of and reduction of potential problems, and the encouragement of cooperative behavior. Staff members are prohibited from using corporal punishment or humiliating, threatening, frightening, or shame-based disciplinary techniques. All staff members receive training in developmentally appropriate and child guidance procedures, practical strategies to support the equity of response across all children, and are monitored on their implementation of those practices.

If children have behavior challenges that are a concern, we will contact the family so that we can work together to develop and implement a plan for teaching the child social and emotional skills and reduce the behavior challenges. We also encourage families to ask us their questions about appropriate child guidance techniques and seek our assistance if they have concerns about the child's social, emotional, or behavioral development.

If children engage in behavior that is harmful to themselves or to others, staff might remove the child from the activity or room until the child is calm and able to return to the classroom. If the behavior incident is dangerous or might be physically harmful, we will seek to conference with the family immediately with the goal of developing an effective approach to support the child. For some children, an evaluation, consultation with professionals outside the program, or additional services might be needed to ensure the child can be successfully supported in the program.

What is the Pyramid Model?

The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development.

What does it do?

The Pyramid Model provides developmental guidance to early childhood special education personnel, early intervention personnel, early educators, families, and other teaching professionals.

RLCFCC Pyramid Model Expectations

1. Be Kind – say please and thank you, take turns, etc.
2. Be Safe – follow playground rules, walk in the classroom, etc.
3. Be Healthy – wash hands, try new foods, etc.
4. Be Responsible – put away work, listen to the teacher, etc.

Family Resources www.ChallengingBehavior.org



Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook and Program Management Manual

I, _____, have read and understand the 2024-2025 Family Handbook and Program Management. I will follow the payment procedures of the Rend Lake College Foundation Children’s Center.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date