

# 2025 Staff Handbook

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## Children's Discovery & Learning Center LLC

### Welcome from the Directors

Welcome to the team at Children's Discovery & Learning Center LLC! We're Crystal and Ramon Augustus, your directors, and we're thrilled to have you join our mission to provide a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment for children from infancy to age 13. With Crystal's over 20 years of experience in early education and Ramon's deep commitment to our family's legacy in childcare, we're dedicated to fostering a supportive workplace where you can thrive while making a meaningful impact on young lives. This handbook is your guide to our policies, expectations, and values, ensuring compliance with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) requirements for nonpublic schools.

### Our Mission

At Children's Discovery & Learning Center, our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive. We partner with families to support each child's journey with love, structure, and purposeful learning, empowering their natural curiosity, creativity, and confidence.

### About Us

Children's Discovery & Learning Center LLC operates three locations:

- 35297 Home Estate Dr, Slidell, LA 70460
- 11637 Sherwood Forest Ct, Baton Rouge, LA 70816
- 2820 LA-311, Schriever, LA 70395

We offer programs for children from infancy to age 13, including infant care, Pre-K, before and after care, and summer camp. Our team is dedicated to excellence in early education, guided by warmth, structure, and flexibility, and in compliance with LDOE standards.

## Section 1: Employment Policies

### 1.1 Equal Opportunity Employment

We are an equal opportunity employer. Employment decisions are based on merit, qualifications, and abilities, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status. In compliance with LDOE policies and federal law, all opportunities are open to staff and students regardless of race.

## 1.2 Staff Qualifications (LDOE Compliance)

As a nonpublic school, we adhere to LDOE requirements for instructional staff (Bulletin 741, §303). All staff involved in teaching must meet one of the following criteria:

- Hold a valid Louisiana teaching certification for the courses you instruct.
- Qualify to teach in a nonpublic school per LDOE guidance.
- Obtain a one-year Nonpublic Temporary Teaching Authorization (NTTA) issued by the LDOE or a diocesan superintendent (if applicable).

If you do not currently meet these criteria, please speak with the directors to arrange for certification or authorization. This ensures we maintain eligibility for any state or federal funding.

## 1.3 Work Hours and Schedules (LDOE Compliance)

- Standard Hours: Full-time staff are expected to work 40 hours per week. Part-time schedules vary based on role and location.
- Operating Hours: Centers are open from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Staff may be scheduled for before and after care shifts.
- Instructional Day: Per LDOE requirements (Bulletin 741, §705), our Pre-K program operates a minimum of 180 days per year. Full-day programs provide at least 330 minutes of instruction (excluding recess, lunch, and planning periods), while half-day programs provide 165 minutes. Summer camp operates from June to August with flexible scheduling.
- Summer Camp: Additional hours may be required during June to August for summer camp programs.

## 1.4 Dress Code

- Staff must wear comfortable, professional attire suitable for working with children (e.g., closed-toe shoes, no ripped clothing).
- Name tags must be worn at all times during work hours.
- Themed attire may be required for special events or summer camp activities.

## 1.5 Attendance and Punctuality

- Staff are expected to arrive on time for their shifts. Notify your supervisor at least 24 hours in advance if you need to request time off.
- Excessive tardiness or unexcused absences may result in disciplinary action.

## 1.6 Confidentiality

All staff must maintain the confidentiality of children's and families' personal information, in compliance with state and federal laws. Do not share sensitive information outside the workplace, including on social media.

## 1.7 Leave Policies (Updated for 2025 Compliance)

We offer the following optional leave policies to support staff well-being, in line with Louisiana employment guidelines:

- Paid Sick Leave: Staff accrue up to 40 hours per year (for staff working 80+ hours annually) to use for personal or family health needs, effective October 1, 2025.
- Bereavement Leave: Up to 3 days of unpaid leave for the loss of a family member, with additional leave available for child loss due to homicide or suicide.
- Voting Leave: Up to 2 hours of unpaid leave to vote during elections, if requested in advance.

## Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

### 2.1 Lead Teachers

- Plan and implement age-appropriate curriculum for infant, toddler, or Pre-K classrooms, ensuring compliance with LDOE curriculum standards (Bulletin 741, §2109).
- Foster a safe, nurturing environment that supports children's development.
- Communicate regularly with parents about their child's progress.
- Supervise assistant teachers and ensure classroom safety, maintaining a maximum of 35 students per class (Bulletin 741, §707), except for activity classes like physical education.

### 2.2 Assistant Teachers

- Support lead teachers in daily activities and classroom management.
- Engage with children during play, meals, and learning activities.
- Assist with maintaining a clean and safe environment.

### 2.3 Summer Camp Counselors

- Lead theme-based activities, outdoor play, and educational projects during summer camp.
- Ensure the safety and engagement of children ages 5 to 13.
- Collaborate with other counselors to create a fun and memorable experience.

### 2.4 Administrative Assistants

- Manage enrollment, scheduling, and parent communications.
- Maintain accurate records, including registration, attendance, and health records for students, as required by LDOE (Bulletin 741, §505).
- Support the directors in daily operations.

## 2.5 General Expectations

- Treat all children, families, and colleagues with respect and kindness, avoiding any race-conscious practices in programming or interactions.
- Follow health and safety protocols, including proper hygiene and emergency procedures.
- Participate in staff training and professional development sessions to maintain compliance with LDOE standards.

## Section 3: Health and Safety

### 3.1 Illness Policy

- Staff must not come to work if they are experiencing symptoms of illness (e.g., fever, cough, vomiting).
- Notify your supervisor immediately if you are unable to work due to illness.
- Follow state guidelines for communicable diseases, including reporting requirements, as mandated by the LDOE.

### 3.2 Emergency Procedures

- Familiarize yourself with the emergency evacuation plan for your location.
- Participate in regular fire drills and safety training.
- In case of an emergency, prioritize the safety of the children and follow the directors' instructions.

### 3.3 Child Safety

- Never leave children unattended. Maintain proper staff-to-child ratios at all times.
- Report any signs of abuse or neglect to the directors immediately, in compliance with mandatory reporting laws.
- Ensure all toys, equipment, and facilities are safe and in good condition.

### 3.4 Student Records (LDOE Compliance)

- Maintain accurate registration, attendance, and health records for all students, from pre-kindergarten to age 13, as required by LDOE (Bulletin 741, §505).
- Keep a permanent record of each student's individual data and academic progress.
- If the center closes, provide an up-to-date copy of the student record to the parent or receiving school upon request.

### 3.5 Seclusion and Restraint (LDOE Compliance)

Per Bulletin 1508 and Bulletin 1706, seclusion and restraint measures should only be used as a last resort for students with disabilities:

- Seclusion: Used only when a student poses an immediate risk to self or others, and only in a designated, safe space. Must be reported to the LDOE within 24 hours.
- Physical Restraint: Use of bodily force to limit movement, employed only when a student poses an immediate risk. Must be reported to the LDOE.
- Mechanical Restraint: Prohibited, except for protective devices prescribed by a licensed health care provider.

All staff must be trained annually on seclusion and restraint procedures. Written guidelines are available upon request.

## Section 4: Professional Conduct

### 4.1 Communication

Maintain open and respectful communication with parents, colleagues, and supervisors. Address concerns or conflicts directly with the directors.

### 4.2 Social Media Policy

- Do not post photos or videos of children on personal social media accounts.
- Refrain from discussing work-related matters on public platforms.

### 4.3 Disciplinary Action

Violations of policies, including tardiness, confidentiality breaches, or unprofessional behavior, may result in verbal warnings, written warnings, or termination, depending on the severity.

## Section 5: Benefits and Support

### 5.1 Professional Development

We provide ongoing training and opportunities for professional growth, including workshops and certification courses to help you meet LDOE requirements (e.g., CDA, NTTA). Staff are encouraged to pursue additional credentials, such as the Child Development Associate (CDA).

### 5.2 Supportive Environment

We foster a collaborative and supportive workplace where your contributions are valued. Regular staff meetings offer opportunities to share ideas and feedback.

### **5.3 Employee Assistance**

Should you encounter workplace challenges or personal concerns affecting your work, please contact the directors for support.

### **Contact Information**

For questions or concerns, please reach out to:

- Directors: Crystal and Ramon Augustus
- Email: [childrendiscoverylearning@gmail.com](mailto:childrendiscoverylearning@gmail.com)
- Phone: 985-710-5145
- Locations:
  - 35297 Home Estate Dr, Slidell, LA 70460
  - 11637 Sherwood Forest Ct, Baton Rouge, LA 70816
  - 2820 LA-311, Schriever, LA 70395

This handbook is subject to updates as needed. You will be notified of any changes.