



# The Lotus Center School

18215 Paulson Dr  
Port Charlotte, FL 33950

## HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

**Please sign the last page of the handbook as acknowledgement of receipt of policies and procedures and return to The Lotus Center the first day of school.**

### Mission Statement

It is the mission of The Lotus Center to provide an individualized, evidence-based education to all students, training and support for their families, and dissemination of best practices to the community.

---

### Students

The Lotus Center currently accepts students in grades K thru 8, with enrollment continuing to 12<sup>th</sup> grade for current students. The school accepts students of varying exceptionalities and as such we strive to ensure a well-rounded, complete educational experience for all our students. Our goal is to ensure we meet the educational needs for all students enrolled, as well as provide a self-welcoming atmosphere to all. Student files will be reviewed thoroughly before acceptance into the school to make sure we are a mutual fit. As part of the evaluation parent and/or student interview, academic assessment, and behavioral observations may take place. Students may be enrolled for a 30 day “trial period” as part of the evaluation process.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

The Lotus Center admits students of any race, color, national, or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to its students. It does not discriminate on the basis of a student's or prospective student's family's race, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, political beliefs, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, and other school-administered programs.

### School Year

The Lotus Center follows a school year loosely based on Sarasota and Charlotte County School Calendars. At the beginning of the school year, parents will receive a Lotus Center school calendar, which includes a schedule of events throughout the upcoming year. We recommend reviewing this so that you may plan your home or work schedules accordingly. This calendar may be modified or updated throughout the year, and changes will be communicated via periodic notices.

### Attendance

Students are expected to be on time and in school for the whole day. Arrival time is from 8:30-8:45. Please make every attempt to arrive during this time so as not to disrupt the learning of other students. In the case

where a student need be absent, the parent should call the school to notify that the student will not be attending that day. Parents must contact the school within 24 hours of the absence or appropriate documentation is required. If this contact is not made, the absence will be recorded as unexcused. If a student is continually sick and repeatedly absent from school, he or she must be under the supervision of a physician in order to be excused from attendance. *Excessive non-excused absences can adversely affect your student's McKay Scholarship eligibility.*

---

An absence can be excused for the following reasons:

1. Student is ill or injured.
2. Major illness or death in student's immediate family (this means parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, or others living in the home or who are close relatives).
3. Religious instruction in family's faith. This requires a note from a parent before the absence.
4. A documented appointment with a doctor or dentist.
5. An occurrence of contagious diseases including head lice, chicken pox, pink eye, etc.

#### **Required Health Forms**

**I. Florida Immunization Certification Forms #680 (part A, B, or C) #3040 (physical exam) and 684 - To be obtained by your doctor or pediatrician. Form # 681 is also acceptable.**

**MUST** be obtained by pediatrician, family doctor, or Florida Health Department. We will not accept out of state immunization forms. They must be transcribed to a Florida form by the Florida Health Department or by a local doctor or pediatrician.

**II. Florida Physical - To be obtained by your doctor or pediatrician**

**MUST** be obtained by pediatrician, family doctor or Florida Health Department. We will not accept out of state physicals. Please bring completed form with you the first day of school.

**III. Medication Authorization - To be completed by your doctor or pediatrician**

***Mandatory only if your child needs prescription medication.*** If your child needs to receive prescription medication during school hours, please note that this form will need to be filled out by both parent and physician and returned to the School. All prescription medication must be brought in by the parent/guardian in its original prescription bottle, given to and signed in officially by Tara Cortopassi. This is a Florida Health Department regulation and allows the Lotus Center to legally administer prescription medications to your child. Prescription medications cannot be transported to or from school by the student.

## **Policies and Procedures**

These procedures are in place to ensure proper functioning of the school.

1. **Emergency Situation Plans**

In the event of a power outage, loss of heat, or loss of water, which may impact the safety requirements of the Lotus Center, the school will close and parents (or other emergency contact) will be called to pick up the children.

Parents will receive information concerning a contingency plan in the event of a natural disaster or other situation which may necessitate the evacuation of the building.

2. **Extreme Weather**

Extreme weather conditions may force cancellation of scheduled school sessions. The Lotus Center will always close when the Sarasota County public schools close for reasons of inclement weather. If Sarasota County public schools have a morning delay, then The Lotus Center morning sessions will be cancelled but the afternoon sessions will be held. Additionally, The Lotus Center may close for inclement weather when the Sarasota Public schools remain open. The Lotus Center will leave an announcement of school closings on our telephone answering machine by 7:00 A.M.

3. **Tuition**

We appreciate prompt payment of tuition fees.

**Application Fee**

\$300 - New students only. Due with application.

**Tuition Fees**

See enclosed fee schedule. Tuition rates are subject to change each calendar year.

Any tuition not covered by the student's McKay scholarship will be billed in quarterly installments beginning September 2. Should student enroll after the first quarter, tuition will be prorated accordingly.

4. **Late Fees**

Payment is due within 30 days of receipt of quarterly statement and is considered late on the 31<sup>st</sup> day, after which a \$25 late fee will apply

5. **Exceptional Circumstances**

If unforeseen circumstances make payment on schedule difficult, the parents involved are urged to contact the school director before payment delinquencies occur. A mutually acceptable alternate payment schedule may then be arranged.

6. **Payments**

Please make checks payable to The Lotus Center for Autism, Inc. Credit cards are accepted with an additional card reader service charge as per service agreement (please check with administration for current service fees).

A penalty of \$35 will be charged for each check returned for insufficient funds.

7. **Parent Concerns**

Any questions or concerns should be resolved with your child's teacher. Upon request, teachers will schedule a private conference with parents who would like to discuss an issue concerning their child. If the matter is not resolved to the parents' satisfaction in such a conference, the parents should then request a meeting with the teacher and Tara Cortopassi,

School Administrator

Any matters remaining unresolved at this stage will be referred to the Board of Directors.

8. **Pick-up procedure:**

We will only release children to persons previously designated by their parents. A person may be so designated either on the appropriate form at the beginning of the school year, or in a letter, signed by the parent, on the day of pickup. When someone other than a parent or other previously authorized person is sent to pick up a child, that person must be listed on your emergency contact form and show a valid ID.

9. **Non-Smoking Policy:**

The Lotus Center observes a non-smoking environment within the school building and on school property.

10. **School Illness Policy and Procedures**

It is the school's responsibility to protect all children and staff from contagious disease. If your child has a fever of 100 degrees or above or a symptom of an infectious, contagious disease you will be called to pick them up from school. We ask that you pick your child up from school within 30 minutes of staff calling. If your child has a fever above 103 degrees, is severely ill or injured, staff will immediately notify you as well as emergency personnel.

11. **Duty to report/Ethical Conduct**

All staff have a duty to report mistreatment or abuse of children. If these conditions are suspected it staff duty to report to Call or Report it online at:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>

All instructional personnel and administrators are required as a condition of employment to complete training on these standards of ethical conduct. Reporting Misconduct by Instructional Personnel and Administrators: All employees and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Examples of misconduct include obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating or testing violations, physical aggression, and accepting or offering favors. Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to \_\_\_\_\_ Tara Cortopassi, Director \_\_\_\_\_.

Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to \_\_\_\_\_ Tara Cortopassi, Director \_\_\_\_\_.

Legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by Florida certified educators will be reported to the Office of Professional Practices Services. Policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student are posted in and on handbook and posted at the school at 18215 Paulson Dr. Port Charlotte, FL 33948\_\_\_\_\_. Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment or Neglect All employees and agents have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Call 1-800-96-ABUSE or report online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>. Signs of Physical Abuse: The child may have unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries; broken bones; or burns. A child experiencing physical abuse may seem withdrawn or depressed, seem afraid to go home or may run away, shy away from physical contact, be aggressive, or wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries. Signs of Sexual Abuse: The child may have torn, stained or bloody underwear, trouble walking or

sitting, pain or itching in genital area, or a sexually transmitted disease. A child experiencing sexual abuse may have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively, fear a particular person, seem withdrawn or depressed, gain or lose weight suddenly, shy away from physical contact, or run away from home. Signs of Neglect: The child may have unattended medical needs, little or no supervision at home, poor hygiene, or appear underweight. A child experiencing neglect may be frequently tired or hungry, steal food, or appear overly needy for adult attention. Patterns of Abuse: Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported. Liability Protections Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by law, or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the department or any law enforcement agency, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability which might otherwise result by reason of such action. (F.S. 39.203) An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under F.S. Chapter 760. (F.S. 768.095)

12. **Toileting**

Due to facility requirements, The Lotus Center is unable to admit children who have not been at least trip trained or are wearing pull ups. This policy may be reviewed on a case by case basis. Assistance with self-help skills will be provided and independence in these areas taught as necessary.

13. **Meals and Snacks**

Students must bring their own lunches, drinks (including water daily), snacks, and any edible reinforcers the student may desire. **Please note: The Lotus Center is a nut-free zone, due to danger from severe allergies.**

14. **Standards of Ethical Conduct**

All of the Lotus Center staff are obliged to adhere to the ethical standards set for by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

15. **Before and After School Care**

Before school care is available (registration required) from 8:00 am to 8:40 am for a \$10/day charge, prepaid weekly. PLEASE NOTE: WE CAN ONLY PROVIDE THIS SERVICE IF A MINIMUM NUMBER OF FAMILIES SHOW INTEREST.

There are two options for after school care: a) behavioral child care at a rate of \$5/30 minutes of care, prepaid weekly (or \$50/day from 2-5pm after school care) or b)enrolled in 1:1 therapy accessing insurance funding, or private pay (see enclosed rates)

Late Pick-Up AFTER 2:20 PM: 1<sup>st</sup> occurrence: warning

2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence: \$5/ every 10 minute increment past designated pick up time

3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> occurrence: \$5/every 5 minute increment past designated pick up time.

Late pick up fees are due before next school day.

More than 5 occurrences per quarter may lead to dismissal. School administration reserves the right to waive late fees as necessary on a case by case basis.

**Parent Acknowledgement of Handbook Information**

*Please detach form after signing below and return to The Lotus Center For Autism, with your registration packet.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby acknowledge that I have read, accept and understand all pages of The Lotus Center School Handbook for Parents for the 2021-2022 school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name