



**Hill Country
Arts Academy**
OF CENTRAL TEXAS

OPERATIONS MANUAL

& PRE-K OVERVIEW

2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR



HCAA PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING

The HCAA Prekindergarten program is built upon the CLI Engage Circle curriculum, a research-based framework designed to foster early childhood development through exploration, play, and structured experiences. Our program emphasizes hands-on learning and center-based activities, ensuring that students engage actively with their environment while developing essential academic, social, and artistic skills.

LEARNING THROUGH CENTERS AND PLAY

- **Centers-Based Instruction:** Students rotate through interactive learning centers that focus on literacy, math, science, art, and dramatic play.
- **Experiential Learning:** Play is treated as a vital tool for discovery, problem-solving, and creativity.
- **Social Development:** Group activities encourage cooperation, communication, and respect for peers.
- **Artistic Expression:** Daily opportunities in music, movement, and visual arts nurture creativity and confidence.

TRANSITION TO LITERARY-BASED STRUCTURE

As students progress through the prekindergarten program, they are gradually introduced to the literary-based instructional model used in HCAA's upper grade levels. This transition ensures:

- Early exposure to structured literacy practices.
- Development of pre-reading and writing skills.
- A smooth academic bridge from experiential learning to more formalized instruction.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ELEMENTARY SUCCESS

The prekindergarten program is intentionally designed to prepare children for admission into HCAA's elementary program by cultivating:

- **Academic Readiness:** Foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving.
- **Social Readiness:** Independence, self-regulation, and positive peer interactions.
- **Artistic Readiness:** Confidence in creative expression and appreciation for the arts.

PROGRAM GOALS

- **Equip students** with the skills and maturity required for kindergarten and beyond.
- **Foster a love of learning** through joyful, engaging experiences.
- **Build a strong foundation** in academics, social-emotional development, and the arts.
- **Ensure students are prepared to thrive** within HCAA's elementary program and embody the Academy's values of creativity, respect, and community.

OPERATIONS FOR PREKINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

The Hill Country Arts Academy Operations Manual serves as the guiding document for the daily management, safety, and educational practices of our Academy. It provides clear policies and procedures to ensure that our programs operate with consistency, transparency, and compliance with all applicable state and local regulations.

MISSION STATEMENT

Hill Country Arts Academy is dedicated to fostering creativity, academic growth, and community engagement through arts centered education. We believe that every child deserves a safe, nurturing, and inspiring environment where they can explore their talents, develop essential skills, and thrive as confident learners.

SCOPE OF THE MANUAL

This manual applies to:

- All Academy staff, including administrators, teachers, and support personnel.
- Parents/guardians of enrolled children.
- Volunteers and community partners participating in Academy activities.

It outlines policies related to:

- Health and safety practices
- Curriculum and enrichment programming
- Parent rights and responsibilities
- Staff training and professional conduct
- Emergency preparedness and compliance with Texas Minimum Standards

GOALS OF THE MANUAL

- To ensure consistency in operations across all Academy programs.
- To provide clarity for staff, parents, and stakeholders regarding expectations and procedures.
- To maintain compliance with the Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers.
- To promote a culture of excellence, inclusivity, and accountability.

COMMITMENT TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY

Hill Country Arts Academy views this manual not only as a compliance document but also as a reflection of our values. We are committed to:

- , Building strong partnerships with families.
- Honoring diversity and inclusivity in all programs.
- Creating opportunities for children to connect their learning with community service and artistic expression.

HOURS, DAYS, AND MONTHS OF OPERATION

1. Regular School Day

- **Instructional Hours:** 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Students are expected to arrive promptly and be prepared for the academic day.
- Dismissal occurs at 4:00 p.m. unless enrolled in afterschool care.

2. Extended Care Services

- **Before School Care:** 6:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.
- **Afterschool Care:** 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- Extended care is supervised and provides structured enrichment activities.
- Families must register for extended care services in advance.

3. Calendar of Operation

- The Academy operates on a **year-round schedule** aligned with the instructional calendar.
- Closed on all Federal Holidays (e.g., New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas).

- **School Breaks:** During scheduled breaks (e.g., winter, spring, summer), academic classes will pause.
 - * Students requiring care during these periods will be provided with **alternate activities** such as arts enrichment, recreational play, and community building projects.
 - * Break care hours remain consistent with extended care services (6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.).

4. Parent Responsibilities

- Parents must ensure timely drop off and pick up within designated hours.
- Late pick ups beyond 6:00 p.m. may incur additional fees and will be documented.
- Families should consult the annual calendar for specific holiday closures and break schedules.
- Parents will purchase school uniforms via our school store at [Land's End](#) using code 900208547.

5. Staff Responsibilities

- Staff are expected to be present and prepared prior to the start of care hours.
- Supervisors will ensure adequate coverage during extended care and school breaks.
- All closures and schedule adjustments will be communicated to families in advance.

PROCEDURES FOR THE RELEASE OF CHILDREN

1. Purpose

To ensure the safe and orderly release of students at the end of the school day and during aftercare, Hill Country Arts Academy maintains structured procedures for dismissal and parent pick up.

2. Regular Dismissal (4:00 p.m.)

- **Primary Release Location:**
 - * Weather permitting, students will be released from the playground area.
 - * Parents/guardians must meet their child at the designated dismissal point.
- **Adverse Weather Conditions:**
 - * In cases of rain, extreme temperatures, or other unsafe conditions, students will be escorted by a teacher directly to the parent's vehicle.
 - * Staff will ensure each child is safely transferred before returning to supervise remaining students.

3. Aftercare Dismissal (4:30 – 6:00 p.m.)

- **Check Out Location:**
 - * Students enrolled in aftercare must be checked out from the **main office** starting at 4:30 p.m.

- **Check Out Procedure:**

- * Parents/guardians must sign out their child using the designated log or electronic system.
- * Only individuals listed on the child's authorized pick up form will be permitted to remove the child from care.
- * Staff will verify identification when necessary to ensure compliance with safety protocols.

4. Safety and Accountability

- Children will only be released to authorized adults as documented in enrollment records.
- Staff are responsible for maintaining supervision until each child is safely transferred.
- Any concerns regarding pick up authorization or custody arrangements must be reported immediately to administration.

5. Parent Responsibilities

- Parents must arrive promptly at dismissal times and follow designated procedures.
- Parents should notify the office in advance if someone other than the usual guardian will pick up the child.
- Late pick ups beyond 6:00 p.m. will be documented and may incur additional fees.

ILLNESS AND EXCLUSION POLICY

1. Purpose

To protect the health and safety of all students and staff, Hill Country Arts Academy follows the **Texas Administrative Code §97.7** and guidance from the **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)** regarding exclusion of children with communicable conditions.

2. General Exclusion Criteria

Children must be excluded from school when they exhibit any of the following:

- **Fever of 100°F or higher** (must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before return).
- **Vomiting or diarrhea** (exclude until symptom free for 24 hours without medication).
- **Rash** accompanied by fever or behavioral changes (return only with medical clearance).
- **Eye infection** (conjunctivitis) with discharge (return after treatment begins or physician clearance).
- **Persistent cough or breathing difficulty** that interferes with learning or may indicate contagious illness.
- Any condition that prevents participation in normal classroom activities or requires care beyond what staff can provide.

3. Specific Communicable Diseases

Children must be excluded according to the following disease specific criteria:

Condition	Exclusion Requirement	Readmission Criteria
Chickenpox (Varicella)	Exclude until all lesions are crusted	Typically 5–7 days after onset
Measles	Exclude for 4 days after rash onset	Physician clearance
Mumps	Exclude for 5 days after onset of swelling	Symptom resolution
COVID-19	Exclude per current CDC/DSHS guidance	Completion of isolation + symptom free
Influenza	Exclude until fever free for 24 hours	No fever reducing medication
Strep throat / Scarlet fever	Exclude until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins	Proof of treatment
Hepatitis A	Exclude for 1 week after onset of illness	Physician clearance
Bacterial meningitis	Exclude until physician clearance	Written documentation required

4. Readmission Requirements

- Child must meet **state-defined criteria** for return.
- Documentation from a licensed **healthcare provider** may be required.
- Parent/guardian must confirm that the child is symptom free and able to participate in normal activities.

5. Staff Responsibilities

- Monitor for signs of illness during the school day.
- Notify parents immediately when exclusion criteria are met.
- Maintain confidentiality while ensuring compliance with state health regulations.
- Document exclusions and readmissions in the student’s health record.

6. References

- **Texas Administrative Code §97.7 – Communicable Diseases**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child Care Centers**

MEDICATION DISPENSING POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To ensure the safe administration of medication to children in compliance with **Texas Minimum Standards (26 TAC §746.3801–§746.3809)**, Hill Country Arts Academy requires written parental authorization and strict adherence to dispensing procedures.

2. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- **Authorization Required:**
 - * No medication will be administered without a completed **Medication Authorization Form** signed by the parent/guardian.
- **Original Container:**
 - * Medication must be provided in the original container labeled with the child's name, dosage instructions, and expiration date.
- **Prescription Medications:**
 - * Must include the pharmacy label with the child's name, prescribing physician, dosage, and instructions.
- **Over the Counter Medications:**
 - * Must be age appropriate and accompanied by written parental instructions consistent with the label directions.
- **Long Term and Life Saving Medications:**
 - * Any long term prescription medication (e.g., daily asthma inhalers, seizure medications) and any life saving medication (e.g., epinephrine auto injectors, rescue inhalers) must have a Medical Authorization Form completed and signed by both the parent/guardian and the child's physician.
- **Storage:**
 - * All medications will be stored in a locked cabinet or refrigerator (if required) and kept out of children's reach.
- **Documentation:**
 - * Each administration will be recorded in the child's medication log, noting date, time, dosage, and staff initials.
- **Staff Training:**
 - * Only staff trained in medication procedures may dispense medication.
- **Emergency Medications:**
 - * Life saving medications will be kept accessible to staff but secured from children.

3. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Complete and sign the **Medication Authorization Form** prior to administration.
- For long term or life saving medications, ensure the **physician's signature** is included on the form.
- Provide medication in its original, labeled container.
- Update the Academy regarding any changes in dosage or discontinuation.
- Retrieve unused or expired medication promptly.

4. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- Verify authorization form and medication label before dispensing.
- Confirm physician authorization for long term and life saving medications.
- Administer medication exactly as prescribed or authorized.
- Record each administration in the medication log.
- Report any adverse reactions immediately to parents and administration.

6. REFERENCES

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746, Subchapter Q – Health Practices (§746.3801–§746.3809)**
- **Texas Health and Human Services – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**

MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

To ensure the safety and well being of all students, Hill Country Arts Academy follows the **Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers** in responding to medical emergencies. Staff are trained to act promptly, appropriately, and in compliance with state regulations.

2. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

- **Assess the Situation:**
 - * Quickly determine the nature and severity of the emergency.
 - * Ensure the child is in a safe environment away from further harm.

- **Provide First Aid:**
 - * Administer first aid or CPR as trained and appropriate.
 - * Use emergency medications (e.g., epinephrine, inhalers) according to the child's **Medical Action Plan** and physician authorization.
- **Call 911:**
 - * For any life threatening emergency or if the child requires immediate medical attention.
 - * Provide clear information: child's condition, location, and actions taken.

3. PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTIFICATION

- Contact the parent/guardian immediately after emergency services are called.
- If parents cannot be reached, notify the **alternate emergency contact** listed in the child's records.
- Provide updates on the child's condition and the steps taken.

4. DOCUMENTATION

- Complete an **Incident/Accident Report** immediately following the emergency.
- Record:
 - * Date, time, and location of the incident.
 - * Description of the child's symptoms and actions taken.
 - * Names of staff involved and emergency responders.
 - * Notification details (parent/guardian contact time and method).
- File the report in the child's health record and submit to administration.

5. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Training:** All staff must maintain current certification in **CPR and First Aid**.
- **Preparedness:** Staff must know the location of first aid kits, emergency medications, and emergency contact information.
- **Supervision:** One staff member remains with the child while another manages communication and documentation.
- **Follow Up:** Staff will monitor the child's recovery and provide support upon return.

6. EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

- First aid kits must be fully stocked and accessible in classrooms, playgrounds, and common areas.
- Emergency medications must be stored securely but accessible to trained staff.

7. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746, Subchapter R – Emergencies (§746.3601–§746.3607)**
- **Texas Health and Human Services – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

- To maintain transparency and ensure the safety and well being of students, Hill Country Arts Academy follows structured procedures for notifying parents/guardians of incidents, emergencies, and important information, in compliance with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**.

2. TYPES OF NOTIFICATIONS

- **Medical Emergencies:** Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately after emergency services are called.
- **Illness:** Parents/guardians will be notified promptly if a child meets exclusion criteria (fever, vomiting, communicable disease symptoms).
- **Accidents/Incidents:**
 - * Major incidents (requiring medical care or emergency response) will be reported immediately.
 - * Minor incidents (scrapes, bumps, behavioral redirections) will be documented in the Minor Incident Log or Daily Summary Sheet and communicated at pick up.
- **Behavioral Concerns:** Parents/guardians will be notified of significant behavioral issues that disrupt learning or safety.
- **General Notifications:** Policy changes, closures, or schedule adjustments will be communicated in advance via email, posted notices, or newsletters.

3. METHODS OF NOTIFICATION

- **Immediate/Emergency Contact:** Phone call to parent/guardian or alternate emergency contact.
- **Written Documentation:** Incident/Accident Report Form or Minor Incident Log provided to parents for signature.
- **Daily Communication:** Notes, emails, or in person updates at pick up.
- **Mass Communication:** Email, text alerts, or posted notices for school wide updates.

4. DOCUMENTATION

- All notifications must be documented in the child's record.
- Incident/Accident Reports and Minor Incident Logs require parent/guardian signatures acknowledging receipt.
- Copies of reports are filed with administration for compliance and review.

5. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure timely and accurate communication with parents/guardians.
- Use professional, respectful language in all notifications.
- Maintain confidentiality while providing necessary details.
- Report any concerns about custody or authorization immediately to administration.

6. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Keep emergency contact information current and accurate.
- Respond promptly to notifications, especially in cases requiring child pick up.
- Review and sign all incident documentation provided by staff.

7. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**
- **Subchapter R – Emergencies and Notifications**

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

HILL COUNTRY ARTS ACADEMY – OPERATIONAL POLICIES MANUAL

Based on Texas Minimum Standards, Subchapter L (26 TAC §746.2803–§746.2807)

1. PURPOSE

This policy ensures that all discipline and guidance practices at Hill Country Arts Academy comply with the Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746, Subchapter L. Our goal is to foster a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for children ages 3 and above.

2. ACCEPTABLE METHODS OF DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE (§746.2803)

Caregivers may use only **positive, constructive, and age appropriate methods**, including:

- Praise and encouragement of good behavior.
- Redirection to appropriate activities.
- Anticipation and prevention of potential problems.
- Logical and natural consequences tied directly to the child's actions.
- Brief supervised separation from the group (time out), limited to one minute per year of age.
- Clear communication of expectations and rules in a calm, respectful manner.

3. PROHIBITED PRACTICES (§746.2805)

The following are **strictly prohibited**:

- Corporal punishment (spanking, hitting, shaking, pinching, pulling hair, etc.).
- Humiliating, shaming, or ridiculing a child.
- Threatening, yelling, or using harsh or abusive language.
- Withholding food, naps, or bathroom privileges as punishment.
- Placing a child in a dark room, closet, or unsupervised area.
- Requiring physical exercise or restraint as punishment.
- Allowing one child to discipline another.
- Any practice that could cause physical or emotional harm.

4. EMPLOYEE CONDUCT (§746.2807)

- Employees may not discipline their own children while those children are in care at the center.
- All staff must model respectful behavior and adhere to this policy consistently.
- Violations of this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5. PARENT COMMUNICATION

- Parents will be informed of this policy upon enrollment.
- Any significant behavioral incidents will be documented and communicated to parents promptly.
- Collaboration with families is encouraged to ensure consistency between home and school guidance practices.

6. STAFF TRAINING

- All staff will receive training on positive discipline techniques during orientation.
- Annual refreshers will reinforce compliance with Subchapter L standards.
- Supervisors will monitor classrooms to ensure adherence.

7. REFERENCES

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746, Subchapter L – Discipline and Guidance**
- **Texas Health and Human Services – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Hill Country Arts Academy is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment. Suspension and expulsion are considered last resort measures and will only be implemented when necessary to protect the well being of students, staff, and the integrity of the program.

2. GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION

A student may be suspended for a defined period when:

- Behavior poses a risk to the safety of self, peers, or staff.

- Repeated disruptive conduct interferes with the learning environment despite prior interventions.
- Violation of Academy rules or policies after documented warnings.
- Pending investigation of serious incidents requiring administrative review.
- Suspension Procedures:
 - Parent/guardian will be notified immediately by phone and provided written documentation.
 - Duration of suspension will be determined by administration (typically 1–3 days).
 - A re-entry meeting with parent/guardian may be required before the student returns.

3. GROUNDS FOR EXPULSION

Expulsion may occur when:

- A student engages in **serious or repeated behavior** that endangers others or significantly disrupts the program.
- A parent/guardian fails to comply with Academy policies, including repeated late pick ups, non-payment of tuition, or refusal to cooperate with staff regarding behavioral plans.
- The Academy determines it cannot reasonably meet the child's needs within available resources.

Expulsion Procedures:

- Parent/guardian will receive written notice of expulsion, including the reason and effective date.
- A minimum of **two weeks' notice** will be provided unless immediate removal is necessary for safety.
- Documentation of incidents and interventions will be maintained in the student's record.

4. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE APPROACH

Before suspension or expulsion, the Academy will make reasonable efforts to:

- Use positive guidance and redirection.
- Implement individualized behavior plans.
- Collaborate with parents/guardians to support the child's success.
- Provide referrals to outside resources if appropriate.

5. PARENT COMMUNICATION

- Parents/guardians will be kept informed of behavioral concerns through conferences, written reports, and daily communication.
- Suspension or expulsion decisions will be documented and signed by administration.
- Parents/guardians may request a meeting to review the decision with the Director.

6. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- Best practices for child safety, fairness, and transparency in disciplinary procedures.
- Reinforce desired behaviors at home.
- Communicate with staff regarding strategies and progress.
- Attend scheduled conferences to review the plan.

MEAL AND FOOD SERVICE PRACTICES

1. PURPOSE

To promote student health and well being, Hill Country Arts Academy establishes meal and snack practices that comply with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers** while recognizing that parents are responsible for providing daily food items.

2. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Daily Provision:** Parents must provide **one lunch and two snacks** each day for their child.
- **Nutritional Balance:** Meals and snacks should follow basic nutritional guidelines, including:
 - * A protein source (meat, beans, cheese, yogurt, etc.)
 - * Fruits and/or vegetables
 - * Whole grains when possible
 - * Limited sugary items and beverages
- **Containers & Labeling:** All food must be sent in **labeled containers** with the child's name.
- **Food Safety:** Perishable items should be packed with ice packs or in insulated containers, as refrigeration is **not available**.

3. ACADEMY RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Supervision:** Staff will supervise all meal and snack times to ensure safety and appropriate behavior.
- **Environment:** Meals will be served in a clean, sanitary environment with proper handwashing before and after eating.

- **Microwave Use:** Microwaves will be available for heating food. Staff will assist children with reheating items to ensure safety.
- **Support:** Staff may assist younger children with opening containers or serving food, but will not provide food beyond what parents supply.

4. RESTRICTIONS

- The Academy does not provide lunch or snacks; parents are solely responsible.
- Food sharing between children is **not permitted** to protect against allergies and dietary restrictions.
- Staff will not prepare or cook meals beyond simple reheating in the microwave.

5. SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

- Parents must inform the Academy of any allergies, medical conditions, or dietary restrictions.
- A **Medical Action Plan** and physician authorization are required for children with food allergies requiring emergency medication (e.g., epinephrine).
- Staff will monitor and enforce restrictions to ensure safety.

6. HOLIDAY AND SPECIAL EVENTS

- On designated celebration days, parents may be asked to contribute food items.
- All contributions must comply with Academy guidelines and be store bought unless otherwise approved.

7. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers (Subchapter Q: Health Practices)**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Food Safety Guidelines**

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

1. PURPOSE

To protect the health of all students and staff, Hill Country Arts Academy complies with the Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Chapter 97, Subchapter B (§97.61–§97.72), which sets immunization requirements for child care facilities and schools.

2. GENERAL POLICY

- Evidence Required: Parents must provide official immunization records prior to enrollment.
- Compliance: Children must remain up to date with required vaccines according to their age.
- Exemptions: Medical and conscientious exemptions are permitted only with proper documentation as outlined by Texas law.

3. REQUIRED VACCINES (2025–2026 SCHOOL YEAR)

Vaccine	Minimum Doses Required	Notes
DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis)	4 doses	At least one dose on/after 4th birthday
Polio	3 doses	One dose on/after 4th birthday
Hepatitis B	3 doses	Required for all children
Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b)	3–4 doses	Booster required after 12 months
Pneumococcal (PCV13)	4 doses	Required through age 59 months
MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)	1 dose	On/after 12 months of age
Varicella (Chickenpox)	1 dose	On/after 12 months; documentation of disease acceptable
Hepatitis A	2 doses	First dose on/after 12 months; second dose \geq 6 months later

4. DOCUMENTATION

- Records must be signed or stamped by a physician, clinic, or public health authority.
- Electronic records from ImmTrac2 (Texas Immunization Registry) are acceptable.
- Parents must update records as new doses are administered.

5. NON-COMPLIANCE

- Children without proper documentation may not attend until records are provided.
- Temporary enrollment may be granted for up to 30 days while awaiting records, per Texas law.

6. REFERENCES

- [Texas DSHS 2025–2026 Minimum Vaccine Requirements Chart](#)
- [Texas Administrative Code §97.63 – Immunization Requirements in Child Care Facilities](#)
- [Texas School & Childcare Vaccine Requirements 2025–2026 Overview](#)

VISION AND HEARING SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

1. PURPOSE

To comply with the **Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36**, Hill Country Arts Academy ensures that all students receive timely vision and hearing screenings to identify potential issues and support early intervention.

2. SCREENING SCHEDULE

- Children must be screened for vision and hearing problems at the following times:
 - * Age 4 (by September 1)
 - * Kindergarten
 - * 1st grade
 - * 3rd grade
 - * 5th grade
 - * 7th grade
 - * Any first time enrollees between ages 4 and 12th grade

3. SCREENING PROCEDURES

- **Vision Screening:**
 - * Distance acuity for each eye must be recorded (e.g., 20/20, 20/30).
 - * Approved charts include the **Sloan Letter Chart** and **HOTV Matching Symbol Test**.
 - * Photo screening may be used for children through age 5 or those with disabilities.
- **Hearing Screening:**
 - * Pure tone audiometry at 25 dB for 1000, 2000, and 4000 Hz in each ear.
 - * Pass/fail documentation must be recorded.
- **Certification:** Screenings must be conducted by individuals certified through the **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**. Certification is valid for five years.

4. DOCUMENTATION

- Results must be recorded in the child's health record.
- Parents/guardians will be notified of any concerns and referred for follow up with a licensed healthcare provider.
- Records must be available for inspection by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

5. EXEMPTIONS

- Parents may request exemptions for medical or religious reasons by submitting a signed affidavit.
- Exemptions must be filed in accordance with Texas law.

6. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36 – Vision and Hearing Screening Program**
- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Chapter 97**
- Guidance from the **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES AND POLICY CHANGE NOTIFICATIONS

1. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

- **Application:** Parents/guardians must complete the Academy’s enrollment application and provide all required documentation, including immunization records, emergency contact information, and signed policy acknowledgments.
- **Registration Fee:** A non refundable registration fee must be paid at the time of enrollment to secure the child’s place.
- **Admission Requirements:** Enrollment is contingent upon:
 - * Completion of all required forms.
 - * Submission of current immunization records or exemption affidavits in compliance with Texas law.
 - * Payment of applicable fees.
- **Orientation:** Parents/guardians will receive an orientation packet outlining Academy policies, procedures, and expectations prior to the child’s first day.
- **Annual Renewal:** Enrollment must be renewed annually, with updated forms and records submitted before the start of each school year.

2. NOTIFICATION OF POLICY CHANGES

- **Advance Notice:** Parents/guardians will be notified of any changes to Academy policies at least two weeks prior to implementation, unless immediate changes are required by law or for safety reasons.
- **Methods of Notification:**
 - * Written notice distributed via email.
 - * Posted notice at the Academy’s main office and parent communication board.
 - * Updates included in newsletters or official Academy communications.
- **Acknowledgment:** Parents/guardians may be asked to sign an acknowledgment form confirming receipt of significant policy changes.
- **Emergency Changes:** In cases where immediate changes are required (e.g., compliance with updated Texas Minimum Standards or urgent safety concerns), parents will be notified as soon as possible by email and posted notice.

3. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Review all enrollment materials and policy updates carefully.
- Ensure that emergency contact and health information remain current throughout the year.
- Respond promptly to requests for updated documentation or acknowledgment of policy changes.

4. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services requirements for enrollment and parent communication**

TRANSPORTATION POLICY (UPDATED WITH BOOSTER SEAT REQUIREMENTS)

1. CURRENT STATUS

- **Transportation is not provided at this time.**
- Parents/guardians are responsible for arranging transportation to and from the Academy.

2. FUTURE AVAILABILITY

- If Academy provided transportation becomes available, parents/guardians will be notified in writing at least **two weeks prior to implementation.**
- Notification will be provided through email, posted notices at the Academy, and updates in parent communications.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- Only students **five years of age and older** will be eligible to use Academy transportation services.
- Proof of age will be verified through enrollment records.

4. BOOSTER SEAT REQUIREMENTS (TEXAS LAW)

- **Children younger than 8 years old** must be secured in a **child passenger safety seat system** (car seat or booster seat) while riding in Academy transportation.
- **Exception:** Children who are **taller than 4 feet 9 inches** may use the vehicle's seat belt without a booster seat.
- Booster seats must be used according to the **manufacturer's instructions** and installed properly in Academy vehicles.
- Staff will verify that each child is secured appropriately before departure.

5. SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE (WHEN TRANSPORTATION IS OFFERED)

- All transportation services will comply with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers** and applicable state and local regulations.
- Vehicles will be maintained in safe operating condition and inspected regularly.
- Drivers will meet all licensing and background check requirements.
- Safety procedures, including seat belt and booster seat use, will be enforced at all times.

6. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure children arrive and depart safely when transportation is not provided.
- Provide an appropriate booster seat if required by law and Academy policy.
- Review and sign transportation agreements if services become available.
- Communicate promptly with the Academy regarding changes in transportation arrangements.

7. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Transportation Code §545.412 – Child Passenger Safety Seat Systems**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Child Passenger Safety Law**
- **Texas Department of Transportation – Seat Belt and Car Seat Guidelines**

WATER ACTIVITIES POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To ensure the safety and well being of all students, Hill Country Arts Academy establishes clear procedures for participation in water activities. This policy complies with **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers (Subchapter R: Safety Practices)**.

2. DEFINITION OF WATER ACTIVITIES

Water activities include, but are not limited to:

- Splash pads, sprinklers, and water tables
- Kiddie pools or shallow basins
- Swimming pools
- Field trips involving lakes, rivers, or other natural bodies of water

3. PARENT CONSENT

- Written parental consent is required before a child may participate in any water activity.
- Consent forms must specify the type of activity (e.g., splash pad vs. swimming pool).
- Parents will be notified in advance of all scheduled water activities.

4. AGE AND SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

- Children must be supervised at all times during water activities.
- **Ratios:** Staff to child ratios must meet or exceed Texas Minimum Standards.
- At least one staff member present must hold current **CPR and First Aid certification**.
- For swimming pool activities, a **certified lifeguard** must be on duty.

5. SAFETY PROCEDURES

- Children must wear appropriate swimwear and water shoes when required.
- Sunscreen will be applied with parental consent before outdoor water activities.
- No child will be allowed near water without direct staff supervision.
- Safety equipment (e.g., flotation devices) must be used as appropriate.
- Staff will conduct head counts before, during, and after water activities.

6. RESTRICTIONS

- Children who are ill or recovering from illness may not participate in water activities.
- Diving, rough play, or unsafe behavior is strictly prohibited.

7. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- In case of an emergency, staff will follow the Academy's **Medical Emergency Procedures**.
- 911 will be called immediately if a child is in distress.
- Parents/guardians will be notified promptly.
- Incident reports will be completed and filed in accordance with Academy policy.

8. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Child Safety Guidelines**

FIELD TRIP POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Field trips are designed to enrich the educational experience by providing students with opportunities to explore community resources, cultural institutions, and natural environments. This policy ensures that all field trips are conducted safely, responsibly, and in compliance with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers (Subchapter R: Safety Practices)**.

2. PARENT CONSENT

- Written parental consent is required for each field trip.
- Consent forms will include the date, destination, transportation arrangements, and any associated costs.
- Children without signed consent forms will not be permitted to attend and will remain at the Academy.

3. PLANNING AND NOTIFICATION

- Parents/guardians will be notified at least **two weeks in advance** of scheduled field trips.
- Notices will include:
 - * Destination and educational purpose
 - * Departure and return times
 - * Transportation details
 - * Items children should bring (e.g., lunch, water bottle, sunscreen)
- Emergency contact information must be current and accessible during all trips.

4. SUPERVISION AND RATIOS

- Staff to child ratios will meet or exceed Texas Minimum Standards during field trips.
- Children will be supervised at all times, including during transportation, meals, and activities.
- Head counts will be conducted:
 - * Before departure
 - * Upon arrival
 - * At regular intervals during the trip
 - * Before returning to the Academy

5. TRANSPORTATION

- Transportation will comply with the Academy's **Transportation Policy**, including booster seat requirements under Texas law.
- Only students **five years and older** may be transported on Academy vehicles.
- Drivers must meet all licensing and background check requirements.

6. SAFETY PROCEDURES

- A first aid kit and emergency contact list will accompany all field trips.
- At least one staff member present must hold current **CPR and First Aid certification**.
- Children must wear Academy identification (e.g., lanyard, wristband, or shirt) for easy recognition.
- Staff will review safety rules with children prior to departure.

7. COSTS

- Parents may be responsible for admission fees, meals, or other costs associated with field trips.
- All costs will be communicated in writing prior to the trip.

8. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- In case of emergency, staff will follow the Academy's **Medical Emergency Procedures**.
- Parents/guardians will be notified promptly of any incidents.
- Incident reports will be completed and filed in accordance with Academy policy.

9. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Child Safety Guidelines**

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

1. PROMOTION OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Hill Country Arts Academy is committed to fostering healthy growth and development through daily opportunities for both indoor and outdoor physical activity. Our program emphasizes the importance of movement, play, and exercise as essential components of a child's educational experience.

- **a. Benefits of Physical Activity and Outdoor Play**
 - * Supports physical health, strength, and motor development.
 - * Enhances social skills through cooperative play and teamwork.
 - * Promotes emotional well being and stress relief.
 - * Encourages creativity, problem solving, and exploration.
 - * Provides exposure to fresh air and natural environments.
- **b. Duration of Physical Activity**
 - * **Indoor Physical Activity:** Minimum of **30 minutes daily**, integrated into classroom routines and enrichment programs.
 - * **Outdoor Physical Activity:** Minimum of **60 minutes daily**, divided into morning and afternoon sessions, weather permitting.
 - * Additional opportunities for movement are incorporated into transitions and special events.

- **c. Types of Physical Activity**
 - * **Structured Activities:** Teacher led games, dance, fitness routines, obstacle courses, and skill building exercises.
 - * **Unstructured Activities:** Free play, imaginative games, playground exploration, and child initiated movement.
- **d. Settings for Physical Activity**
 - * **Indoor:** Classrooms, multipurpose rooms, and designated indoor play areas.
 - * **Outdoor:** Playground, open field space, and shaded areas for group activities.
 - * **Special Programs:** Gymnasium or rented facilities for enrichment events.
- **e. Recommended Clothing and Footwear**
 - * Comfortable, weather appropriate clothing that allows free movement.
 - * Closed toe athletic shoes or sneakers (no flip flops, sandals, or dress shoes).
 - * Hats and sunscreen for outdoor play, with parental consent.
 - * Jackets or coats during cooler weather.
- **f. Criteria for Extreme Weather Conditions**
 - * Outdoor play will be prohibited or limited when:
 - * Temperatures exceed **100°F** or fall below **40°F**.
 - * Heat index or wind chill poses a health risk.
 - * Severe weather warnings are issued (thunderstorms, lightning, hail, tornado).
 - * Air quality alerts indicate unsafe conditions.
- **g. Plan for Physical Activity During Extreme Weather**
 - * When outdoor play is prohibited or limited:
 - » Indoor physical activities will be expanded to meet daily movement requirements.
 - » Options include dance parties, yoga, indoor obstacle courses, movement games, and stretching exercises.
 - » Teachers will integrate short activity breaks throughout the day to ensure children remain active.

2. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers (Subchapter R: Safety Practices)**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services – Child Health and Wellness Guidelines**

INSECT REPELLENT AND SUNSCREEN POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To protect children from sun exposure and insect bites during outdoor activities, Hill Country Arts Academy establishes procedures for the safe use and application of insect repellent and sunscreen, consistent with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers (Subchapter Q: Health Practices)**.

2. PARENT CONSENT

- Written parental consent is required before staff may apply insect repellent or sunscreen to a child.
- Consent forms must specify whether parents will provide the products or authorize Academy provided products.
- Parents may update consent at any time.

3. TYPES OF PRODUCTS USED

- **Sunscreen:** Broad spectrum, SPF 30 or higher, water resistant sunscreen.
- **Insect Repellent:** Repellents containing up to **30% DEET or picaridin**, as recommended by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**.
- Products must be age appropriate and used according to manufacturer instructions.
- Parents may provide alternative products if preferred, provided they are labeled with the child's name.

4. PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION

- Staff will wash hands before and after applying sunscreen or insect repellent.
- Sunscreen will be applied to exposed skin at least **15 minutes before outdoor activity**.
- Insect repellent will be applied to clothing and exposed skin as needed, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.
- Staff will assist children to ensure proper coverage.
- Products will not be shared between children.

5. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide labeled sunscreen and/or insect repellent if preferred.
- Inform staff of any allergies, sensitivities, or restrictions related to these products.
- Update consent forms annually or as needed.

6. SAFETY AND RESTRICTIONS

- Products will be stored safely and out of children's reach.
- Staff will follow manufacturer guidelines for reapplication.
- Staff will monitor children for any adverse reactions and notify parents immediately.

7. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines on insect repellent and sunscreen use**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for child safety**

PARENT RIGHTS

1. PURPOSE

Hill Country Arts Academy recognizes that parents/guardians are essential partners in the education and care of their children. This policy affirms parent rights consistent with the **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers.**

2. PARENT RIGHTS

Parents/guardians of enrolled children have the right to:

- **Access and Visitation**
 - * Visit the Academy at any time during operating hours without prior notice.
 - * Observe their child's classroom and activities.
- **Information and Communication**
 - * Receive clear, timely communication regarding Academy policies, procedures, and changes.

- * Be informed of their child’s progress, behavior, and any incidents or accidents.
- * Review menus, schedules, and activity plans.
- **Records and Documentation**
 - * Access their child’s records, including enrollment forms, incident reports, and health documentation.
 - * Request copies of Academy policies and procedures.
- **Safety and Care**
 - * Expect that their child will be cared for in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.
 - * Be notified promptly of any emergencies, illnesses, or injuries involving their child.
- **Participation and Consent**
 - * Provide or withhold consent for activities such as water play, field trips, sunscreen/insect repellent application, and photography.
 - * Participate in conferences and planning for their child’s educational and developmental needs.
- **Complaint Resolution**
 - * Express concerns or file complaints without fear of retaliation.
 - * Contact the **Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)** if concerns are not resolved at the Academy level.

3. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Alongside these rights, parents/guardians are responsible for:
- Keeping enrollment and emergency contact information current.
- Reviewing and acknowledging Academy policies.
- Supporting Academy staff in maintaining a safe and respectful environment.

4. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Health and Human Services Commission Parent Rights Guidelines**

PARENT REVIEW AND DISCUSSION PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

To ensure transparency, collaboration, and compliance with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**, Hill Country Arts Academy provides parents/guardians with clear procedures for reviewing and discussing policies and procedures with the Academy Director.

2. PARENT ACCESS

- Parents/guardians may request to review Academy policies and procedures at any time.
- Copies of the Operational Policies Manual are available in the Academy office and may be provided electronically upon request.
- Updates to policies will be communicated to parents in writing, and parents may request clarification from the Director.

3. SCHEDULING A DISCUSSION

- Parents/guardians may schedule a meeting with the Director by:
 - * Submitting a written request (email or paper form).
 - * Calling the Academy office during business hours.
- Meetings will be scheduled within **five business days** of the request, subject to availability.

4. DISCUSSION PROCEDURES

- The Director will meet with parents in a private, professional setting to discuss questions or concerns.
- Parents may bring documentation or examples to support their concerns.
- The Director will provide clarification, explain the rationale behind policies, and note any feedback for consideration.
- If immediate resolution is not possible, the Director will provide a timeline for follow up.

5. DOCUMENTATION

- A record of parent concerns and discussions will be maintained by the Director.
- Any agreed upon changes or clarifications will be documented and communicated to all families.

6. ESCALATION

- If concerns cannot be resolved at the Academy level, parents may contact the **Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)** for further review.
- Contact information for HHSC will be provided in the enrollment packet and posted in the Academy office.

7. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- Parent rights provisions established by the **Texas Health and Human Services Commission**

PARENT PARTICIPATION POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Hill Country Arts Academy values parents/guardians as partners in the educational process. This policy establishes procedures for parent participation in the Academy's operations and activities, consistent with **Texas Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**.

2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

Parents/guardians may participate in the Academy's operation and activities through:

- **Classroom Involvement:** Assisting with special projects, reading sessions, or enrichment activities.
- **Events and Celebrations:** Volunteering at performances, ceremonies, and seasonal events.
- **Field Trips:** Serving as chaperones, subject to background checks and Academy approval.
- **Service Projects:** Supporting community service initiatives organized by the Academy.
- **Committees:** Joining advisory groups or parent committees to provide input on programming and operations.

3. PROCEDURES FOR PARTICIPATION

- Parents must notify the Academy Director of their interest in participating.
- Participation requests should be submitted in writing (email or paper form) at least **two weeks in advance** of the activity.
- The Director will review requests to ensure alignment with Academy policies and safety standards.
- Approved participation will be scheduled and communicated to parents in writing.

4. REQUIREMENTS

- Parents must comply with Academy safety and confidentiality policies.
- Background checks may be required for participation in certain activities (e.g., field trips).
- Parents must follow staff instructions and maintain appropriate conduct while on campus or during Academy activities.

5. COMMUNICATION

- The Academy will notify parents of upcoming opportunities for participation through newsletters, email, and posted notices.
- Parents may request additional opportunities by contacting the Director.

6. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- Academy guidelines for parent engagement and volunteer participation

PARENT ACCESS TO STATE RESOURCES

1. PURPOSE

To ensure transparency and compliance with Texas law, Hill Country Arts Academy provides parents/guardians with instructions on how to access important state resources related to child care standards, child protection, and regulatory oversight.

2. ACCESSING MINIMUM STANDARDS ONLINE

- Parents may review the **Texas Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers** online at the **Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)** website.
- Direct link: [Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers](#)

3. TEXAS ABUSE AND NEGLECT HOTLINE

- Parents may report suspected child abuse or neglect by calling the **Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400**.
- Reports may also be filed online at [Texas Abuse Hotline](#).
- This hotline is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

4. HHSC WEBSITE

- Parents may access the **Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)** website for information on child care licensing, regulations, and consumer resources.
- Direct link: [Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#)
- The HHSC website provides:
 - * Licensing information for child care centers
 - * Consumer protection resources
 - * Updates on state regulations and standards

5. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Health and Human Services Commission guidelines**
- **Texas Family Code requirements for reporting child abuse and neglect**

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

1. PURPOSE

The Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and well being of all children, staff, and visitors. This Emergency Preparedness Plan establishes procedures for responding to natural disasters, medical emergencies, and other critical incidents in compliance with **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers (Subchapter R: Safety Practices)**.

2. TYPES OF EMERGENCIES COVERED

- Fire and Smoke Emergencies
- Severe Weather (tornado, hail, high winds, flooding)
- Medical Emergencies
- Utility Failures (power, water, gas)
- Hazardous Materials Exposure
- Intruder/Lockdown Situations
- Evacuation due to external threats (chemical spills, nearby incidents)

3. EVACUATION PROCEDURES

- Evacuation routes are posted in each classroom and common area.
- Staff will lead children to designated safe areas outside the building.
- Head counts will be conducted before, during, and after evacuation.
- Emergency contact information and attendance records will accompany staff.
- Parents will be notified of evacuation and reunification procedures.

4. SHELTER IN PLACE PROCEDURES

- Used during severe weather or external threats.
- Children will be moved to designated interior safe zones away from windows.
- Staff will maintain calm, provide activities, and monitor conditions.
- Emergency supplies (water, flashlights, first aid kits) are stored in each safe zone.

5. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- At least one staff member with current CPR and First Aid certification will be present at all times.
- Staff will administer first aid and call 911 if necessary.
- Parents/guardians will be notified immediately.
- Incident reports will be completed and filed.

6. COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

- Emergency notifications will be sent to parents via email and posted notices.
- Local emergency services (fire, police, EMS) will be contacted as needed.
- The Academy Director will serve as the primary point of contact.

7. TRAINING AND DRILLS

- Fire drills: **monthly**
- Severe weather drills: **quarterly**
- Lockdown drills: **twice annually**
- Staff training: Annual review of emergency procedures and responsibilities

8. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Keep emergency contact information current.
- Review Academy emergency procedures provided at enrollment.
- Follow reunification instructions during emergencies.

9. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Health and Human Services Commission Emergency Preparedness Guidelines**
- Local fire, police, and emergency management requirements

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN

1. PURPOSE

Hill Country Arts Academy is committed to protecting children from abuse and neglect. This policy establishes procedures for prevention, awareness, training, and response in compliance with the **Texas Family Code and Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746**.

2. REQUIRED ANNUAL TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES

- All employees must complete **annual training** on child abuse and neglect recognition, prevention, and reporting.
- Training will include:
 - * Definitions of abuse and neglect under Texas law.
 - * Recognizing warning signs and risk factors.
 - * Procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- Documentation of training completion will be maintained in personnel files.

3. INCREASING AWARENESS OF ISSUES

- **a. Employee Awareness**
 - * Staff will receive ongoing education on:

- » Warning signs that a child may be a victim (e.g., unexplained injuries, sudden changes in behavior, fear of adults).
- » Risk factors (e.g., family stress, domestic violence, substance abuse).
- * Staff meetings will include periodic reviews of child safety practices.
- **b. Parent Awareness**
 - * Parents will be provided with informational materials on child abuse and neglect.
 - * Resources will include warning signs, prevention strategies, and reporting procedures.
 - * Awareness will be reinforced through newsletters, parent meetings, and posted notices.

4. PREVENTION TECHNIQUES

- Staff will model positive guidance and nurturing interactions.
- Parents will be encouraged to use non violent discipline methods.
- The Academy will maintain open communication channels between staff and families.
- Safety policies (e.g., supervision ratios, secure environments) will reduce opportunities for harm.

5. COORDINATION WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- The Academy will collaborate with local agencies, including:
 - * **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)**
 - * Local law enforcement and child advocacy centers
 - * Community health and counseling services
- Partnerships will provide access to training, resources, and intervention support.

6. PARENT ACTIONS AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

- Parents who suspect their child is a victim of abuse or neglect should:
 - * Immediately contact the **Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400** or file a report online at www.txabusehotline.org.
 - * Notify the Academy Director, who will assist with documentation and support.
- The Academy is legally required to report suspected abuse or neglect to DFPS. Reports must be made within **48 hours** of suspicion.
- Confidentiality will be maintained, and retaliation against reporters is prohibited by law.

7. COMPLIANCE

- Texas Family Code, Chapter 261 – Investigation of Report of Child Abuse or Neglect
- Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services guidelines

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING CHECKS

1. PURPOSE

To ensure the safety, integrity, and compliance of Academy operations, Hill Country Arts Academy establishes procedures for conducting checks when required by law, regulation, or internal policy.

2. TYPES OF CHECKS

- Checks may include, but are not limited to:
 - * **Background Checks:** Criminal history and child abuse registry checks for employees and volunteers, as required by the **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)**.
 - * **Safety Checks:** Routine inspections of facilities, equipment, playgrounds, and vehicles to ensure compliance with safety standards.
 - * **Compliance Checks:** Internal reviews of policies, procedures, and documentation to verify adherence to **Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers**.

3. PROCEDURES

- **Background Checks**
 - * Conducted prior to employment or volunteer service.
 - * Must be completed through DFPS and renewed as required by state law.
 - * Documentation of clearance will be maintained in personnel files.
- **Safety Checks**
 - * Conducted monthly by designated staff.
 - * Includes inspection of fire extinguishers, first aid kits, playground equipment, and emergency exits.
 - * Findings will be documented, and corrective actions taken promptly.

- **Compliance Checks**

- * Conducted quarterly by the Academy Director or designee.
- * Includes review of enrollment records, staff training logs, and emergency preparedness documentation.
- * Reports will be filed and available for inspection by licensing authorities.

4. DOCUMENTATION

- All checks will be documented in writing.
- Records will be maintained in accordance with Academy policy and state requirements.
- Documentation will be available for review by parents and regulatory agencies upon request.

5. PARENT NOTIFICATION

- Parents will be notified of any findings that directly affect child safety.
- Updates will be communicated through email or posted notices.

6. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) background check requirements**
- Local fire and safety regulations

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION ON VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES

1. PURPOSE

To protect the health and safety of children, families, and staff, Hill Country Arts Academy provides employees with information on vaccine preventable diseases and encourages compliance with recommended immunizations. This policy aligns with the **Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Chapter 97 – Communicable Diseases**.

2. VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES

- Employees are informed about the following common vaccine preventable diseases:
 - * Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
 - * Varicella (Chickenpox)
 - * Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
 - * Diphtheria and Tetanus
 - * Polio
 - * Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B
 - * Influenza (Seasonal Flu)
 - * Pneumococcal Disease
 - * Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
 - * COVID19 (as applicable under current public health guidance)

3. EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

- Employees will receive written information on vaccine preventable diseases during orientation.
- Annual training will include updates on disease prevention and immunization recommendations.
- Educational materials from the **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)** and the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** will be provided.

4. IMMUNIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- While not all vaccines are mandated for employees, staff are strongly encouraged to remain up to date with immunizations recommended for adults working in child care settings.
- Employees should consult their healthcare provider for individualized recommendations.
- Documentation of immunizations may be requested for compliance with public health guidelines.

5. PREVENTION PRACTICES

- In addition to vaccination, employees are expected to follow standard infection control practices, including:
 - * Frequent handwashing
 - * Proper cleaning and sanitization of surfaces and toys
 - * Staying home when ill
 - * Prompt reporting of communicable diseases to the Director

6. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Chapter 97 – Communicable Diseases**
- **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) guidelines**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for adults in child care settings**

INCLUSIVE SERVICES POLICY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL CARE NEEDS

1. PURPOSE

Hill Country Arts Academy is committed to providing an inclusive environment where all children, including those with special care needs, can learn, grow, and thrive. This policy establishes procedures to ensure equitable access, individualized support, and compliance with **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**.

2. IDENTIFICATION AND ENROLLMENT

- Parents/guardians must inform the Academy of any special care needs during enrollment.
- Documentation (e.g., medical records, Individualized Education Plans [IEPs], or physician recommendations) may be requested to support individualized planning.
- Enrollment decisions will be made in collaboration with families to ensure the Academy can meet the child's needs safely and effectively.

3. INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING

- The Director and teaching staff will work with parents to develop an **Individual Care Plan (ICP)** for each child with special care needs.
- Plans may include:
 - * Medical requirements (e.g., medication administration, allergy management).
 - * Developmental or behavioral supports.
 - * Adaptations to curriculum, environment, or daily routines.
- Plans will be reviewed at least annually or as needs change.

4. STAFF TRAINING

- All staff will receive training on inclusive practices, disability awareness, and strategies for supporting children with diverse needs.
- Specialized training will be provided when a child's care plan requires specific procedures (e.g., seizure response, dietary restrictions).

5. INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- Children with special care needs will be included in all classroom activities to the greatest extent possible.
- Adaptations may include:
 - * Modified materials or equipment.
 - * Adjusted activity pacing or structure.
 - * Additional adult support during transitions or group activities.
- Peer inclusion will be encouraged through cooperative play and social skill development.

6. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS

- Parents are partners in planning and decision making.
- The Academy may coordinate with external professionals (e.g., therapists, medical providers, school district specialists) to support the child's needs.
- Communication will be ongoing, respectful, and solution focused.

7. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Individual emergency procedures will be developed for children with medical or mobility needs.
- Staff will be trained on specific responses outlined in the child's care plan.
- Emergency contact information and medical instructions will be kept accessible at all times.

8. COMPLIANCE

- **Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers**
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for accessibility and inclusion**
- **Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) guidelines for child care centers**

OPERATIONS MANUAL

& PRE-K OVERVIEW

2026-2027

ACADEMIC YEAR



**Hill Country
Arts Academy**
OF CENTRAL TEXAS

IGNITE. INSPIRE. EMPOWER. CREATE.