

IRWIN PARK TREE HOUSE CHILDCARE SERVICES **PARENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK**

Welcome to Irwin Park Tree House. We are a Not-For-Profit, charitable organization, that was originally started by a group of working moms. In November, 1989 we became a registered incorporated society which was called the Three Acrewood Daycare Society.

We changed our name to Irwin Park Tree House Childcare Services in 2000. We have come a very long way since 1989 and today the center is commonly referred to as “Tree House”. In the past the service operated out of one of the classrooms inside of Irwin Park School, and provided parents with before and after school care for children from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

Today we are happy to have the privilege to lease a 2100 square foot building along with its brand new covered deck completed in May 1999. Tree House offers a two day developmental program for toddlers, a licensed preschool and before and after school care. Our programs are designed to promote opportunities for socialization while providing a safe, nurturing environment where children laugh and play and learn. We strongly believe that parents are vitally important to the success of our programs. It is essential that we work closely together to develop understanding and establish open lines of communication. We invite you to stop by for a visit, to get to know our teachers and the wonderful programs they make available to your child.

This handbook was written with you, as parents, in mind. I hope that it will explain our objectives and answer any questions that you may have. We look forward to working with you and your child. Please feel free to contact us at any time.

TREE HOUSE PHILOSOPHY

Our job as teachers is to provide an environment that fosters as many teachable moments as possible. We strive to make the Tree House experience inviting and interesting.

The care provided at Tree House (Centre) is based on the belief that each child should be given the opportunity to develop his or her maximum potential through loving support. We respect each child as a unique individual and recognize the differences in the child's rate of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. A child learns best through direct, concrete experiences presented in a play atmosphere.

Play is the child's work. A variety of activities are planned to help each child learn and develop in a playful, stimulating environment. The environment is extended beyond the center to include the community by use of various resource visitors and field trips. We encourage independence and respect for others while working to promote each child's positive self-image through successful experiences. The teachers value working with each child and their family, maintaining open lines of communication between home and the Centre.

GOALS

CHILDREN

- 1.) Be aware of each child's abilities and needs.
- 2.) Provide a safe and healthy environment.
- 3.) Encourage constructive, thoughtful, interested and creative behavior.
- 4.) Develop and sustain a positive self-image.
- 5.) Promote healthy physical activities.
- 6.) Provide cooperative work and play experiences.

PARENTS

- 1.) Parents will be given the opportunity to observe their children and have prearranged conferences with teachers to discuss their child's progress.
- 2.) Parents will be kept informed of the Society's activities, by way of posted notices and our Shutterfly sites.
- 3.) Parents will be encouraged to contribute special skills and talents.
- 4.) *Parents are welcome to attend regular Board meetings and to take an active part in the running of the Centre.
- 5.) Parents are encouraged to assist the **volunteer** Board of Directors to promote Tree House during community and fundraising events.
- 6.) Parents must provide the Centre with all necessary information and to keep the teachers informed of any changes in address, telephone, health, custody, etc.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Election

Election of the Tree House Board of Directors is held once a year in October at the Annual General Meeting. All members may run for any positions. All parents are STRONGLY encouraged to attend this important meeting. The Board is made up of parent volunteers.

It is not necessary to have had any experience on boards. It requires minimal time and provides an invaluable learning experience both professionally and personally.

REGISTRATION

A non-refundable membership fee of \$50.00 to the Society is required by all families and can be used to secure a space in the Centre. The monthly fees are set annually by the Board of Directors. A government subsidy is available for those who are eligible; net income and pertinent information determine eligibility. This is done through the Ministry of Children and Families.

Fees are due by the first of each month. Cheques should be made payable to 'Irwin Park Tree House'. We request 10 post-dated cheques which are kept safely locked up and deposited at the first of each month.

We recommend that parents register their child or children in January if they wish to attend the Tree House in September of the same year. If space is unavailable at that time, the child will be placed on a waiting list which works on a first come, first served basis. Parents may place their children on our waiting list at any time.

Eligibility

We accept all children between 18 months and twelve years of age, depending on our space availability.

Registration will not be accepted from families who are in arrears with the Tree House unless arrangements for payment are satisfactory to the Board.

Records

Registration forms must be completed and submitted to Tree House prior to attending. This includes emergency contact names and telephone numbers, immunization records, and any custodial agreement information. Please notify the teachers of any changes in the child's home environment, custodial arrangements etc. as soon as they occur so that we may be prepared to assist your child through any transitions taking place. The information that parents provide is confidential, and in order to assure that the best possible care is maintained for your child, records must be clear and current.

Cancellation/Refunds

Withdrawal from Tree House requires written notice to either the Office Administrator and/or Manager of Care one month in advance, at which time all post-dated cheques will be returned. If written notice is not received, we will accept one month's fee in lieu thereof.

*Vacations and minor illnesses cannot qualify a member for rebates when sessions are missed. The Board, however, will deal with serious situations on an individual basis. A committee consisting of some of the Board members will be available to review individual family financial situations relative to fees payable.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS (public school not in session) & SCHOOL BREAKS

Depending on enrollment, Tree House will be giving preferential service to school age children on these days. Registration is required ONE WEEK prior to the Pro-D day. If the program runs, children under kindergarten age, normally scheduled will not attend the Centre on this day.

Staff ratios to children are maintained, while providing a balanced, caring environment for every child. **Tree House is closed on all statutory holidays and for one week between Christmas and New Years.**

FEES

All fees for any Tree House program must be paid in the form of post-dated cheques, dated for the first of each month. No exceptions will be made. Full payment is required for each month, in September. The cheques are kept in our safe, locked in the facility. A \$20.00 charge applies to all N.S.F. or any returned cheque. A charge of 2% of the monthly invoice will be payable if payments have not been received by the 10th day in the month of which the fee is due.

Nominal fees may be requested from time to time for special field trips.

Professional Development days and winter spring break days are NOT included in monthly fees. If you wish for your child to participate in these days, you must register and pay the specified fee for days attending. When there are unexpected changes to days originally scheduled, any additional fees will become due at that time, while reduced fees will be credited to your account.

When the Centre is closed on statutory holidays and regular holidays, there are no reduction of fees

Due to the fact that we are a non-profit organization, we must run on consistent monthly revenues to provide you and your child with the best alternative to home care.

DROP-IN

Fees are set for each particular program regardless of how many hours your child attends. Drop-in space may be available. However if you wish to have your child Drop-in please give us as much warning in advance to ensure we have sufficient space and can maintain appropriate child- teacher ratio. Invoices will be issued at month-end stating drop-in fees.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Tree House is open September to June, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. During school Professional Development days, Spring break and Christmas holidays, the hours of operation may change. Please see the posted schedule for these times. *We are closed for all Statutory Holidays.*

TODDLER - Two Day Developmental Program (18 months to 4 years)

Monday & Friday mornings

9:00 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.

AM&PM PRESCHOOL (30 months – 5 years)

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday mornings

9:00 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday afternoons

12:30 p.m. - 2:55 p.m.

SCHOOL AGE CARE (Kindergarten – Grade 7)

Before school Monday through Friday

7:30 a.m. – 8:55 a.m.

After school Monday through Friday

3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

LUNCH TIME - EXTENDED CHILDCARE

Monday through Friday

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

LATE PICK UPS

There is a late fee of \$1.00 per minute payable to the Tree House. An invoice will be issued at the end of the month specifying this extra charge.

WITHDRAWAL OF CHILDCARE SERVICES

Tree House will no longer be able to accommodate your child/children under the following circumstances;

- 1.) Continual aggressive behaviours such as biting, hitting and punching.
- 2.) Unpaid fees, failure to provide postdated cheques (when required), consistent late payments.
- 3.) Breakdown of parent / teacher relations
- 4.) Failure to work with childcare staff to meet the needs of one's child i.e. failure to pick up a sick child from the Centre within a 90 minute time frame from the placed call.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Often throughout the year pilot programs are introduced to enrich and enhance daily course work. Field studies and on-site presentations help foster the love of learning. A variety of interests may be covered in the method of enriched learning. Performing and visual arts as well as athletics and sports programs add significantly to our Tree House philosophy which encompasses the whole child; intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically.

OUR TEACHERS

Our teachers at Tree House have their ECE designation or Responsible Adult certification, current Emergency First Aid training, a completed criminal records review, and have provided two written reference letters that are job related. Teachers have a minimum of three years' experience working directly with children. Many of our teachers have a wide variety of interests that enhance each of the programs. Individual teacher profiles are posted on our parent communication board.

VOLUNTEERS

Each year Tree House is fortunate to have student teachers working towards their Early Childhood Education Certificate who join our Preschool team. We as educators are excited by the interest in our E.C.E. program. The children attending our before and after school programs benefit from the Career Placement Program, which provides opportunities for interested high school students to be involved with our programs. All volunteers must complete a Criminal Records Review, be interviewed by the Manager as well as have their parents sign a permission letter prior to commencing their volunteer time with us.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

Recognizing times when discipline is necessary, Tree House requires that it be consistent and constructive in nature. Discipline at the Centre is based on mutual respect and guidance, never physical punishment.

All expectations and guidance is adjusted to each child's age and abilities. Teachers establish clear, reasonable expectations and exercise a kind, firm and consistent manner

to ensure compliance. Redirection and encouragement are utilized to help the children learn positive ways of dealing with situations. One example used at the Centre is the 'choices chair' where a child can regain calmness and with or without help from a teacher, form a new plan of action and then, with or without help, implement that plan. Overall, safety and well-being is always maintained. Teachers shall ask or walk with and the child to come and sit on the "Choices chair". If the child is resistant to this, our Teachers shall work with the child to help them find an alternate place for them to regain self-control.

Parents will be advised of unacceptable behavior exhibited by their child. Continued unacceptable behavior may lead to the family being asked to make other arrangement for the care of their child.

If interested, please speak to staff regarding discipline techniques and or learning and guiding techniques used at Tree house. Teachers are approachable and willing to be informative.

Our guidelines and policies are in accordance with the requirements set out in Sections 51 and 52, Div 2 of the Child Care Licensing Regulations.

Procedure

Establish clear expectations and guidelines in a positive manner. ie; Please keep the blocks down close to the ground.

Follow through in a timely manner ie; say it once and move to the child to repeat directions and assist with follow through

If the child chooses not to comply, Staff may suggest that the child needs a moment to re think their choice and offer redirection or more appropriate choices.

Community Care Facility Records Division 2 — Guidance and Treatment of Children

Harmful actions not permitted

52 (1) A licensee must ensure that a child, while under the care or supervision of the licensee, is not subjected to any of the following:

- (a) shoving, hitting or shaking by an employee or another child, or confinement or physical restraint by another child;
- (b) confinement or physical restraint by an employee, except as authorized in a child care's plan if the care plan includes instructions respecting behavioural guidance;
- (c) harsh, belittling or degrading treatment by an employee or another child, whether verbal, emotional or physical, that could humiliate the child or undermine the child's self respect;
- (d) spanking or any other form of corporal punishment;
- (e) separation, without supervision by a responsible adult, from other children;
- (f) as a form of punishment, deprivation of meals, snacks, rest or necessary use of a toilet.

(2) A licensee must ensure that a child is not, while under the care or supervision of the licensee, subjected to emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect as those terms are defined in Schedule H.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The age group of our children precludes a high susceptibility to communicable diseases and infections. To keep the children as healthy as possible the Tree House has a high-standard **sick child policy*.

**Our programs are designed to include outdoor play and exercise. If your child is not well enough to participate in any of these outdoor activities, please make alternate arrangements for childcare that day.*

**If for any reason your child is taking medication prescribed by your doctor, please ask for a medical form, which is to be signed by your child's physician.*

**The teachers are not permitted to administer any form of medication without this signed form from your prescribing doctor.*

** All medication must be in its' original container clearly marked with the pharmacy's label.*

**A child who is experiencing temperature elevation, diarrhea, vomiting, upper respiratory congestion, or a skin rash will NOT be admitted to the Centre. Please notify the Centre, if your child has contracted a communicable disease.*

EMERGENCY CARE

Parents of a child requiring emergency care will be notified immediately of the situation. If a child must be transported to a medical clinic or hospital for treatment, parents will be requested to meet at the clinic or hospital immediately. If a child becomes ill during the day, they will be comforted until the parent arrives to pick up the child.

Once a parent has been contacted, the child must be picked up within 90 minutes from the time of the phone call. If the child has not been collected within this time frame, an alternate emergency contact will be called. If we cannot reach the first designated person, we will continue to call the people in the order on the child's registration. Please notify the people whom you have designated as an emergency contact. This prevents the teachers from a long explanation of why they are phoning. This policy was designed to prevent

healthy children and teachers from contracting any form of illness that they may perhaps be exposed to on a frequent basis.

Fire Drills and Earthquake preparedness:

Our 'SAFE HOUSE', is the library in Irwin Park Elementary school, adjacent to Tree House. In the case where Tree House has to be evacuated, all teachers and children would walk together to this location.

All fire drills and earthquake preparedness drills are practiced on a regular basis.

*** OUR MISSING CHILD POLICY:**

The teachers give 10 minutes grace to children expected after school at Tree House. In the event that parents cannot be contacted, and as a precautionary measure, we will call the West Vancouver Police and notify them of the child's absence.

Procedure:

10 minutes pass and the child has not been located:

- 1.) Call school secretary and have child paged*
- 2.) Call parents and try to determine child's whereabouts*
- 3.) If parents cannot be contacted, call West Vancouver Police and report that the child is missing.*

The police are then alerted to the fact that we are missing a child and will help us try to locate the child in the vicinity using their vehicles.

As parents you can HELP PREVENT this procedure by letting us know IN WRITING when your child will not be attending our After School Program.

NUTRITION

Tree House offers an Open Snack experience for all our programs;

Water and healthy snack food are available for all the children in our programs.

Snack and lunch time are designed to meet nutritional needs of the children in our care and also to be a social experience. A table has been set designated as the Snack table. On this table, cups, a water jug and a plate with healthy snacks are made available. Small plates and or napkins, and a bin for used dishes will also be on the table. Our expectations are that as a child or children realize they are hungry they are assisted to wash their hands and come to the table. Where they are able to choose two pieces of snack at a time, until they have satisfied their hunger. There is space available for three or four children at a time. More space can be provided if necessary. This area will be monitored by the teachers, closely.

Our snack usually consists of fruits and or vegetables i.e. apples, melons, carrots, grape fruit, salad and a carb. I.e. crackers, banana bread, cereal and whole wheat toast etc. We strive to use organic fruits and vegetables and whole wheat products as much as possible.

As per the information provided by Parents on the registration forms, all children with food allergies and or food preferences and sensitivities will be posted in the kitchen so those foods and products will be avoided.

On occasion we will have celebrations and or participate in a food activity, such as cooking, that may include treat food i.e. Cupcakes, rice crispy squares, cookies, juice etc. again we will be sure not to include anything on our current allergy list. Families are welcome to bring treats for their child's birthday. **Please check with the teachers prior** for any special instructions and number of children.

All allergies and preferences must be noted on the registration forms and the Manager of Care must be notified in writing, of any changes in that area so we may continue to avoid any complications.

We are a peanut free environment. Please refrain from sending nuts, or nut products to school.

Pop, candy, chocolate and gum are not permitted at Tree House and shall be returned unopened.

Lunch Program

Any Child attending the lunch program MUST provide their own lunch meal. We are happy to warm their food. Please ensure all the food provided at lunch is healthy. If a child chooses not to eat at lunch we may ask them to revisit their lunch bags at snack time.

After school Programs,

A nutritious snack will be served @ 4pm. If a child is hungry before or after snack, we encourage the children to revisit their lunch bags. Please send along an additional snack if necessary. Water is always available.

Community Care Facility Records Division 1 — General Care Requirements

Nutrition

48 (1) A licensee must

- (a) ensure that each child has healthy food and drink according to the Canada's Food Guide, and
 - (b) promote healthy eating and nutritional habits.
- (2) If a child's record includes, or the child has a care plan that includes, instructions respecting food and drink for the child,
- (a) the requirements of subsection (1) (a) do not apply to the extent that they are inconsistent with those instructions, and
 - (b) the licensee must comply with those instructions.
- (3) A licensee must ensure that the food and drink given to a child is sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the developmental needs of the child, having regard to
- (a) the child's age,
 - (b) the number of hours the child is under the care of the licensee, and
 - (c) the child's food preferences and cultural background.
- (4) A licensee must ensure that children are not
- (a) fed by means of a propped bottle,
 - (b) forced to consume any food or drink, or
 - (c) left unsupervised while consuming food or drink.
- (5) A licensee must ensure that safe drinking water is available to children.
- (6) A licensee must make available to parents information on the food and drink given to children.

- (7) A licensee must ensure that food and drink are not used as a form of reward or punishment for children.

PROFESSIONAL DAYS, WINTER AND SPRING BREAKS

As with the lunch program, each child must bring their own lunch. We will provide a snack in the morning and another in the afternoon. The children are welcome to revisit their lunch bags.

CELEBRATIONS & BIRTHDAYS

Teachers at Tree House are fond of celebrations in any size, shape or form. Birthdays in particular are especially important. Whatever program your child attends, it is extremely important that we are kept informed of birth dates.

Invitations

If you are planning a birthday party for your child, and are wanting to invite only certain children from our programs, we request that you plan to hand out or mail the invitations from home. If, however, you are planning to invite the entire class, feel free to use our mailboxes and cubbies.

Information

In an effort to reduce our carbon foot print we utilize email and our closed Shutterfly sites as best we can for sending information home. On occasion there may be handouts in your

child's cubbies or mailboxes. Please check them regularly. Other notices may be posted at the front door or on our parent board at the front desk.

Our Shutterfly sites are available only to those families invited as a member and will have new photos and updates twice monthly. All your contact information may be adjusted by you once you have been accepted as a member. If you do not wish to have your information posted please indicate your wishes on our registration form.

Social Arrangements for The After School Program

If your child wishes to arrange to playdate at a friend's house in lieu of attending their Afterschool program at the Tree House, please help by encouraging them to make plans the day before. This enables us to know that your child will not be attending. This is OFTEN overlooked and many times teachers spend a great deal of time and anxiety searching for seemingly 'missing' children.

DROP - OFF & PICK – UP

****Please respect designated times for drop off and pick up... Thank you.**

Before School Parents:

All Parents **MUST** sign their child **IN**

Toddler, Preschool Parents:

All parents **MUST** sign their child **IN AND OUT** from the Tree House every visit.

After school parents:

*All parents **MUST** sign their child **OUT** when picking up and speak to a staff person.

*Any parents who have made alternate plans for someone else other than themselves to pick up their child for that day **MUST** notify the teachers, IN WRITING.

*Children will not be permitted to leave the Centre alone.

*A parent or designated adult must accompany the child when the programs have ended.

Policy on Pick – up:

Only authorized people listed on your child’s registration forms will be allowed to remove your child/children from the premises. Anyone else will require **WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION** from the primary caregiver. The staff maintains the discretion to assess whether the person picking up a child(ren) is able to provide safe and proper care. If there is any concern on the part of the staff member, the child can be retained until the situation is cleared up by the primary caregiver.

Community Care Facility Records Regulation Div. 4

(56) A licensee must keep current records of each of the following:

- (a) written policies and procedures for the safe release of children

Early Dismissal

Children enrolled in before school care are not permitted to leave the Tree House without permission (with your written consent) to enter the school at **8:40 a.m.**

CLOTHING

Parents, please dress your child for play. We use washable paints but often the strong pigments in dry powder paints and some tempera may stain clothing. (Save your child’s good clothes for special occasions). In the preschool years, children have more success with ‘do-it-myself’ or ‘self-help’ style of clothes, such as pull-on pants and skirts, Velcro

rather than belts, buckles and zippers. This only serves as a suggestion, especially to those children in the process of toilet training, etc. Self-help skills in dressing come from practice and encouragement. Each child will not develop at the same rate but this may provide a small window of opportunity for the child's personal success.

Identification should be clearly marked on the INSIDE of your child's jacket or raincoat. Sturdy footwear is very important to develop motor skills and provide protection of the feet. Any open toed sandals or improperly fitted shoes may cause children to stumble and trip, which may cause injuries.

It is a requirement that all TODDLER and PRESCHOOL children keep a spare change of clothes for emergency reasons. These are kept in their cubbies. The items required: T-shirt, pull-on pants, one/two pairs of underwear and a pair of socks. It is also recommended to have slippers or slip on type of running shoes for our movement programs.

Please check your child's clothing at least once a month and make sure everything is returned to the box. If you notice any items missing, please check our Lost & Found hamper. Rain boots and a warm waterproof jacket must also be left at the Centre. Many times we have wanted to venture outdoors and find that some children are not properly dressed for the weather. Each preschool child is given a cubby. School age children use a hook to hang up their backpacks and jackets. The teachers encourage children to learn to practice this for themselves.

CHILDREN'S CREATIVE WORK

Often the children work very hard during the day, both at school and at the Tree House. They explore a variety of media and work with a broad spectrum of materials. They are very proud of their results and are eager to share that with family outside of the Centre. Please remember to check cubbies and mailboxes each day for finished projects to take home.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Parents (families) are and will always be the principle influence in the development and the lives of their children. We consider family participation an important component of a quality childhood program. There are numerous ways for parents and family members to participate at Tree House.

Work parties:

We ask that all parents attend our bi-yearly work parties, which are critical to maintaining our unique environment. These parties help keep Tree house germ free at the same time a great place to meet other families. We depend on 100% family participation in all fund-raising activities, which enhance the resources for both the Centre and the children.

Each family can participate on a Committee of their choice. There will be a \$50.00 fee charged to families who choose not to become involved in any of the volunteer

opportunities such as: work parties, preparing snacks, attending field trips or volunteering 6 hours of time to the Centre.

During the year there will be social events. This is an opportunity to meet and greet the other parents in a relaxed and social atmosphere.

Other participatory suggestions:

- 1.) Share a hobby, occupation, special interest or talent with your child's group.
- 2.) Let the teachers know about any special family celebrations, happenings, events, traditions and customs that your family celebrates.
- 3.) Volunteer your time to positively promote and support the Tree House, its teachers and its programs.
- 4.) Be involved in the actions of the Society, participate actively by volunteering your time as a member on the Board of Directors or attend regular Parent Volunteer Meetings.

However you choose to participate, your support and assistance are greatly appreciated.

Your continued efforts are very much needed in providing a caring and enriching environment for your child!

SPECIAL NOTE TO OUR FAMILIES

If you should have any questions or concerns, suggestions or ideas we would love to hear from you. It is with your input that we better serve the needs of our children, families and community. Please let us know how we are doing and how your child is enjoying their Tree House experience!

PARENT CONTRACT

Parents please read the childcare service contract below. Please fill in the spaces provided and return it to the office. Thank you.

I _____ have read the above parent contract and the Parent Handbook. I agree to the terms explained in the handbook set out by the facility. I will provide ten post-dated cheques dated from September 1st to June 1st for the _____ school year.

I agree to pay the non-refundable \$50.00 annual registration fee (per family) to secure my child's enrollment. I will attend the Annual General Meeting in October and two facility maintenance sessions in November and April.

Date: _____/____

Parent Signature: _____

Our Mailing Address

Irwin Park Tree House Childcare Services

2455 Haywood Avenue, West Vancouver, B.C. V7V 1Y2

Telephone: (604) 926 -4080

Fax: (604) 926 – 4006

E-Mail: irwinparktreehouse@gmail.com

Our web site: www.irwinparktreehouse.com