

# Howard Cottage

*Child Development Center*



## **Policies and Procedures Parent Handbook**

“I will let them be little, fill their hearts with laughter,  
help them grow, inspire them to believe, nurture their sense of wonder,  
and love them like there is no tomorrow.” – Unknown

# Howard Cottage Child Development Center

## Parent Handbook

Part 1	What is Howard Cottage? .....	pg. 3
Part 2	Attending Howard Cottage .....	pg. 6
Part 3	What are the Health and Safety Policies? .....	pg. 17
Part 4	Parent Acknowledgement Form (please sign and return)..	pg. 31
	Yearly Calendar (for you to keep).....	pg. 32

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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

We act in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable federal, state, or local laws pertaining to the provision of services to children with disabilities. Our goal is to meet the individual needs of the child within the structure of our program, while maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all the children and staff. We will make reasonable accommodations to afford children with disabilities full and equal enjoyment of our programs and services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. We will make no assumptions concerning any individual's abilities or disabilities and will make an individual assessment to determine if we can meet each child's need in our group childcare setting.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## **Part 1 – What is Howard Cottage?**

Howard College Child Development Center, or “Howard Cottage,” is a state-licensed childcare center located on the Big Spring campus. The facility was created to serve two basic functions. The first is to provide childcare and high-quality pre-school education for the children of Howard College students, staff, and the community. The center also serves as a lab school environment where students at the college instructional programs, such as Child & Family Development Studies, can interact with children and practice concepts and skills while under the supervision of experienced and credentialed center staff.

### **What is our Mission Statement?**

Our mission is to provide each child with a strong foundation for life-long learning and inspiration to excel through a challenging curriculum focused on academics, as well as social-emotional development in a safe and nurturing environment.

### **What are the program's goals?**

- To create a happy, warm, and exciting environment that is inviting, comfortable, flexible, and manageable for the children in our care.
- To promote respect for self, others, and property while responsibilities and social skills are both enhanced and encouraged.

- To support a caring staff who show confidence in each child's potential and have genuine respect for the children, parents, and one another.
- To perform careful observations and offer individualized learning, based upon each child's needs and learning style.
- To promote a cooperative, informative, and respectful relationship with families.

### **Program Features:**

- Toddler Program (18 months to 3 years)
- Three's Preschool Program (3 years to 4 years)
- Preschool Program (4 years to kindergarten)
- After School/Summer Program (Kindergarten through age 9)
- Breakfast, Lunch and Afternoon Snack provided.
- Parent Committee/Room Parents
- HC Student/Volunteer Site

### **What is the curriculum?**

Howard Cottage implements Frog Street Press Curriculum in all full-time classrooms. Frog Street is a comprehensive program that integrates instruction across developmental domains and early learning disciplines. Depending on the classroom, the program consists of nine to thirteen themes. Each day begins with a Greeting Circle where the focus is building a sense of community. Children sing, perform a calming strategy (de-stressor), connect with classmates through fun activities, and commit to helping keep the classroom safe. Greeting Circle is followed by a Morning Message where children are actively involved in the practice of early literacy skills. Literacy and math lessons are offered daily. Lessons are short, theme-related and filled with hands-on applications and meaningful context. Lessons spiral so that each time children return to a lesson concept or skill, they can expand their understanding. Frog Street Press is dedicated to the concept that all children can learn when instruction stimulates curiosity, nurtures the child's interest, is delivered with joy, and is tailored to challenge each child to the edge of his or her competency. Frog Street Press is filled with songs, music, hands-on materials and activities, chants, games, make-believe, and stimulation for the children's imagination. The journey is joyful from Greeting Circle to Closing Circle.

### *Screen time policies*

Except for drop-off and pick-up times, electronic media usage is only used for educational purposes and is restricted to less than one hour per day.

### **What is Classroom Management?**

The Frog Street Press curriculum includes a classroom management and social-emotional program known as Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline creates a learning environment where children will know, “yes, I am safe,” and “yes, I am loved.” From this foundation of safety and caring, children will begin learning how to solve conflicts, manage their emotions, and take responsibility for their own actions.

### **Howard Cottage follows the standards set by the:**

- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS or Licensing)
- US Department of Agriculture
- Howard College
- Texas Rising Star

### **What other services does Howard Cottage provide?**

- Developmental Screenings (performed at 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 42, 48, 54, and 60 months)
- Vision and Hearing screenings for all children four years or older by September 1 of that year.

\*\*Any concerns that arise from the assessments are discussed with the family and addressed in weekly lessons and individualized activities.

## **Part 2 – Attending the Howard Cottage**

### **Hours of Operation:**

- Fall and Spring Semesters:
  - Day Program: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday
- Summer Schedule:
  - 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday

\*Howard Cottage schedule of operation currently follows the college calendar (holidays, etc.)

\*For severe weather or emergency closing, please refer to local news stations.

### **Ages Served:**

- Full Year Program -
  - Day Program - 18 months to kindergarten
- Fall and Spring Semesters -
  - After School Program - Kindergarten through age 9 (9-year-olds may continue enrollment up until their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday)
- Summer Program -
  - Kindergarten through age 9

### **Who can attend Howard Cottage?**

Howard Cottage is available to college students, employees, and the community, based on the following prioritization policy: (listed in highest to lowest priority):

1. Howard College Students and Employees-full time childcare
2. Community (not student or employee at Howard College) full-time childcare

\*Students must provide a copy of their class schedule to verify student status.

### **How can I enroll my child in Howard Cottage?**

Complete a waiting list form. This is not a guarantee of immediate enrollment; however, it will give your child a dated place on the waiting list. You will be called as soon as (a)

there is an opening in the appropriate classroom and (b) it is your child's turn to be enrolled according to your waiting list date. At that time, you will be asked if you are still interested in enrolling your child in Howard Cottage. If you wish to decline the offer to enroll you will be removed from the waiting list.

## **How does my child begin?**

It is important for your child to have a smooth transition to Howard Cottage. You and your child will be scheduled at least two visits in the classroom so that your child can be as comfortable as possible each step of the way. Enrollment records, such as licensing admission forms and CACFP enrollment forms are completed by the parent/guardian and returned before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of enrollment and renewed annually and as needed. You will also need to provide a copy of your child's current immunization records.

**\*Children cannot attend Howard Cottage until all paperwork and a morning, and an afternoon visit have been completed.**

## **Fees for Enrollment**

### ***Fees include:***

Toddlers Program: 18 months to 3 years of age

\$560.00 per month\*

Preschool 3 Program: 3 to 4 years of age

\$540.00 per month\*

Preschool 4 Program: 4 to 5 years of age

\$520.00 per month\*

After School Program: Kindergarten through 9 years old

\$200.00 per month

\*Families are billed by a monthly charge (based on an average of 20 possible attendance days per month) except for December, March, June and July which will be billed by the daily rate due to college holidays and special Cottage "closed" days

\*\*Parents of school age children who attend a full day at the Cottage on days when the public schools are closed will be billed the regular full day school age rate.

\*\*\* Discounts may be available for staff and students at Howard College.

***Payment Methods:***

- All tuition must be paid within 5 business days of the date tuition bills were issued to continue receiving services. A late payment fee of \$25.00 will be added and services will be suspended on Cottage tuition/bills that are more than 5 days delinquent. Scholarships cannot be used to pay late fees.
- Tuition must be paid in advance of receiving childcare services.
- Payments are made at the Howard College Business Office.
- Students who are funded by Child Care Services (CCS) will be billed for the parent fee at the beginning of the month. As a CCS vendor, Howard Cottage must follow all CCS attendance, reporting, billing, and payment requirements.
- Carl Perkins and Worthy Scholarships will be billed by the Child Care Center at the beginning of each month.
- Failure to pay your bill will result in a hold on your account.
- You will not be allowed to receive a transcript or register for courses until your bill has been paid. (Refer to Howard College catalog).
- Failure to pay your bill will result in your child being excluded from care and your past due balance sent to collections.

***Supply Fee:***

The school supply list will be included in our enrollment packet and updated every August. If school supplies are not provided by September 15, a \$25.00 supply fee will be added to your September bill.

***Hold-a-Spot Fees and Payment Policies:***

Howard College Students and Employees who choose NOT to participate in the Cottage program for one or more months during the summer may sign the “Hold-a-Spot” agreement. This allows the parent to temporarily withdraw the child (ren) for the specified time (June and/or July) and pay 50% of the monthly tuition for those months when the child is not attending to reserve their spot in the Cottage classroom. This would also apply to any child who must be absent due to legal custody rulings at any time during the year.

If the child is physically present any day during a hold-a-spot agreement month, full tuition will be charged for the day the child attended in addition to the 50% monthly charge.

The monthly Hold-a-Spot charge must be paid by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month to retain the child’s spot in the classroom.



**Late Fees:**

A late fee of \$1.00 per minute begins after the Cottage closes for the day. Parents will be given written notice in advance of any calendar or time changes. Parents should arrange to pick up their children before the center closes each day to avoid these late charges.

**Absence and Center Closing:**

Parents will receive a yearly and monthly calendar. It is important to read the calendar to be informed of events, field trips, holidays, closings, etc. Notices are also posted in the center on the front door, the sign-in computer, in the classrooms and sent through Remind.

- A. Tuition must be paid for days enrolled whether the child is present or absent.
- B. Parents will not be charged for scheduled extended holiday closing such as Christmas Break, Spring Break, and Howard Cottage closing as needed for training. Therefore, the months of December, March, June, and July will be billed by the day, rather than the month. There will be “no charge” only the days the college is closed. The “no charge days” do NOT include absence of the child when the center is open.
- C. Parents are expected to call Howard Cottage when their child will not be present on a scheduled day of attendance. The Cottage staff are concerned about the health and well-being of all Cottage children and families. Attendance information may also be required by Child Care Services. Children who are absent from Howard Cottage for ten consecutive days without communication with their parents will be dropped from enrollment. Any outstanding charges will be billed.

**How do I drop off my child?**

Children are expected to be dropped off no later than 9:30 am. If there is an emergency, and you need to bring your child after 9:30 am, call the center as early as possible to let your child’s teacher know.

When you drop off your child:

- Sign in your child using the ProCare computer in the office area.
- Drop-off your child in the designated area.
- Make sure that the center has current phone numbers for the emergency contacts.
- Check your child’s cubby.
- Be sure that an adult knows your child is present before you leave.

## **How should I say goodbye to my child?**

Howard Cottage recognizes that it is sometimes hard for parents and children to separate, especially if it is for the first time. Please say goodbye but do not prolong it, and do not sneak out of the classroom. The teachers are equipped to handle unhappy children. Allow your child a reasonable adjustment period. If difficulties persist, be sure to talk with the teacher.

## **How should I pick-up my child?**

Important: Parents must sign the child in and out of the center each day. Those authorized to pick up the child will be listed on the child's enrollment forms. The parent is expected to keep this information updated on a regular basis. Legal guardians may add to your child's pick-up list at any time in person. No phone calls for alternate pick-up will be accepted. Persons who are unfamiliar to caregivers (even if on the authorized list) will be required to provide photo identification. The driver's license number (or other verification data) will be recorded and retained for a minimum of three months.

- Children **will only be released** to those who are listed on the enrollment form with a picture ID to be presented when picking up the child.

Howard Cottage staff may not legally prevent a child from being picked up by his/her parent unless there has been legal action to prevent release to that parent. Custodial parents should address this issue at enrollment by telling Cottage Staff how they would like these issues to be handled. Cottage staff will always ask to see the identification of people they do not know and will check to make sure these people are on the list of those authorized to pick-up the child.

**If a parent is legally prohibited from visiting or picking up his or her child, Howard Cottage must have copies of the legal paperwork, for example, restraining orders, decrees of divorce, etc.**

The Custodial parent may discuss this issue with Cottage administrative and classroom staff at any time to inform them of any changes in persons authorized to pick up the child, or legal rulings.

**The only exceptions to this release policy: Law enforcement officers and Child Protective Services (CPS) staff have the authority by law to remove a child without a parent's permission.**

## **For your Child's Safety:**

Due to the volume of campus traffic near the center, for your child's safety and to prevent them from running away from you, please do not allow your child to separate from you during drop-off and pick-up time.

- Children will only be released to adults – please do not send anyone under 18 years of age to pick up your child.
- Children WILL NOT be released to anyone who is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## **What if I'm running late for pick-up?**

If you cannot pick up your child by 5:30 pm, contact the center to let them know you will be late and when you plan to arrive. Your child will be cared for by staff in one of the classrooms until you arrive, and late fees will be applied. If a child has not been picked up by 6:00 pm for the day, Cottage staff will contact Child Protective Services.

## **Does my child need to come every day?**

Howard Cottage strongly believes that children's feelings of security, trust, and safety are affected by regular attendance and that children thrive when they can control their environment by knowing what to expect each day. Regular routines are a very important parenting tool that will be most effective when started at this early age. Research shows that children who attend school regularly have significantly better development in social-emotional skills, language skills, and cognition.

## **What if my child is absent?**

- If your child must be absent for the day due to illness, professional appointment, or other legitimate reason, please call the center to inform the teacher that your child will be absent.
- If your child is absent for two or more days and the center has not received notification from the parent, we will initiate a courtesy call to follow up in case of injury or illness.
- If your child has ten consecutive absences and Howard Cottage has not been able to contact you, we will assume that you wish to withdraw your child and will

fill their vacancy immediately. You will still be responsible for tuition fees until the date of withdrawal.

## **What will my child eat?**

Howard Cottage prepares and serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack, according to the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. Upon enrollment and annually thereafter, families will be asked to complete an enrollment form for the CACFP program and be given “Building for the Future” and an updated WIC flyer. During mealtimes, the staff sit with children to talk to them and model correct behaviors. Menus are made available to the parents and are posted in each classroom.

Additional food policies:

- Water is served at every meal and after active play and is always available.
- The program provides nutritious, age-appropriate foods.
- Foods are discarded after the expiration date.
- Liquids and foods that reach 110 degrees are kept out of children’s reach.
- Howard Cottage serves only 100% fruit juice and only to children over 1 year of age.
- Toddlers must sit at the table to drink from a cup. Bottles and pacifiers are not permitted.
- No outside food or drinks are allowed in the center (if it is brought in, it will be thrown away).

\*If a child has any allergies or special dietary needs, Howard Cottage must have a completed plan that includes appropriate substitutions. Plans must be updated yearly and signed by you and your child’s health care professional.

\*\*Howard Cottage supports mothers who choose to breastfeed by providing them a comfortable and private place to breastfeed their child. If mothers bring milk into the classrooms, we will coordinate storing and serving the milk. Breast milk must be labeled with the child’s name and the date it was made. We can store frozen milk for up to 3 months and refrigerated milk can be stored up to 48 hours.

### **When will my child eat?**

- Breakfast 8:15 am
- Lunch 11:30 am
- PM Snack 3:30 pm

\*Children arriving after breakfast is over will be offered breakfast or an alternative, however, a parent or guardian must sit with the child in a designated area while they eat.

### **Will my child take a nap?**

Each child is provided the opportunity to sleep or rest after lunch for 2 hours. Children sleep on cots or mats with a sheet. Blankets and pillows may be provided by the parents. Each child's sheet, blanket and pillow are not shared and are laundered weekly and as needed. If children are awake for more than one hour, they will be provided with quiet activities to allow other children to continue sleeping. Children are always supervised by staff during naptime.

### **Will my child go outside?**

When the weather permits, children will go outside to participate in active play, both structured and free play. When weather does not permit outdoor play according to Child Care Weather Watch, children may be given the opportunity to use the indoor gym for active play.

### **Will my child play in the water outdoors?**

The center has scheduled water play days on the playground. Water play is limited to sprinklers placed in the grass, water tables containing 3 inches of water or less and small wading pools. When water is present on the playground, the children are supervised by extra staff to ensure their safety.

### **Will my child attend field trips?**

Howard Cottage provides transportation for field trips only in Howard College vans. Cottage staff will comply with all DFPS AND DPS safety regulations for driving and

transporting children. Parents of children under eight years old are required to provide child safety seats. At the beginning of each academic year, children and staff will receive training on van safety and procedures. According to Texas Child Care Licensing regulations, staff must attend a minimum of two hours of transportation safety training annually.

Field trips expand and extend learning experiences for children (and adults) and they are FUN. Howard Cottage classrooms participate in both on-campus and off-campus field trip experiences year-round. The three and four-year-old classroom groups, with parent permission, will be scheduled for occasional off-campus field trips which generally relate to a particular topic on the current lesson plan. The 18 months to 3-year-old group do not participate in off-campus field trips due to extremely low adult to child ratio requirements and developmental maturity of the younger children. Parents will have the opportunity to sign consent forms for field trips. Notices will be posted in the child's classroom, on the parent bulletin board, on the front door, and near the sign-in computer. Parents are encouraged and always welcome to attend field trips.

### **How should my child dress?**

- Your child should be dressed and ready to start the day when they arrive at the center.
- Your child needs to wear simple, comfortable, washable clothes each day.
- Children will be participating in activities that cause them to get dirty, so please do not send children in good clothes.
- Your child also needs extra clothes. Please provide two extra outfits in case of messy play or accidents, an extra pair of shoes, a jacket during cold weather, as well as a hat and mittens if you wish for your child to wear them.
- Shoes must be worn every day; sneakers are preferred for safety. Please NO flip-flops or bare feet.

\*Each piece of clothing must be clearly labeled with your child's name.

### **What can my child bring?**

To protect your personal items, Howard Cottage encourages you to leave toys and games at home or in the car. If items are brought in, they will be placed in the child's cubby until the end of the day.

## **Can I celebrate my child's birthday?**

Your child's birthday is important to us, and we want to help celebrate it. Talk with your child's teacher at least one week before your child's birthday if you would like to celebrate at school. Please note that all birthdays are celebrated during the PM snack time at 3:30. Please bring enough to share for the classroom. Foods brought for sharing must be commercially prepared and have an ingredient list (for allergy or special dietary purposes).

## **What should I talk about with my child's teacher?**

Changes you notice in your child:

- not eating favorite foods
- restless night's sleep
- cutting teeth
- fussier than usual
- any other changes you may see.

## **How do I communicate with my child's teacher?**

Your child's teacher is always available to answer any questions you may have. You can contact your child's teacher or the office by:

- speaking to them at drop-off and pick up.
- email
- calling the center
- checking your child's cubby daily to receive notes, announcements, newsletters, etc.
- Parent-teacher conferences

## **How will I receive general notification?**

- REMIND app.
- Posting on front door and in classrooms
- ProCare messages
- Notes sent home in each child's cubby.
- Center Facebook page

## **When can my family or I visit the center?**

You are welcome to visit the center to see your child or their classroom at any time. You are welcome to include other family members if they have been designated by you on the Authorization to Release. We ask that you take your child's schedule into consideration when planning your visit. For example, do not visit during nap time.

## **What if I have concerns?**

Howard Cottage believes in an open-door policy. You may schedule a time to meet with the Director and/or your child's teacher by calling the office at 432-264-5185.

Howard Cottage has a grievance policy that teachers will present to families during enrollment and have them read and sign. Parents are also able to review DFPS Minimum Standards at [www.dfps.state.tx.us/child\\_care](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care), and a printed copy is available in the Director's office. The most current licensing inspection is posted on the licensing board in the front hallway. Parents can also contact the local licensing office by calling (800-862-5252).

## **How can I help?**

Howard Cottage has an organized Parent Committee with officers elected by the committee participants. During the school calendar year (September through May) parent meetings are normally scheduled once per quarter, or as needed. All parents are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in these meetings to discuss special events, curriculum, policies, fund raisers, and any other subjects' parents wish to bring forth. Parents are also invited to request special, unscheduled meetings at any time necessary. Special project work groups may also meet more frequently.

## **Does Howard Cottage offer any training for parents?**

Workshops on a variety of subjects are presented during the academic year. The topics may include but are not limited to education, social-emotional development, health and wellness, nutrition and dental health, social services, parent involvement, substance abuse, and child support. Suggestions for workshop topics are always welcome, and parents or other family members who wish to be a presenter in a particular area should contact the Center Director.



## **What are transitions?**

Transitions are changes in your child's enrollment, such as moving from one classroom into another. It is important for your child to have smooth transitions. You, the teacher and the director will plan for the transition so that your child can be as comfortable as possible each step of the way. Your child will visit the new classroom at various times during the week prior to his/her transition date.

## **Part 3 – What are the Health and Safety Policies?**

### **Why have health and safety policies?**

Howard Cottage believes in protecting and promoting the health and well-being of each child in the program. To do this, we follow the guidelines required by regulatory agencies and suggested by pediatric authorities.

### **What if my child has special health care needs?**

Howard Cottage can make reasonable accommodations for any child with special health care needs or medication requirements, if being in the program is not a risk to anyone involved. You and your doctor will need to provide clear and thorough instructions on how to care for your child.

### **What accommodation will be offered for my child?**

We make every effort to support family and individual diversity. We encourage families to share their different backgrounds, cultures, and home languages. We may ask for your support by sharing words, stories, customs, or songs. In addition, we believe that diversity also may include a wide range of physical, cognitive, and social abilities. For those individuals requiring accommodation, it is essential that parents, teaching staff and support services collaborate and communicate to ensure that children receive the best possible learning experiences.

## **Does my child need to be current on immunizations?**

Before your child can begin in the center-based program, you must provide Howard Cottage with a completed Child Health Certification and a current shot record, showing all required immunizations for your child's age have been completed. It is your responsibility to bring these items to the office. Once your child is enrolled, it is also your responsibility to keep your child up to date on all required immunizations and provide the documentation to Howard Cottage personnel.

If your child is under-immunized due to a medical condition, we will need this clearly documented by your child's doctor. If your child is under-immunized and you do not have appropriate documentation from a health care professional your child may be excluded until immunizations are current.

## **Are employees required to have immunizations?**

It is Howard Cottage policy to maintain a health and immunization program that protects both the employee, as well as the children, from diseases that may be prevented through routine screening or vaccination. Employees of Howard Cottage must have the following before working with children:

- The current State of Texas requires initial immunizations.

It is ***highly recommended*** that employees also have the following immunizations:

- Flu vaccine – annually at appropriate time of year
- Updates on required immunizations as needed.

No employee will be allowed to be present in the center while exhibiting symptoms of any contagious disease. Certain communicable diseases will require a doctor's release before the employee may return to work.

## **Will my child be screened for vision and hearing?**

Children ages 3 – 5 years of age will be screened for possible vision and hearing problems. The screenings will be conducted by members of staff that have been certified to do these screenings. A record of the screening will be kept for each individual child, and parents will receive a copy of the screening. A permission statement is included on the child's enrollment form.

## **What does well mean?**

You are responsible for making sure your child comes to the center well:

- rested
- healthy
- able to participate comfortably in all activities, indoors and outdoors.

\*Daily your child's teacher will conduct a health check through conversation with you and by checking your child for signs of illness or injury and recording all observations. This will include a complete check of the child's body from head to toe.

## **What does sick mean?**

If your child shows any of these symptoms or conditions, they are sick and should not come to Howard Cottage:

- cough or earache, so that your child cannot go outdoors.
- unusual rash or blisters on any part of the body
- unexpected heavy sweating
- swelling, redness, or throbbing pain in an injured part of the body
- wheezing, uncontrolled breathing, or convulsions
- persistent pain in the stomach (abdomen)
- unusual behavior such as excessive fussiness, crying a lot, red or watery eyes, no appetite, no energy, or excessive sleepiness.
- vomiting (2 or more times)
- diarrhea (uncontrolled)
- a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more
- any other illness or symptom of an illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in daily activities including outdoor play.

Note: Children experiencing fever, vomiting or diarrhea must be free of symptoms for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication to return to the center.

## **What if my child gets sick while at the center?**

If your child becomes ill, Howard Cottage staff will notify you immediately, and then will keep your child safe, secure, and separated from the other children until you arrive. For the health of your child as well as the health of other children, you must pick up your child immediately once you have been notified that your child is sick. (You will be

allowed 30 minutes of travel time to pick up your child.) Please leave a current phone number with your child's teacher daily.

## **When can my child come back to the classroom?**

For a usual illness, your child is considered well and can return to the center when:

- free of fever without Tylenol or a similar medicine for 1 day (24 hours),
- free of symptoms for 1 day (24 hours) or
- You have obtained a health care professional's statement that the child no longer has an excludable disease or condition.

If your child has been absent due to illness, you may be required to bring a doctor's note to return. The Director or Assistant will determine if a doctor's note is required. If your child has been absent with a diagnosed communicable disease, Howard Cottage requires a doctor's note stating that your child is no longer contagious and can safely return to the center.

\*Children with suspected impetigo, pink eye, ringworm, or chronic head lice must be seen by a doctor (not a pharmacy) for treatment. After the first 24 hours on medication, your child can return to the center with a note from your doctor that treatment has begun.

## **Who can give my child medicine?**

Only a full-time staff member can administer medicine to children. The staff can give your child prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine, and as-needed medicine, only when you:

1. Bring the medicine in its original, child-proof, labeled container.
2. Follow the specific directions for each type of medicine.
3. Sign the Medication Authorization form each day, or every 6 months for an as-needed medicine.
4. Medications must have either a designated time or be prescribed three or more times per day to be given at the center.
5. Give your child the first dose of medicine at home, so that you can see if your child has a reaction.

For all medications, you will need:

- Your child's first and last name on the container.

- the directions from the doctor or manufacturer on how and when to give the medicine, including the amount and time of each dosage, the minimum and maximum time between doses, and how to store and dispose of the medicine.

\*For over the counter and as-needed medicine, you will also need a doctor's note that includes the doctor's name, child's name, and the name of the medication

### **Will teachers put anything else on my child?**

Howard Cottage does use sunscreen, insect repellent, and diaper rash cream, you will be asked to provide any topical sprays or creams that you wish for staff to use on your child. If you bring sunscreen, insect repellent or diaper rash cream it is implied that you give consent for these items.

### **What happens when other children in the center are sick?**

Howard Cottage will notify you if your child is exposed to any contagious illness. You will be given the following information:

- the disease or condition to which the children have been exposed.
- signs and symptoms of the disease or condition.
- when the exposure occurred.
- ways to prevent infection in your family.

\*Howard Cottage also obtains advice immediately when outbreaks of communicable diseases occur.

### **What about incidents and accidents?**

Howard Cottage will notify you at pick up time if there is any minor incident or accident involving your child. You will receive documentation that details what occurred and if any minor injuries were noted.

In the event of a serious injury or illness:

- 911 will be called immediately.
- Certified staff will administer CPR, or first aid as needed while waiting for relief by emergency professionals.
- A staff member will contact you with information about the injury or illness.

- If necessary, your child will be taken by ambulance to the hospital designated by you at enrollment.
- A staff member will remain with the child until the parent arrives at the emergency room.

## **What happens in inclement weather?**

During threatening weather, center staff will monitor storms by local radio, television, public warning sirens, and weather radio to track the storm path and intensity. If necessary, children will be moved from their rooms into the restrooms and/or center room of the facility until storm danger has passed. Staff will have first aid equipment, flashlights, and emergency information (phone numbers, etc.) for each child. The building is equipped with emergency lighting that will remain on in case of an electrical power failure.

The current college policy states that classes will be held, and business will continue as usual unless hazardous driving conditions exist. If the college cancels classes due to icy roads, etc., Howard Cottage will also be closed. College and school closings are announced on local radio and TV stations. Please tune in after 6:00 a.m. to KBST (95.7) AM/FM radio, or local cable TV stations or the Howard College website ([howardcollege.edu](http://howardcollege.edu)) to determine if the Child Care Center is open on snowy or icy days.

\*Please do not attempt to drive to the center to take your child home. This could be even more dangerous for you and your child. Your child will not be released in dangerous conditions; however, you may take shelter at the center with your child or come for your child as soon as an all-clear bulletin has been announced over radio or television.

## **What are the Emergency procedures?**

### *Fire / Bomb threat*

Fire escape routes are clearly marked and posted in each room of the center. Staff and children are trained through monthly drills to react quickly and efficiently to the building's fire alarm system. Drills are conducted once a month at different times of the day to ensure that all the children and staff are familiar with all the exit points. Staff will ensure that all children are evacuated and accounted for. The children and staff will meet by the fence at the back of the playground area. The Director or person in charge will shut all windows, turn out the lights, close all doors, check all bathrooms for children and then

proceed to the meeting place. No one will re-enter the center until the “All-Clear” signal has been given.

### *Tornado / Severe Weather*

Tornado/severe weather drills will be conducted quarterly, and staff are familiar with the emergency procedures. The signal for the tornado / severe weather drill is three whistles followed by an announcement on our two-way radio system. A staff member from each room is responsible for taking their emergency backpack which includes first aid kits, flashlight, and parent contact information. The staff and children will take cover using their nap mats in the bathroom located in their classroom and will remain there until an “All-Clear” signal has been given.

### *Lockdown*

In the event that a person who is threatening or potentially dangerous enters the childcare facility or is within close physical proximity of the outside of the building/playground,

Cottage staff will:

- Call 911.
- Secure the classroom exterior door (center is normally in lock-down unless the children are outdoors on the playground).
- Close and lock their interior classroom doors and gather in the designated area.
- Wait for help to arrive, or for the “all clear” message from center administration or law enforcement.

\*These Cottage procedures will be modified to align with the Howard College campus emergency defensive procedures as necessary, and parents will be notified in writing of any changes to these procedures. Persons who have been convicted of certain crimes cannot be present in a licensed childcare facility.

\*\*In the event of a real emergency all the above emergency procedures will be followed. The staff and children will remain in their designated areas until “all-clear” signal has been given. If it is necessary to leave Howard Cottage immediately, staff will follow the off-site evacuation guidelines.

## **What if we need to evacuate the building?**

Howard Cottage has an emergency preparedness plan which is posted in every room near the map of the building. If it is deemed necessary to evacuate the building, all children and adults will go to a secure off-site location and return to the center only when the building is declared safe. Currently the Howard Cottage secure off-site location is South West College for the Deaf (SWCD).

## **Is Howard Cottage secure?**

Howard Cottage always maintains building lock-down. The front door entrance is equipped with a key fob system and only people who have been approved for and issued a key fob will be able to enter the building independently (without staff opening the door for them.) Parents or legal guardians may only authorize certain individuals to receive a key fob to pick up or drop off their child. Key fobs are issued at the front desk of the center.

### *Security*

Howard College maintains licensed security officers at all Howard College facilities. A uniformed officer is available on campus during and after hours to provide additional security.

### *Surveillance System*

In addition to the door security system, the Cottage is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by indoor and outdoor cameras. These cameras are constantly recording activity in and around the building for the safety of the children, staff, and the facility.

## **What are other health and safety policies?**

### *No Smoking*

For the health of children and adults, Howard College follows a no-smoking policy for all persons while on the property, walks, buggy rides, or at any sponsored event regardless of location.

### *Criminal History Restrictions*

All staff and volunteers who will have direct contact with children will have a criminal history and fingerprint check done before working in a classroom. Anyone found by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to be unsafe will not be allowed to work or volunteer at Howard Cottage.



### *Gang-Free Zone*

Under Texas law, any area within 1000 feet of a childcare center is a Gang-Free Zone.

### *Substance Abuse*

Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be permitted on the premises of Howard Cottage.

IF STAFF SUSPECTS THAT A DESIGNATED PICK-UP PERSON IS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL, WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO NOTIFY AUTHORITIES.

### *Prohibited Items*

Possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or any weapon, including a firearm, is prohibited in the center by staff, volunteers, or family members.

\*Peace officers and security officers commissioned by the Texas Private Security Board who are trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty may have firearms and ammunition on the premises.

### *Cell Phones*

Proper communication is imperative when working with young children. It is difficult to communicate when cell phones are in use. Effective December 1, 2010, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services passed new regulations prohibiting the personal use of cell phones in classrooms. Please end all calls prior to entering the building.

### *Social Media*

Howard Cottage respects the right of privacy of the children in our care. Please do not post photographs or videos of other children or staff of Howard Cottage without prior written permission. This includes photos or videos of classroom activities, parties, field trips, graduation, etc.

### *Animals in the Center*

Howard College believes that children need opportunities to interact with animals. We occasionally have fish or small animals in the classrooms. The teachers ensure that staff and children wash their hands after encountering animals or items used by animals. Teachers supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior. Any children allergic to the animal will not be exposed. If needed, classroom pets have documentation from a veterinarian to show that the animals are fully immunized. Please do not bring personal pets to the center.

### *Insect and Rodent Control*

Howard Cottage is treated with pesticides to control insects and rodents on a quarterly and as needed basis. The treatments are applied so that children will not encounter them.

### *Parent conduct*

Please remember that we have many children listening to and observing our actions. We want to ensure that children feel safe and secure while at school. As adults it is our responsibility to teach our children by example. Parents are expected to behave and interact appropriately and respectfully (language and/or actions). We welcome the opportunity to address any concerns you may have in a professional manner. If we feel that proper conduct is not being shown on your behalf your child will be withdrawn from the program.

### **What does the law require for reporting child abuse and neglect?**

Howard Cottage staff are **REQUIRED** by Texas State law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services (CPS) any instance when there is reason to **suspect** the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation. Our staff receive annual training on recognizing and preventing the signs of abuse and neglect. Howard Cottage staff have made a commitment to help boost awareness and prevention techniques to employees and parents through training, memos, and newsletters. Howard Cottage staff also coordinates with community organizations on strategies to prevent abuse and neglect.

The staff may not notify the parent when a report is made to Law Enforcement or CPS about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, except on the recommendation of Law Enforcement or CPS.

Some examples of abuse and neglect are unexplained marks or bruises, leaving a child in a vehicle unattended, not properly securing a child in a vehicle, failure to obtain proper medical care, and child hygiene issues.

If you suspect possible child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or exploitation we encourage you to get help. Please contact the Texas Department of Family and Protected Services (DFPS) by phone at 1-800-252-5400 or online at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).

## **How will my child be disciplined?**

Howard Cottage follows the discipline and guidance policy mandated by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Minimum Standards. We will share this policy with you at enrollment. You will be asked to sign this policy at enrollment and every subsequent year.

Howard Cottage staff use positive discipline in a safe, non-threatening environment. They set limits and encourage the beginnings of self-control. No child is ever physically punished or humiliated by staff or parents.

## **How do teachers handle children with challenging behavior?**

Howard Cottage staff are trained to anticipate and take steps to prevent challenging behaviors in children. When this behavior occurs, staff respond in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and others in the classroom.

There are times when appropriate strategies have been tried and the problem continues. It is at these times that we might ask a child to sit quietly by themselves until that child can return to playing. Children are always supervised during this time. We do not have a “time-out” place and this time is not seen as punishment; rather, it is a time for the child to regroup. Children will sit for no longer than 1 minute per year of age.

## **May I punish my own child on Howard Cottage premises?**

Howard Cottage policy requires that parents follow the above stated discipline policies while interacting with their own or other children at the Howard Cottage facility either indoors or outdoors. If parents choose to use physical or harsh verbal punishment with their own children, the child must be removed from the facility and view of the facility to do so. Parents may discipline their own children while at Howard Cottage if the guidelines for discipline as outlined in the Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers and as outlined above, are followed, and not violated.

## **What if my child harms or bites another child?**

### ***Biting:***

Biting is unfortunately not unexpected behavior for toddlers. Some children and many toddlers communicate through this behavior. However, biting can be harmful to other children and to staff. This biting policy has been developed with both ideas in mind. As a

day care, we understand that biting, unfortunately, is a part of a day care setting. Our goal is to help identify what is causing the biting and resolve these issues. If the issue cannot be resolved, this policy serves to protect the children that are bitten. If a biting incident occurs, state regulations require that the parent of the child biting and the parent of the child who was bitten be contacted. Names of the children are not shared with either parent.

### ***When Biting Does Occur:***

Our staff strongly disapproves of biting. The staff's job is to keep the children safe and help a child that bites learn different, more appropriate behavior.

For the child that was bitten:

- First aid is given to the bite. It is cleaned with soap and water. If the skin is broken, the bite is covered with a bandage.
- Parents are notified.
- The "Incident/Illness report" form is filled out documenting the incident.

For the child that bit:

- The teacher will firmly tell the child "NO! DO NOT BITE!"
- The child will be placed in thinking time for no longer than the child's age (one year old, one minute).
- The parents are notified.
- The "Incident/Illness report" is filled out documenting the incident.

When Biting Continues:

- The child will be shadowed to help prevent any biting incidents.
- The child will be observed by the classroom staff to determine what is causing the child to bite (teething, communication, frustration, etc.) The administrative staff may also observe the child if the classroom staff is unable to determine the cause.
- The child will be given positive attention and approval for positive behavior.

When biting becomes excessive:

- If a child inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period (5 weekdays) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
- If the child again inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period (5 weekdays) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the

bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 2 business days.

- If a child once again inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period (5 weekdays) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the parents will be asked to make other day care arrangements.

If a child, who has been through steps 1 and/or 2, goes 3 weeks (15 business days) without biting, we will go back to step one if the child bites again.

If a child bites twice in a 4-hour period, the child will be required to be picked up from day care for the remainder of the day. This will not count towards the 2-day suspension.

**\*This policy also applies to any continuous behavior that harms another child or staff member. (Kicking, hitting, scratching, etc.)**

### ***School-age Children:***

Howard Cottage takes the safety of the children seriously and will take necessary action to ensure a safe learning environment. If your child is responsible for harming another child or a staff member, a disciplinary report will be issued that will require a parent signature acknowledging the incident. This also applies if a child uses disrespectful or abusive language including profanity, racial slurs, sexual terminology, or other hateful phrases. If this behavior reoccurs, your child will be subject to the disciplinary steps listed above, depending on their age and development.

### **Will my child's teachers help with toilet training?**

Howard Cottage staff will be happy to help toilet train children. Most children entering the Toddler Room have not yet achieved bladder or bowel control due to age (physical and cognitive immaturity). The Cottage Toilet Training Policy/Procedure is available upon request and can also be followed at home.

It is recommended that procedures be consistent at school and at home to achieve success. Cottage staff will work cooperatively as much as possible with parents during this process; however, there are certain guidelines that staff must follow while children are in care at this facility. There will be no punishment (scolding, shaming, withholding of food) associated with toilet training – this is a gradual process.

Howard Cottage has a high rate of toilet training success, however, due to staff and equipment limitations your child must be toilet trained by their transition date into the 3-

year-old classroom. Staff will make every effort to ensure that your child is ready for this transition.

### **How will I be notified of policy changes?**

Parents will be notified in writing of Howard Cottage policy changes. The current Howard Cottage Parent Handbook is available on the Howard College website. Parents may also request a printed copy if needed. All policy changes and any handbook updates will be posted in the office area of the center.

**\*Please note that Texas Minimum Standards states that a director may always retain the right to dis-enroll a child if it is in the best interest of the child or other children at the center.**