



# Volunteer Manual



ASSOCIATED STUDENTS  
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

## COVER PAGE

Campus Children's Center  
Volunteer Manual  
Phone  
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### **General Information**

The Associated Students SDSU Children's Center was established in 1970 to provide a quality preschool program that could benefit students/parents by providing an on-campus facility and flexible scheduling of children. The children benefit by the Center's secure, non-directive and sensory-rich environment. In addition, the Center is operated on the concept of parent participation and control in all facets of the program. Parents are encouraged to participate in some of the administrative duties of operating through the Children's Center Board and working committees. Parents, staff, and volunteers work together to provide an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and healthy for young children in which to grow. The Center is operated by the Associated Students who provide part of the budget. The remainder of the budget is provided by fees paid by the participating parents, the State Department of Education and the California State University.

### **The Role of the Volunteer in the Center**

The volunteer's service is of great importance to the Center and to the children; therefore, volunteers must expect to participate regularly and in a responsible manner. The special services with which a volunteer can enrich the Center include: providing additional help to facilitate smooth functioning in the classroom and providing each child with an additional chance to develop a personal relationship with an adult.

General ways in which volunteers can help include:

1. Working with a specific child who needs special attention
2. Reading stories to the children
3. Assisting indoors under the teacher's direction
4. Engaging children in conversation
5. Singing with/to the children
6. Supervising outside activities
7. Assisting the teacher at breakfast, lunch or snack
8. Helping the children to prepare for naps
9. General housekeeping and outdoor improvement
10. Gardening

Every person working or participating in the Center who comes into contact with the children is regarded as a teacher. Volunteers may want to bring special projects they would like to try, making their participation a learning experience for all involved. Project work must be pre-approved for appropriateness.

### **Philosophy**

The staff and parents of the Associated Students Children's Center believe that play is the vehicle whereby children learn and grow into healthy, happy adults. Our primary objective is to make our Center into the kind of relaxed and loving atmosphere that enables children to feel free to explore and create through play. We believe in helping the while child develop; therefore, the experiences we provide are aimed at the physical social, emotional and intellectual development of the child. Our mode of "education" is exposure to the tools of early learning. "Discipline" at the Center means gentle guidance. We promote guidance in which adults help children learn appropriate ways of getting along with others.

We practice continuity of care with teachers moving with their children all five years.

Our program is influenced by the schools of Reggio Emilia.

Our work is grounded in the theoretical principles of such scholars as Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, Montessori, and other noted researchers in Child Development.

We use a child initiated, project based curriculum model with active collaborations between children, teachers and families.

## **Center Schedule**

### **Preschool, Toddlers, and Transition 2's**

7:00 Supervisor opens center

8:00 Teachers supervise activities available in classroom

8:20 Clean-up, wash tables, group time

8:30 Breakfast

9:00 Indoor/Outdoor activities (small groups)

11:00 Clean-up, wash tables, group time

12:00 Nappers brought inside for naptime Outdoor activities for non-nappers

2:00 Activities outside

2:45 Clean-up, wash tables, group time

3:00 Snack

3:30 Clean-up, wash tables, group time

4:00 Children combined in most classes

5:00 Clean-up yard area. All children come inside for quiet activities

5:45 All children gather in Duckling classroom for "Goodbye Time"

6:00 Center closes

\*Toddlers and Transition 2's diaper and potty checks are done at least every hour and a half.

### **Infants**

8:00 Greet children and parents

8:30- 9:00 Breakfast

9:00-11:30 Indoor/Outdoor Activities (small groups)

11:20- 11:30 Set up for lunch

11:30- 12:00 Lunch

12:00-2:30 Naps, Indoor/Outdoor Activities

2:30-3:00 Wash hands, table-songs, snack

3:00-4:00 Indoor/Outdoor Activities

End of day clean up

\*Diaper/Potty checks are done at least every hour and a half.

All volunteers in the classroom are encouraged to initiate activities for the children, with approval from the teacher.

\*\*The guideline suggestions are meant to help new student teachers, as working with children can be overwhelming at times. Please read through the suggestions and feel free to ask questions, suggest new ideas or share your concerns with the staff.

### **Suggestions for Student Teachers and Volunteers**

1. When you arrive, ask the Master, Associate, or Assistant Teacher which activity area you should supervise (e.g. block corner, computer, and climber).
2. When you are at a child's level (i.e. sitting down) it is easier to work with them and they are usually more comfortable.
3. The most effective supervision occurs when adults are evenly spaced (both indoor and outdoors). Problem situations can be prevented if adults are **CONSTANTLY ALERT**. This is not a time to socialize with friends.
4. As a teacher in the classroom, you are free to plan activities that you are comfortable doing; please discuss your planned activity at least a week prior to the time you want to implement your activity. The Center has many books containing curriculum ideas. Feel free to use these books or ask a Master, Associate, or Assistant Teacher to suggest some activities you can initiate.
5. As a teacher, it is your **RIGHT** and **RESPONSIBILITY** to make decisions and take actions that are necessary for proper safety, health and adequate supervision (e.g. asking children **NOT** to go to an area because there are not enough adults to supervise it, taking care of potentially dangerous situation, etc.) Also, children enjoy helping adults clean their classroom and yard.
6. (e.g. pick up things as you walk around the room, mop up spills immediately, etc.) Also, children enjoy helping adults clean their classroom and yard, but be sure that you are giving out age-appropriate tasks (i.e. young children are not to be exposed to strong cleansers like bleach, that could be potentially toxic).
7. Please print children's' names on artwork so they can be identified easily and so that the child gets practice reading and writing his/her name. Names go in the upper right corner of the artwork, beginning with a capital letter followed by lower case. If the child wishes to have their name elsewhere on the creation, that is fine!
8. For the child, art is a valuable tool as it is a means of self-expression. Avoid making samples since children may get frustrated when they are unable to duplicate it. Rather than asking children what their work is, ask them to tell you about their work.

If you take an ACTIVE interest in the program at the Center, you will find working with and observing the children challenging and stimulating. You get out what you are willing to put in. We guarantee it!

### **Guidelines for Active Play**

The children may become very excited and eager for your attention when you participate. Children enjoy active play and crave the kind of individual attention that volunteers can provide. However, activities that encourage uncontrolled, “wild” behavior, such as chase-games, monster play, swinging by their arms, etc. are strongly discouraged. These games get the children so excited that they often lose control and accidents or other behavior problems result. Positive relationships are built through showing interest in children’s ideas and encouraging fun activities that result in constructive play. Try story telling or dramatic play such as playing fir-fighter or taking imaginary trips. Or, try making a tricycle obstacle course, or ball and bean bag games. These types of activities allow the children to expend energy in constructive ways and discourage aggressive, out-of-bounds behavior.

### **Points of Safety and Health**

#### **General**

1. Absolutely no smoking, gum chewing or eating while participating in the Center. Cell phones should be silenced.
2. Inform a staff member before leaving an area so that the children will not be left unattended.
3. Be very careful when opening the door. A child may be standing behind it.
4. Make sure all gates are kept closed. Please do not step over the small gates.
5. Children may not stand on tables or chairs either indoors or out. Staff may not sit on tables.
6. Kitchen, office and adult locker areas are off-limits to all children.
7. Feel free to use our filtered water cooler to re-fill water bottles. We try to limit the use of one-time plastic bottles.

#### **Outdoors**

1. The children are not to climb on the fence or gates.
2. Drinking fountains are not to be played in. They should be kept clean and free of sand (carried from drinking to sand box).
3. All children must be supervised by at least one adult when using equipment: climbing structures, playhouse, sand boxes and slides at ladder. There is to be no throwing of sand and please try to see that the sand stays in the sandbox. On all equipment the children are to decide what they are capable of doing. Please be sure not to lift a child onto the playground equipment or push him/her beyond his/her limits.

#### **Introduction to Staff**

The Center operates with 20 Full-Time Staff, many part-time student staff, and student volunteers. The Center is managed by the Director, Assistant Director, Business Manager, and Supervising Teachers. We also have our “Teachers who Cook”-the Food

Service Staff. Each classroom is managed by a full time Master Teacher. The rest of our classroom staff is comprised of part time student staff.

### **Things to Know:**

- Anyone coming into the Center must sign in and out. Your organization may provide its own sheet, and the Center will make a copy for our records.
- **Nametags are required.** Again, you may make your own or we can provide them with a list of volunteers.
- Our parking lot belongs to the University, so anyone using it must have a valid student, staff, or faculty permit. The 15 minute drop off and pick up sites on the east side of the lot are for parents only. Please know if you take the risk of getting a ticket, there is nothing the Center staff can do to help.
- Please arrange with the Assistant Director at least 3 days before a planned event the numbers of student volunteers we can expect. We are required to notify families in advance when large groups will be here. We have 10 classrooms, and more than 3 people per room is too many.
- The Children's Center has a very strict food and drink policy as we have many children with severe allergies. Only bottled water is allowed in the classrooms or play areas. Food, coffee drinks, or energy drinks need to be consumed out of the Center.
- Groups of volunteers should not congregate in front of the Center entryway.
- Volunteers are busy when they are here with us-sitting on the floor, inside and outside, stooping, crouching, etc. We ask you to dress comfortably while also keeping in mind our need for professionalism and decorum. Girls should not wear short shorts, short skirts, or tank tops. Shirts should be longer than the tops of pants, with no offensive or inappropriate slogans or advertising. Comfortable shoes are best.
- It is important to remember that the purpose of volunteering and/or community service is to be with the children. Too much socializing between friends diminishes the experience the children have. Goofing off and horseplay can upset children, and often people get hurt in the process.
- Like everything else in life, you will get out of this experience what you are willing to put in.
- Cell phones should be off or set to vibrate, with no texting, calling or web browsing while volunteering.
- Storage space is extremely limited, so if you can leave big back packs and skateboards at home that will be helpful.
- This may sound like lots of rules and regulations! Keep in mind we have 200 children to keep safe, and we have learned a thing or two about what works and what doesn't.
- When in doubt, feel free to ask.

## **Guidelines for participation**

The Children's Center strives to provide a positive and supportive environment for all who are involved in the program: the children, families, staff and volunteers. In order to accomplish this goal we need the help of everyone involved in our program. The following guidelines are suggestions for ways you can help create the best learning environment for the children in our care.

**1. The safety and emotional well-being of the children is our first concern.**

Be alert to the needs of the children and try to be "pro-active" rather than "re-active". Anticipate behavior and/or unsafe situations before they become a problem. Actively listen to the children and be alert when supervising their activities.

i.e. If one child is starting to climb up the slide and another is starting to slide down, remind the child who is climbing up, that the slide is for going down, the stairs/ladder is for going up. If necessary remove the child from the slide and re-direct him/her to the stairs.

**2. Children are very skillful at overcoming obstacles or working out problems if we give them the opportunity to do so.**

Please do not solve their problems for them but guide them as they attempt to work them out on their own. Do not intervene too soon but observe the situation and give children a chance to talk it out between themselves.

**3. Respect each child as an individual.**

Please avoid comparing children or discussing them in a negative way. Even very young children are sensitive to criticism. This also applies to the other adults you will be working with in the Center. Not everyone has the same skills and experience in working with children. Give each person the right to make mistakes and to learn from them, child and adult.

**4. In our Center the children are free to participate or to choose not to join in specific activities.**

Invite them to join the activity and be friendly but do not pressure them to participate. For many of the children this may be their first experience with new materials and activities and they may be unsure about participating. Offer them the chance to observe the activity from the safety of your lap or while holding your hand or just standing and watching. When they are ready, children will take part in activities that interest them.

**Involve the children in routines and tell them in advance what you will be doing**

**with them.** Whenever it is necessary to take a child away from what they are doing, tell the child in advance what is going to happen and involve him/her in that activity