



Serving children and adults with Down syndrome,
autism and other developmental disabilities

PARENT HANDBOOK

2024 - 2025

4 Fern Place, Plainview, NY 11803

Website: www.acds.org

Follow us on facebook: @ACDSNY

Phone # 516-933-4700 Fax# 516-933-9524

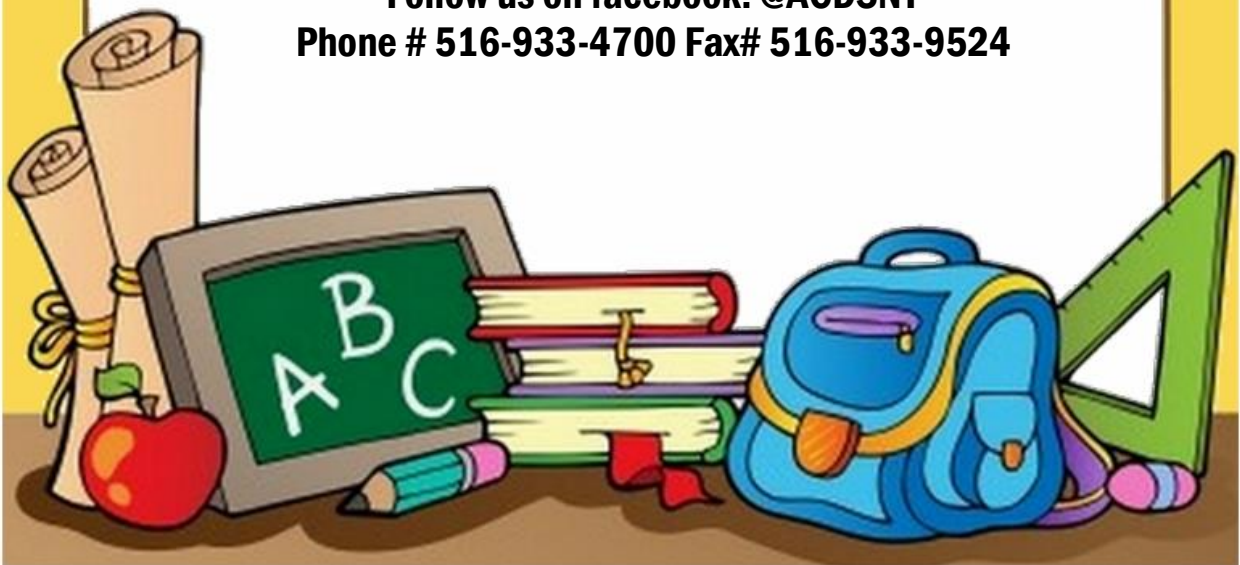


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DIRECTORY

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Transportation	Nancy Heuser	ex.2010	nheuser@acds.org
Intake Coordinator	Regina Noonan	ex.1300	rnoonan@acds.org

MISSION STATEMENT/NY State Regulators

ACDS is dedicated to providing lifetime resources of exceptional quality, innovation and inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome, Autism and other developmental disabilities and their families. As an exemplary agency committed to individuals with disabilities, ACDS' programs and services seek to empower all students to achieve their greatest potential working collaboratively with families with respect, understanding, compassion and teamwork. ACDS is governed by the NY State Department of Health, The NY Stated Education Department, and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). ACDS has a NY State Licensed Day Care Center under OCFS.

EARLY INTERVENTION, PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION, AND KIDS' CONNECTION DAYCARE

ACDS' Early Intervention and Preschool Programs are individualized and all inclusive, designed to meet the student specific profile of children with a diversity of developmental and learning challenges including Down syndrome and other genetic conditions, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, speech and communication delays, neuromuscular disorders, sensory processing dysfunction, and visual and auditory impairments. Programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of the child and allow for continuity of educational/therapeutic service provision from Early Intervention through the preschool years.

ACDS' center-based Early intervention, Preschool and Kids Connection programs are located in an early childhood educational center which also includes the state of the art, clinical wing. A sensory-motor OT gym along with an innovative PT gym were designed to enhance children's fine and gross motor skills, regulatory processing and attending skills necessary for learning. Related service provision, including Occupational, Physical and Speech therapies, are provided on site as well as in the home and in community-based areas.

If you would tour ACDS on any given day you would see children eagerly involved in child centered activities focusing on all developmental domains. Our enriched learning environment provides educational instruction and therapeutic intervention that is comprehensive, modified and adapted to each child's individual needs, unique learning styles and competencies. Activities are developmentally designed to enhance children's learning, focusing on ability and not disability.

ACDS is truly a collaborative learning community; teachers, therapists and families working together to promote learning, social and emotional growth, and a positive sense of self competency. The educational and therapeutic staff is highly trained in designing developmentally appropriate interventions with young children and does so with nurturance, encouragement, and positive support. The positive climate of our school includes mutual respect along with feelings of safety and connectedness, strong teacher-student engagement, collaborative teacher-parent relationships, inherent policies promoting social, emotional, and academic learning along with a system to address barriers to learning and teaching in order to reengage students who are challenged, and the shared goal that each student reach his/her maximum potential. Our school culture is reflected in ACDS' behavioral expectations for students, staff and parents across situations and environments: "Be Kind, Be Safe and Make Good Choices".

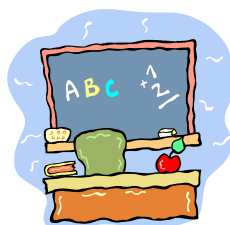
EARLY INTERVENTION

ACDS' Early Intervention (EI) Program is dedicated to providing children, from birth to age 3, with special instruction and related services as authorized on the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Infants and toddlers who are at high risk for developmental delays due to genetic disorders or who demonstrate cognitive deficits, speech and language delays and/or physical disabilities receive a variety of services. These include multidisciplinary evaluations, hands on guidance and special instruction from certified special education teachers and therapy services delivered by licensed physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech and language pathologists. Audiological and counseling services are also provided as authorized.

EI services are offered in a home-based setting, center-based classroom, clinical therapy setting, or through a combination of home/center-based educational/therapeutic interventions in accordance with the family's IFSP.

Parents are actively involved in determining developmental goals for their children and work collaboratively with teachers and therapists in an effort to integrate interventions naturalistically into the child's daily routine and home environment. We are currently authorized to conduct a half day center-based developmental groups for eligible children. Early Intervention center-based programs incorporate ABA instructional methodology in a developmental group.



PRE SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION & INTEGRATED CLASS (3 TO 5 YEAR OLDS)

ACDS provides preschool special education or integrated classroom instruction along with related therapeutic services to children, ages 3 to 5 years of age, who are classified as Preschoolers with a Disability by their school district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE). Educational services are offered in a center-based classroom setting, five days a week (full day schedules). Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of skills in the following areas: pre-academics aligned with New York State Preschool Standards, language and communication, social and emotional learning, adaptive skills, and gross and fine motor development. The goal of ACDS' preschool program is to provide our children with the foundational skills necessary for success upon transition into the public school system in kindergarten.

Children receive a distinctive readiness program aligned with their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Standardized as well as thematic curriculums offer comprehensive, child-centered learning experiences that are differentiated and customized to the student's individual learning profile. ABA instructional methodology is incorporated into classes with a lower student to teacher ratio. Learning enhancements include "specials" – music and adaptive physical education, in addition to health and safety instruction and nature study. Each preschool class is equipped with iPads and a SMART board, utilized as a supplement to curriculum content. When designated on the child's IEP, transportation services are provided.

ACDS' authorized classes include Self Contained: Full day 12:1:3, 12:1:2, 8:1:3 and 6:1:2 classes as well as Full day Integrated 12:1:2 classes which include students classified as Preschoolers with Disability learning alongside typically responsive learners. Related therapeutic services are provided during the school day through ACDS' clinical service department including Physical, Occupational and Speech-Language therapists.

KIDS CONNECTION CHILD CARE

Kids Connection, a New York State Licensed (OCFS) and DSS approved day care program providing an enriched Early Childhood Program for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years, operates from 7am to 5:30 p.m., 52 weeks a year, to accommodate parents' work schedules. Kids Connection offers New York State certified and degree holding teachers, a low student-teacher ratio, three outdoor playgrounds and an indoor physical education program that offers an array of activities.

The comprehensive developmental curriculum includes enriched pre-academics and activities geared toward social and emotional learning along with music classes, movement classes, sensory activities, art education, and nature study. The program offers a health care plan for children with medical needs and has a registered nurse as well as MAT trained (administration of medications) staff on site.

OUR PROGRAM IS LOCATED AT:

ACDS
4 Fern Place, Plainview, NY 11803
(516) 933-4700

ACDS' CLASS TIMES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Preschool Full-day classes: Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Half-day EI program has two sessions:

Monday - Friday Morning 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Monday - Friday Afternoon 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Kid's Connection Day Care

7:00 AM – 5:30 PM



TRANSPORTATION:

Bus transportation is provided through the Nassau or Suffolk County Department of Health who have contracted with **Swissport** for management of transportation services.

Nassau & Suffolk County Students – **Swissport: 516-433-4500 / 631-737-0600**

ACDS Transportation Coordinator: **Nancy Heuser:** (516) 933-4700 Ext 2010, Fax (516) 933-9524

EI Transportation forms will be distributed by ACDS social workers for children residing in Nassau County while transportation for Suffolk County students is handled directly by the county. Any changes that are made to the transportation form cannot be fulfilled during the first two weeks of any given session.

For our preschool students determination of eligibility for transportation for our preschool is made at the time of the child's CPSE meeting and must be included on the child's IEP. All required forms/documentation are handled by the child's school district.

If your child needs a car seat, it will be provided by the bus company. If your E.I. child has special seating needs (i.e.; wheelchair, bucket seat, etc.) the parent will fill out the needs on the transportation form. If your SED child has special seating needs (i.e.; wheelchair) this needs to be filled out at the school district.

For the safety of all children please review the following procedures:

- The transportation company will contact you one to two days before the school session begins. They will inform you of the approximate time your child will be picked up and dropped off. They will notify you if and when they are going to perform a dry run prior to the beginning of classes. If you do not hear from the bus company before the first day of school contact either Nassau or Suffolk County Swissport numbers.
- Please have your child ready and waiting when the bus comes. The bus company personnel cannot ring doorbells or try to locate you. The bus must continue on its route and bus drivers are instructed to wait no longer than 3 to 5 minutes. Please Note: If you are not home at the scheduled drop off time the bus company will continue with the route and drop off your child at the end of the route.
- If your child is ill or will not be attending the program please call the bus company with as much advance notice as possible. When your child is ready to return to school please call the bus company to resume services.
- If your child has been assigned a 1:1 aide and is absent please call Nancy Hauser at. Ex. 2010 to inform her of the absence either the night before or the morning of (before 7:00 AM) at ex. 2010.
- Parents are requested to contact **Swissport Nassau or Swissport Suffolk with any complaints or operational issues.**

- If the bus has not arrived home on time the Nassau County contact is Education Bus Transport 516-935-2277 and We Transport for Suffolk County at 631-242-2796 or contact ACDS at 933-4700.
- **If you drive your child to school and they typically take the bus you must inform Nancy Heuser the child has arrived for the day so they can be signed in properly for the day. If you drive your child to school and the child is taking the bus home you must notify Nancy Heuser and the classroom.**
- For those parents who decide to not use bus services please have your child at the school for the scheduled time of his/her session and you must pick up the child promptly at the end of the session. If you drive your child in both directions you may be eligible for mileage reimbursement. Please contact the Bussing Coordinator for further details.

PARENTAL/CAREGIVER IDENTIFICATION

It is required that you complete the EMERGENCY CONTACT CARD with 2 alternate contacts. These contacts will be called if the parent/guardian cannot be reached, and the child must go home. Children will only be released to parent/guardian or persons listed on the Emergency card. Photo ID will be required upon picking up your child. Restraining orders and custody papers must be legal documents on file in the school office.

SCHOOL SAFETY

ACDS is committed to following procedures which ensure children's health and safety, and which are educationally sound and advantageous. There is one main entrance into the school and all parents and visitors entering the school must do so through this entrance.

- Everyone who enters the building must sign in with the receptionist who will provide a Visitor Badge which is to be worn while in the building.
- All other exterior doors are alarmed. Staff wear identification badges that allow them access into the building by swiping in at designated entries. It also allows access in from both fenced in playgrounds.
- Fire drill and lock down practices are held in accordance with OCFS/NY State Education Regulations.

Toward these ends, the procedure for parent drop-off and pick-up is outlined below.

Early Intervention & Preschool children, including students in Integrated Classes, will be appropriately signed in by the adult that received the child from the parent. Your child will be escorted to his/her classroom. Children to be picked up by parent/guardian at the end of the school day will be brought to the front lobby waiting area by a member of their classroom team at 2:30 PM. The staff member will release your child, once your child has been signed out by a staff member.

- **Daycare, Morning care and After care Children.** Please see the instructions in the Kids Connection Parent Handbook

Children should be brought in for the beginning of the official school day (8:45 – 9:00 AM) and picked up at assigned dismissal times (11:30 AM, 2:30 PM or 3:00 PM).

Once children have been dropped off according to above procedures you are free to leave. At dismissal, once your child has been released into your care please leave the front area of the school in a timely manner to avoid congestion and maintain safety as our bussing children are being released and require a clear passage as they exit. Extensive conversations with staff members or others should not occur at drop off or pick up time. You may call and set up an appointment if you need to speak to your child's teacher at length.

If there is a circumstance when a child is not picked up at the end of their scheduled class time, the emergency contacts will be called to pick the child up. Please make sure that all emergency contact information is up to date and that contact phone numbers are correct and operating. An ACDS staff member will remain with the student until parent/emergency contact picks the child up.

There may be times when you drop-off or pick-up your child after the beginning of the official school day or before the official end of the school day. In these instances, parents/guardians should ring the bell on the front door. Your child will be logged in/out by office personnel. The office will then call your child's classroom, and a classroom staff member will come to the front desk area to escort your child to his/her classroom.

We expect that these procedures, as outlined, will enable us to closely monitor traffic into and out of our school building, thus further ensuring school security. These procedures are also designed to assist your child in transitioning at the beginning and end of the school day. Lastly, these procedures should help to minimize disruption of classroom routines and schedules.

Your cooperation with the parent drop-off and pick-up procedures, as outlined is appreciated.

Fire and Emergency Drills

Section 807 of the Education Law mandates instruction and training of students by means of drills so that they may exit the building in the shortest possible time in an orderly manner while remaining calm. Such drills shall be held at least twelve times in each school year. Eight of all such drills shall be evacuation drills and four of all such required drills shall be lock down drills. Two additional drills shall be held during summer session, one of such drills held within the first week of summer school. In the event of an emergency that children and staff are not permitted to re-enter the building ACDS' reunification site is located at Pasadena Elementary School (adjacent directly next to ACDS).



WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

Below is a list of supplies to send in with your child on the first day of school **please label everything with your child's first and last name:**

- Complete change of clothing – pants, underwear, shirt and socks, one sweatshirt or sweater
- Current picture of your child
- Painting smock
- Bag of diapers or pull ups (if needed, 3 used daily)
- Potty seat or ring (if needed)
- Suntan lotion (no sprays)
- 1 Box of thick sized Crayola crayons
- 1 Box of medium sized Crayola crayons
- 1 Box of magic markers (Preschool students only)
- 1 pair of children's scissors (Preschool students only)
- 1 bottle of glue
- 2 glue sticks
- 1 composition sized notebook for notes from teacher or therapists
- 1 pocket folder

Note: Your child's teacher will contact you for any other additional items that may be needed.

Daily

- Lunchbox with snack, lunch, drink & Silverware (spoon, cup, fork) – please label lunchbox, utensils and food containers with child's first and last name.
- Backpack – check daily for school notices
- Transitional object if needed.

Clothing

Please dress your child appropriately according to the weather and temperature, taking into consideration the opportunity for outside play activities. Please be mindful of your child's footwear. Flip flops pose a safety hazard and should not be worn to school. Sneakers are advisable for outside playground play and gym participation.



EMERGENCY EVACUATION/SHELTER IN PLACE SUPPLIES

These items will be stored separately in our Emergency/Evacuation Bags.

Please send the following items in on your child's first day in a sealed Gallon Ziploc bag:

Infant Program

- One bottle
- Sectioned formula case with enough for three bottles
- Finger foods if your child is on solids
- One pacifier
- One blanket
- One juice box (if your child is on juice)
- One change of clothes

Toddler Program

- Two juice boxes
- Cereal bar or small bag of sealed snacks
- Pacifier if your child uses one
- One blanket
- Complete change of clothes
- Sweatshirt

Preschool Program

- Two juice boxes
- Two small, sealed snacks
- Complete change of clothes
- Sweatshirt

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is very important that your child attends school on a regular basis. Please avoid any unnecessary absences.

- The school nurse must be notified immediately, if your child has a **contagious illness**, so that we may alert others who came in contact with your child. We may be required to notify the Department of Health.
- If your preschool child is absent for more than 5 days, ACDS is required to notify Nassau/Suffolk County Department of Health and your school district.

Reporting absences: It is important that ACDS be informed if your child is going to be absent or late. The school nurse must be notified by phone at ex. 1290 or by email at dvaccaro@acds.org no later than 8:45 A.M. when a child is absent or any reason. In your message or email please include the child's first and last name, teacher/room number, date of absence, and reason for absence. Please alert our main office (ex.1000) if your child will be arriving to school late.



WHEN TO CONTACT THE SCHOOL NURSE

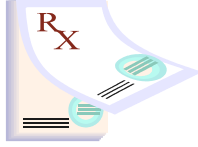
Please be sure not to send your child to school if they are sick. Any child with a fever, diarrhea or vomiting needs to stay home for a minimum of 24 hours & must be symptom free before returning to school. The following are the school's guidelines for exclusion from school:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or greater (until 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal without the use of medication)
- New onset of cold symptoms (excessive sneezing, coughing, runny nose – clear or yellow/green)
- Strep throat or scarlet fever (until treated with antibiotics for 24 hours and fever free)
- Bacterial conjunctivitis (pink eye until treated with antibiotic eye drops for 24 hours)
- Coxsackie (until lesions are scabbed over and there are no new ones)
- Impetigo (until treated with antibiotics for 24 hours)
- Untreated pediculosis (lice – until treatment has started)
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Rash or open lesions to any body part

Children who are absent from school or sent home from school due to a diagnosed illness will need a doctor's note for them to return.

If it is determined that your child should not be in school due to an illness, the nurse will contact you to pick up your child immediately. If you are not available, or cannot pick up your child within an hour, your emergency contact number(s) will be called. It is imperative that your emergency contact person is reliable, has

transportation and is willing to pick up your child. Parents are advised to keep their children home for an adequate time to recuperate and not to allow children back to school still exhibiting symptoms



WHEN IS A DOCTOR'S NOTE IS REQUIRED

The policy of ACDS is that a doctor's note is **required** if your child is:

- hospitalized (admitted)
- receives anesthesia for a procedure
- sent home from school for a medical condition deemed possibly contagious (rash)
- sustains an injury that affects their mobility or range of motion (e.g. broken bone, sprain/strain etc.)
- Receives stitches/sutures to any part of the body

If your child comes to school with an existing injury, rash or medical condition, please notify the school nurse by phone, email or write a brief note in your child's communication book. If a doctor's note is required to return to school it must indicate, as per New York State Education Law, that your child may return to school without restrictions and may resume all therapies. The clearance note must state specifically what therapies your child may resume such as PT, OT and/or ST. Should your child have restrictions, the clearance note must indicate those restrictions. *If your child is seen in Urgent Care, they may not provide a clearance note for OT, PT and/or ST therapies. You may have to visit your child's pediatrician* **Do not send your child back to school without the appropriate clearance note.** If your child arrives to school without a clearance note, you will be notified immediately to pick them up. If you are unavailable, we will call your emergency contact.



HEALTH REQUIREMENTS, HEALTH CARE & NURSING SERVICES

ACDS requires all children receive an annual medical examination and submit completed Health Examination form completed by a physician, signed, stamped, and dated. An immunization record must be attached. **Public Law 2164 as amended by Chapter 35 of the Laws of 2019 prohibits a school from permitting any child to be admitted to such school, or to attend such school, in excess of 14 days without sufficient evidence that the child has received all age-appropriate required vaccinations. All required immunizations must be up to date prior to entry into school.**

At ACDS we want to ensure that all children are kept healthy and safe. In order to do so, please notifying the school nurse if your child:

- Has any food allergies, especially those that require an epinephrine auto-injector or medication allergies.
- Any pertinent medication information such as asthma, seizures, swallow evaluations;
- Needs to have surgery. Needs to have medication administered to them during the school day (if yes, please see below)

All medication (including over the counter medications such as Tylenol, Motrin, and Benadryl) which needs to be administered to your child while in school can only be administered by the school nurse or MAT trained personnel.

No medication will be administered without a doctor's order (Medication Consent) as well as a parent's written permission. Forms can be obtained from the nurse or on our website.

Prescription medications must be sent to school in the original packaging with the prescription label applied by the pharmacy. Over the counter medications need to be unopened and labeled with the name of your child.

Any medication changes, new medical treatment, or dietary herbal supplement change, during the school year, must be reported immediately to the school nurse. It is important for the nurse to be aware of these changes. This information is vital in case your child has an allergic reaction or change in behavior.

Medication is not permitted to be transported to and from school on the school bus or placed in your child's backpack. Medication must be brought to school by the parent/guardian and given directly to the school nurse. A student may not be in school without their prescribed medication.

SPECIALISTS

In order to provide appropriate services for your child, ACDS requests that you provide the name, address and phone number of the specialists who have evaluated/treated your child. Please provide copies of medical reports anytime your child visits medical specialists such as an ophthalmologist, neurologist, orthopedist, etc. If you do not have copies, we will gladly request them for you if you sign a "Consent to Release Records" form which can be found in the nurses' office.

PEANUT SENSITIVE SCHOOL

ACDS is a nut-sensitive school, thus, foods containing peanuts and nuts are not allowed in the school at any time, including peanut butter, granola bars that contain peanuts or tree nuts; granola that contains peanuts or tree nuts; cakes, cookies or other baked goods with peanuts, peanut oil, peanut, or nut-tree flour; and toppings containing tree nuts, peanut butter, or tree-nut butter.

All items that are sent in for a birthday party or celebration must be store bought and labeled with the food ingredients, otherwise, they will not be served. Lastly, any food that is purchased from a pizzeria or fast-food restaurant, must be purchased from a peanut/nut free facility, i.e., in that they do not cook with peanut/nut oil, otherwise, those food items will not be served in school. Please refer to www.snacksafely.com for a list of peanut/nut free items.

CHOKING HAZARDS

Food is a common choking hazard as many children are not able to chew their food well and end up swallowing it whole. Below is a list of foods that are choking hazards and are **NOT** permitted to be in school:

- Whole hot dogs and sausage (must be cut lengthwise and in quarters – in fours)
- Whole grapes (must be cut in quarters – in fours)
- Cherry tomatoes (must be cut in quarters – in fours)
- Whole Cherries (no pits – cut in quarters – in fours)
- Fruit with skin (such as apples – peeled and cut in fours)
- Raw vegetables (carrot & celery sticks)
- Nuts and seeds (school nut FREE)
- String cheese (must be cut in quarters – in fours)
- Hard or sticky candy
- Popcorn
- Raisins
- Fruit snacks/fruit roll up
- Chewing gum
- Marshmallows

Please note it is the parents' responsibility to cut the children's food into the appropriate size and shape as the staff are NOT permitted to do so. If a food that is listed on the above-referenced list arrives with your child and is not cut appropriately, it will not be presented to your child and returned home.

In addition, as per OCFS (Office of Children and Family Services), Section 418.1.5 (aa), plastic bags (zip lock) are NOT permitted to be accessible to children, therefore, please send food items in containers, labeled with your child's first and last name.

ALLERGIES/INTOLERANCES

Any child who has a documented food allergy will have a Food Allergy Care Plan implemented. Children with documented food allergies that require Epinephrine will be placed in a classroom that will be free of that allergen. ACDS's Food Allergy/intolerance policy for children with food allergies/intolerances states that:

1. ACDS will not provide any foods or drinks to a child with a documented food allergy and/or intolerance.
2. All food and drinks provided by the parent, from home, must be labeled with the child's first and last name.
3. Only regularly assigned classroom staff who are familiar with the student and who are trained/aware of allergies will work with the student with allergies during feeding times.
4. Foods that contain known allergens related to an identified food group (i.e. dairy, wheat, nuts), even if reported that the child has tolerated the food without known reaction, and the food is sent into school, from home, it will not be given to the student until the allergy/intolerance has been clarified.
5. The student's chair will have a red alert poster with their name along with the listed allergen/intolerance.
6. A new food or drink is not permitted to be introduced to a student for the first time while in school.

7. Classroom's will notify parents, in advance, when there is a party or celebration in the classroom or school asking for them to provide a snack and drink for their child to have during that time. Refer to www.snacksafely.com for alternatives.
8. If a parent has a specific food preference/restrictions for their child that are not medically based (i.e. gluten free, dairy free, vegan, etc.) they will be asked to sign off whether or not their child may be given food from ACDS.

All food items for parties and celebrations MUST be store bought with food label attached. No home baked goods will be permitted in the school or classrooms for consumption by any child attending the school. If no food label is attached to the provided item it will not be served to any child and returned home to the parent.



EMERGENCY CARE

In the event of a serious injury, including severe trauma, prolonged seizure, etc. 911 will be summoned and an ambulance will take the injured child to either Northwell Plainview Hospital on Old Country Road in Plainview or Nassau University Medical Center. The ambulance staff determines the hospital based on the severity of the emergency. A staff member will accompany the child in the ambulance and will bring a copy of the child's Emergency Information card. The child's parents (or emergency contact) will be notified to meet them at the hospital. In the event of a serious medical incident ACDS is required to notify the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) who may contact you to review the incident and to ascertain that your child's care was appropriate.

SUNSCREEN/OINTMENTS

As per the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), ACDS must have parent permission to apply any over-the-counter topical ointments, lotions, creams, sprays including sunscreen products and topically applied insect repellent. Parent permission must be obtained before any over the counter ointment, etc. can be applied.

If you wish to have sunscreen, topical ointments, such as diaper cream, applied to your child, while in school, please notify the school nurse and obtain a consent form or obtain on our website. Please be aware, that any over the counter ointments, lotions, etc. must be kept in its original container and be labeled with the child's first and last names.

All left over or expired ointments, lotions, etc. will be given back to the child's parents for disposal or disposed of in a garbage container that is not accessible to children.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/SCHOOL CLOSING



ACDS is now part of School Messenger Notification System which allows ACDS to promptly and efficiently communicate with families in case of inclement weather, emergencies or unexpected events. If the situation arises you will receive a phone call on your home and/or cell phone to alert you that ACDS may be closed, has a delayed opening, may be opened without bussing, has an early dismissal or that pm classes are cancelled. Please note that these notifications may occur as early as 6:00 AM or as late as 11:00 p.m. so please provide numbers that are available to receive information at these times. This system may also be utilized to provide families with other important ACDS information or to alert you to important events which are happening in school. You may also call the school at 516-933-4700 for a recorded announcement.

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

Back-to-School Night is a wonderful opportunity for all parents and caregivers to meet the teachers, aides, administrators, other staff members and fellow parents. The event gives you a glimpse of your child's daily life at school and an opportunity to learn about the curriculum. Back to school night takes place within the first three weeks of school and is for parent or caregivers only.

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCE

Formal parent conferences will be scheduled to take place at the end of the first school quarter. This is a planned meeting where the teacher and therapeutic staff and parent/guardian have the opportunity to discuss valuable information related to a student's skill progression in each area of development that will assist the student throughout the school year.

STUDENT EVENTS

ACDS is enriched with special events throughout the year including but not limited to: our annual Fall Harvest, Halloween parade, Thanksgiving parade, Holiday party, Super Bowl celebration, PJs & Pancakes, Field Day, Graduation, International World Down Syndrome Day, Autism Awareness Day, Ice Cream Social and the Petting Zoo. Parents/caregivers will be notified of these events in advance.

PARENT PARTICIPATION/COMMUNICATION

Parent/guardian involvement is collaborative and critical to the development of each child. A family's perspective, priorities and expertise about their child is of utmost importance in order to know everything about your child. Positive relationships with families are acquired through shared decision making, mutual trust and open communication. The uniqueness of each family and the significance of its culture, customs, language, beliefs, and the community context in which it operates are respected.

ACDS encourages parents/guardian to keep the lines of communication open between home and school. Throughout the year notices will be sent home informing parents/guardian of upcoming outdoor events that you may attend. It is critical that you check your email on a daily basis for communication from your teachers and/or therapists regarding your child.

Teachers and staff utilize a variety of strategies to communicate with families. This includes email, phone, communication notebook and google classroom. Both parents/guardians will be provided information unless precluded by legal documentation. Access to cultural support services, including interpreters, is utilized so families receive information in language that is clear and understood.

Teachers can be reached by phone by calling the main office at 933-4700 ex. 1000 and therapists can be reached by calling the clinical department at ex. 1410. Staff is available before 8:45 and after 2:30. If it is an emergency the main office or clinical personnel will alert the teacher/therapist as well as an appropriate administrator and immediate action will be taken as needed.



OUTDOOR PLAY

ACDS is equipped with a two fully enclosed outdoor play areas both highly interactive, specifically designed for toddlers or children from 2-5 years of age. The 2–5-year-old playground is surrounded by a circular blacktop path enabling students to develop higher level gross motor recreational skills such as pedaling a tricycle or participation in such events as a Hot Chocolate Run. ACDS’ toddler playground for our younger children and new walkers allows for sensory exploration as well as development of early foundational motor skills and understanding of appropriate equipment utilization. Weather permitting, the children will go outside to the playground. As mandated by OCFS regulations children will have outdoors play every day. Exception will be when the wind chill is below 30 degrees Fahrenheit, the heat index is 90 degrees Fahrenheit or above or when the air quality index is in the unhealthy range. Please dress your children accordingly.

YOUR CHILD’S TEAM

Your child’s educational team can consist of parent/guardian, special educator, teacher assistants, social workers, school psychologist, BCBA, music therapist, physical education teacher, and any or all of the following; occupational therapist, physical therapist and speech/language therapist.

NYS Special Education Teacher: The teacher is trained to help your child learn by understanding his/her learning style as well as competencies and weaknesses. This is accomplished by presenting explicit learning opportunities in an organized, structured and supportive classroom environment with a clear integration of academic instruction, positive behavioral supports, and social and emotional learning. Emphasis on activities of daily living is also emphasized during instructional time.

Teacher Assistants: A teacher assistant helps the teacher prepare classroom activities and provides assistance, guidance and direction to the children during individual and group activities throughout the instructional day.

Music Therapist: Music therapy is a creative process using sound, music and movement within an educational and therapeutic setting. It involves the interaction of the children and music therapist providing a nurturing and pleasant experience that generates feelings of well-being for all children.

Physical Education Teacher: The goal of the adapted physical education program is to improve strength, balance, coordination and agility. Age appropriate materials, games and water play are designed to assist in the development of gross and fine motor skills, cognition, attending and self-awareness.

Speech/Language Therapist: The speech/language therapist is specially trained to help your child develop appropriate language and communication skills as well as promote oral motor control and skills necessary for feeding. This includes facilitating both language comprehension and expression through structured child centered play, using a variety of developmentally appropriate materials.

Physical and Occupational Therapists: Occupational & Physical Therapists are responsible for the evaluation and treatment of a variety of sensory, motor and developmental disabilities. The therapists implement and carry out individualized programs for children that facilitate and promote development and refinement of gross and fine motor skills.

Occupational Therapists focus on sensory processing skills, upper extremity strengthening, grasp patterns & hand function, visual/perceptual motor skills and activities of daily living.

Physical Therapists focus on gross motor activities that incorporate balance, coordination, locomotion, strength and endurance so that the children can safely negotiate their environments.

Clinical and School Psychologists: ACDS' clinical and school psychologists are trained to provide comprehensive psychological/Developmental evaluations and lead our multi-disciplinary team during initial, transitional or supplemental evaluations. School psychologists are also responsible for the development and implementation of Early Childhood Positive and Behavioral Intervention Supports and social and emotional learning. When necessary, ACDS psychologists conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA). If warranted, a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) will be created to improve students learning, attending, socialization and generalization of behavior across settings. ACDS clinical and school psychologists also are available to provide family training and for our children. Each classroom is assigned a specific Psychologist.

BCBA: ACDS' BCBA is a board certified and NYS licensed Behavior Analyst that provides specialized classroom support to reduce problem behavior as well as increase positive behavior through assessment and intervention planning. Our BCBA trains staff in the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and works collaboratively with classroom teachers to create an individualized ABA program for each student requiring this methodology of instruction. Student specific positive reinforcement contingencies are determined and used to address academic skills, social behaviors, communication abilities, self-help skills and functional play.

Social Workers: Here at ACDS, the Social Work Department offers a variety of services to the families of our children. This Department is comprised of two licensed Social Workers, one clinical social worker and a bilingual Social Work assistant. Social Workers provide ongoing support to assist you and your families in the form of groups, trainings, information and referrals to outside resources. Social Workers serve as a liaison between the home and school environment and are available to address any concerns impacting your child or family. Along with the psychologists, Social Workers facilitate Social and Emotional learning groups within the classroom setting. Each classroom is assigned a specific Social Worker who would welcome the opportunity to speak with you to be a source of ongoing support throughout the school year.

SCHOOLWIDE BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

ACDS is committed to utilizing the best practices and behavior management techniques that incorporate positive behavioral supports and proactive, preventative strategies. Our philosophy and procedures are designed to provide the best care, safety and welfare for all our students across all situations. Proactive planning involves providing our children with clear, concise expectations, predictable routines, intentional teaching, and external structure in which they can develop their self-regulatory abilities.

ACDS strictly prohibits any method or interaction that is punitive, demeaning or humiliating. The use of aversive techniques (i.e. punishment, time-out, verbal threats or physical discipline) is prohibited as is withholding of food, rest or sleep. Students will be supported to regain self-control and will never be isolated in an area where they cannot be supervised or seen.

ACDS STUDENT RIGHTS/STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

All children have the right to learn and play in a school environment which is safe, conducive to learning, orderly and free from harassment and bullying. ACDS is committed to providing such an environment for our students, maintaining respect for the dignity of each student, embracing diversity, and supporting our students to develop and maintain the learning and social behaviors needed to relate to others. Through the provision of a nurturing, accepting and secure school setting our goal is for every student to reach their fullest potential academically, socially, and emotionally, preparing them for entrance into public school. Responsible behavior by teachers, therapists, administrators and other ACDS staff along with parents and visitors is important to achieving this goal through provision of a positive school climate.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents of ACDS students are considered collaborative partners for success in academic, social and emotional learning. Parental expectations include:

- Send student to school appropriately dressed for the weather and activities
- Ensure children attend school regularly and are on time
- Notify the school nurse if your child is absent being mindful of unexcused absences
- Maintain ongoing communication with my child's teacher and therapists by participating in Back to School Night, Parent Conferences and checking emails and google classroom daily.
- Maintain respectful, positive relationships with staff, parents and children, being polite and courteous during all interactions
- Speak directly to child's teacher or administrator if a problem arises
- Provide and update school with all pertinent medical, legal and emergency contact information as well as any changes in the home environment that may impact student conduct or performance
- Maintain confidentiality – refrain from asking questions or talking about other students with staff or individuals encountered at school or in the community
- Maintain safety practices on school property – park in designated areas, do not block other cars or interfere with bussing, drive slowly and carefully in the parking lot, and be courteous to other drivers
- Follow school- wide policies and procedures as outlined in Parent Handbook.

ACDS Administration

- ACDS administration is committed to providing professional development training, adequate staffing, additional resources, critical reflection and collegial support opportunities for all staff
- Maintain high expectations for themselves and ACDS staff, committing to achieving best practices with all children
- Promote a safe, orderly and stimulating school environment as well as creating a positive school climate that teaches respect for all, is culturally sensitive, and models positive behavioral interactions
- Support engaged teaching and evaluate all instructional programs on a regular basis
- Are responsible for enforcing the code of conduct and following up on any issues that need resolution
- Follow up on any reported incidents of discrimination and harassment

- ACDS employs and supports a therapeutic/teaching staff with all discipline specific licensure or certification qualifications, knowledge and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development as well as to support families' diverse needs, concerns, and interests.

ACDS will promptly investigate all reports of suspected discrimination or violations of the Student code of Conduct and/or harassment and take appropriate action as necessary.

MANDATED REPORTER

All staff members employed at ACDS are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or maltreatment. It is the legal responsibility of a mandated reporter to make a report to the New York State Central Register (SCR) of Child Abuse and Maltreatment if in his or her professional role at the center he or she has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment or acquires information in any way about a suspected case of abuse or maltreatment. Under no circumstances will ACDS carry out its own investigation into any allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse. Full cooperation will be given to any and all properly identified representatives from Child Protective Services, OCFS or Law Enforcement agencies looking into a suspected instance of child abuse or maltreatment. If a parent has any concerns regarding the safety of their child, assistance can be accessed by contacting their child's teacher, classroom social worker or psychologist, educational administrator, School Principal, Executive Director and/or The New York State Child Abuse and Maltreatment Register at 1-800-635-1522. Parents must inform their child's teacher of any visible injuries or marks on their child. It is in the best interest of the parent to tell the teacher how the injury occurred and what, if any, action had been taken to care for the injury. This will be documented on our standard accident/incident report to keep in the student's file. Parents/guardians will be promptly informed if a child is injured or sustains a mark or abrasion on his or herself (accidental or otherwise) or if a previously unreported mark to the skin is discovered. This will be documented on our standard accident/incident report and kept on file.

ACDS will follow the guidelines set by New York State on how to proceed when an allegation made against an employee or volunteer involving a child is brought to the attention of a supervisor or Designee. The person who has been made aware of the alleged abuse will complete an incident report following the guidelines set by New York State Education Department's Social Service law regarding Child Abuse in an Educational setting as well as procedures set forth by OCFS. Parent/guardian will be notified immediately of the allegation as well as NYS OCFS and the SCR. Law enforcement will be notified if deemed necessary. The NY State Commissioner of Education will also receive a report when the individual alleged to have committed an act of child abuse holds a certification of licensure from the NY State Education Department.

PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEOTAPES



A photo release form is provided and if given permission grants ACDS permission to use any and all photos/videos/audios taken or conducted at, by, or for ACDS, including annual class pictures, special functions and events (i.e. holiday parties, field day, dance recitals, etc.). This form will remain in effect throughout your child's education at ACDS unless a new release is requested.

PLEASE NOTIFY THE SCHOOL

- Your address and/or phone number (home or work) changes

- There is any change in the authorized person picking up your child
- There are significant changes at home that can impact your child's health or learning
- Your child has a prolonged illness or will be away from school for an extended length of time

NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA

The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are: (1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the school receives the requests; (2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate; (3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent (option). Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll; (4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. **Parents need to put requests in writing.**

USE OF GPS TRACKING SYSTEMS

ACDS recognizes student specific needs warranting the use of GPS Tracking systems designed to maintain the health and safety of children with special needs who are nonverbal or who have a tendency to wander or elope. ACDS takes no responsibility or liability for any GPS/Tracking Devices that are brought into and/or used at the school. This includes potential damage or loss incurred from normal use, breakage, and/or theft. **Parents must sign a waiver at the beginning of each school year, indicating their awareness, understanding and acceptance of this policy.** This policy applies to the equipment owned by the student's family as well as equipment provided to the student by a school district or other outside source. Further, ACDS assumes no responsibility or liability for any damages, usage fee, phone charges, subscriptions, financial obligations of any kind related to the aforementioned equipment and/or related service. This includes but is not limited to loss of data, corrupted files, and/or applications and/or service interruptions. Use of any information obtained via the Internet on any device referenced in this document is at the user's discretion and own risk. To maintain the confidentiality of all our students, no recording of video or audio are permitted in the school. If a tracking device has one of these features, including a listening in option, it must be disabled (turned off) during school hours. **Parents must sign an attestation acknowledging that they understand this.**

PTO (Parent Teacher Organization)

ACDS' PTO consists of parents who volunteer their time to support student learning, create and participate in events for the children and hold fundraisers for the purpose of purchasing equipment and technology to assist student instruction. The PTO invites all parents to join and involve themselves in whatever way they can to be an active part of the ACDS community. The money raised over the past few years from PTO fundraisers has been used to purchase Smartboards, contribute to the creation of ACDS Infant/Toddler Daycare and Early Intervention playground. As part of the PTO you may volunteer for committees and events and help shape the school year for you and your child. The donation of your time, talent or treasure is incredibly useful to keep the school thriving. You will receive information from the PTO after the start of the school year. Please follow the PTO on Facebook @PTO for ACDS. If you have any questions, please email: ACDS.PTO@gmail.com.