

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Continuity of Care

Continuity of care has been in practice at St. Aloysius Child Care Center since 1998. Continuity of care is a staffing system that allows the same caregiver to remain with a group of children for as long as possible in their first three years. Here at St. Aloysius, a child enters the Center in the infant room. A child stays with Linda and Wanda for about a year. The child then moves with several other infants to a continuity of care “family”. Tiffany, Lucy, Laurie, or Regina will be the primary caregiver in the “family”. The “family” stays together until the summer that the class has or is turning three. In June or August of that year, the children move to T1 to be with Tina and Latrenda in the three year old program.

As the children get older, the ratio of child to teacher grows as does the size of the class. Children in continuity of care families have birthdays that put them all in pre-k together. Usually two continuity of care families will make up one pre-k class. All children in the family or families turn four by September 30 of the school year. When the class moves from the Child Care Center three year old program to St. Aloysius School Pre-K class (those who are accepted into the program), no child is left behind because he/she is too young for the class.

Continuity of care is based on the theory that children are more secure and trusting in their relationships with others and with the world, when they have a warm, appropriate, caring, consistent caregiver. The parents are the caregiver of the child’s first continuity of care family. The “family” at the Child Care Center tries to be like the family unit in meeting the child’s needs while the child is away from home.

At St. Aloysius Child Care Center, we are blessed with a very low turnover in the staff. This allows the continuity of care system to be successful. Classes may move from space to space in the Center, but the primary caregiver will remain the same. New children may be added to the continuity of care family as vacancies occur or the children get older, but they will come from outside of the Center, not moved up or down from another class. When a class moves to the three year old program, the caregiver “loops” back to start a new “family” with children gathered from the infant room.

Continuity of care promotes closer relationships between the child and the caregiver; the caregiver and the parents; and the parents of one child, and the parents of another; and between the children themselves. Continuity of care has created our room parent program. A parent or two in each “family” is responsible for communicating information to the parents and for encouraging and facilitating conversation and relationship among the parents.

If you have questions about continuity of care that were not answered here, please let us know. We will answer your questions in the next newsletter.

What is the Christmas Toy Drive?

The Child Care Center Council decides on a charity to “adopt” at Christmas. The Parental Involvement Committee of the Child Care Council organizes the toy drive. Center families bring new or gently used toys to give to needy children. After the gifts are collected, Santa visits the Center. He comes to the Center on a fire truck. The firefighters help Santa load the gifts on the fire truck to take them to needy children. This is a very exciting project for the children and the families. All children who are willing come to the parking lot to say “Hello!” to Santa. Parents are invited to this event.

What is Breakfast with Santa?

After loading the Christmas gifts on the fire truck, Santa takes a stroll over to T1. Santa reads a story or two and then joins the children in T1 for morning snack. This is a very special event for the children enrolled in T1. T1 is the only classroom in the Center that gets a special visit from Santa. T1 Parents are invited to share breakfast and a story with Santa.

Where did the idea of the Christmas fund for teachers start?

Several years ago the Staff Appreciation committee surveyed the Center staff to see what gifts they most enjoy from the parents. The staff suggested that one gift from all the families together would be more useful than small gifts from individual families. From that point the “gift fund” was born. The room parents manage the fund for each class. The fund is voluntary. Families may give individual gifts instead of contributing to the fund if they prefer. The room parent uses the fund to give one gift

(usually a gift card) to the teacher and other staff assigned to the class. This gift is from the entire class regardless of how many families contribute to the fund. .

What is Pre-K Application Day?

Pre-K application day is scheduled on a Thursday in early February from 9:00- 1:00 pm in the parish Hall.

Pre-K application day is the day all children turning four by September 30, can apply for the pre-k program at St. Aloysius School. In mid January, the Center give a Pre-School packet to the parents of all children enrolled in T1. This packet answers many questions parents have about the move to “the big school” in August. . On that day Tina and Latrenda will have a copy of the application for enrollment to Pre-k. Parents can view the application and ask questions about the application process and the pre-school program at SAS. The orientation program at the Center is designed help families through the application process.

On application day in February you will need to bring copies of your child’s birth certificate, baptism certificate, current immunization record and social security number. You should also bring a list of all ministry involvement you have in the parish. Moving to the big school can be a very stressful move for some families. We have designed this program to help relieve some of the stress from this important milestone in the life of you and your child.

What are all those envelopes on the classroom bulletin boards?

The envelope marked “Tuition, Fees, and Notes for the Office”, is for any correspondence or payment going to the office. Notes, envelopes, tuition payments, and other “stuff” is gathered from these envelopes several times a week. The envelope marked “Room Parent” is for correspondence and fees going to the room parent of your classroom. The room parents will sometime ask for information from the parents. In the fall, contributions to the teacher fund and contact information is placed in this envelope. In the spring, staff appreciation information is placed in this envelope. This envelope is checked a few times a month by the room parents. The envelope marked “Notes for the Teacher” (not every bulletin board has one of these) is for any notes or correspondence you might want to get to your child’s teacher. This envelope is particularly important if your daily schedule is such that you do not see your child’s teacher on a regular basis. This envelope is checked several times a week.

The “runny nose” and the “diarrhea policies are hard to live with as working parents. Can they be changed?

The health policies in the Parent Handbook are the result of many years of research and communication. The parents through the years via the SACC Council and in the past, the Parent Committee, have been in dialogue with the administration for many years about these policies. The Center looks at the policies from the side of the parent of the well child in a classroom. We have gathered information from National conferences and from local pediatricians about how to stay well in the classroom. The most common solution, although no solution is perfect, is to wash hands all the time and to exclude the ill child. Who decides when a child is ill? The staff can only look at the symptoms a child exhibits. We look at fever, loose stools, vomiting, the green runny nose, or coughing. The parent has the burden of proving that the symptoms do not add up to an illness. This decision can best be made by the pediatrician. With a note from the doctor, the child can return to the Center in 24 hours if they are not contagious and free of the symptoms that sent them home. Without a note, time is your next ally. In time most viral illnesses will run their course. Without a note, a child can return in 48 hours if not contagious and free of the symptoms that sent them home.

Who’s in charge when the director is not in the Center?

Licensing requires a “staff in charge” to be appointed to supervise the Center when the director is away from the Center. St. Aloysius Child Care Center does not have the funds to afford an

assistant director. Every staff with the exception of the cook and the director is in the classroom with the children. Linda Montague in the absence of the director and Tina Currier in the absence of Linda and the Director have been appointed “staff in charge”. If you have a comment or concern when the Director is away from the Center, talk with Linda in the infant room or in her absence, talk with Tina.

Where are the classrooms and what how are they labeled?

There are seven “classrooms” in the Center. The Center consists of the Main House and two t buildings. Each room one has a sign on the door labeling the room (the infant area is the only exception).

1. Miss Lucy is in the **Carport room**. It is the room nearest the office and is at the end of the driveway that runs to the front of the Center. It was a carport in the days when a family lived in this house. This room does not have access to a potty so the younger children usually live in this room.
2. Miss Tracy is in the **Zoo room**. It is so named because the border in the room has zoo animals on it. It was the Garden room, but the flower mural was painted over. This room is down the hall from the office. It is to the left as you walk into the main entrance of the Center. This room does not have access to a potty so the younger children usually live in this room.
3. The infants are located in the Fireplace Room (so named because it has a fireplace in it), the **Front Corner Room** (named for its location in the building), and the Soft room (named because in the early days it was the only room in the house with carpet – Yes there are hardwood floors under most of the carpet in the house.). The infant rooms do not have signs on them. You know these rooms because there are lots of babies, beds, swings, bottles, rattles, and other baby things in the rooms. You also know this are because Miss Linda, Miss Noel, Miss Sandy, and Miss Hazel are there.
4. Miss Laurie is in the **Blue Room**. It was green for a long time but was repainted blue. This room is on the opposite side of the infant deck from the Zoo room. It completes the other arm of the “U” shape of the house. This room has its own bathroom with a child size potty. Children can be and are potty trained in this room.
5. Miss Tiffany and Miss Regina are in **T2**. T2 is our newest t building. It located nearest the rectory. It is on the south end of the property. T2 has an upper deck and a lower deck and it has a handicap ramp. It has a bathroom with two child sized potties. Children eat snack and lunch in this building. It is a self contained classroom.
6. Miss Tina, and Miss Latrenda, are in **T1**. T1 is the home of our three year olds (some children have already turned four). This is our oldest t building. It is also a self contained classroom. It has the “southern style” porch across the front. From a distance it looks like someone’s camp in the woods. The children in this building will go to pre-school at St. Aloysius in August 2010.
7. The house also has a staff bathroom with an adult sized potty (thank goodness). This room is located off the hall near the office. The stack washer and dryer are located in the closet in this bathroom.
8. The **Kitchen** is located in the house. All meals and snacks are prepared in the kitchen. The kitchen was expanded several years ago. We took out two closets and a wall (non-load bearing of course) to enlarge the work area. We added cabinets and shelving to facilitate storage and to increase surface work area.
9. The **Office** is located in what used to be the paint and lawnmower room. It is down the hall from the staff bathroom and from the door of the zoo room. It is small and cozy.
10. The **Dining Room** is located just inside the main entrance. Classes from the soft room, carport room, zoo room and blue room eat in the dining room. We follow a snack and lunch schedule that allows about 30 minutes per class for snack and for lunch.
11. There are three storage sheds on Center property. The shed in the front yard contains paint, the fryers, and the yard lights used at the fish fry and the pumpkin carving party. There are two

sheds in the back yard. One shed is the “Toy” shed. It contains duplicate and extra toys and other classroom supplies. The other shed is the “work” shed. It contains nails, screws, tools, furniture parts, extra beds, and other pieces and parts to repair stuff.

12. There are five decks or porches around the Center. T2 has a covered upper (1) and a covered lower deck (2) or porch. T1 has a covered deck (3) or porch. The Carport room has a covered deck (4) or porch and the infant room has a covered deck (5) or porch.

If you have any questions about the physical setup of the Center or if you would like a tour, please let me or any staff member know. We will be glad to show you around.

What is the Krewe of Tots parade?

On the Thursday before the weekend before Mardi Gras Tuesday, The Krewe of Tots parade rolls on the St. Aloysius Campus. Parents and children decorate wagons, trikes, strollers or just about anything that rolls for the event. Families bring beads to the Center all year long for the staff to get ready for the parade. Children in T1 decorate t shirts to wear for the event. At 10:00 am, the music starts, the wagons are lined up, and the parade begins. The parade winds around the campus. The church office staff, school children and the school administration staff pour out of the buildings to watch and call out “throw me something mister”. All children at the Center except the infants are in the parade. It is quite a sight to see. Plan to attend and plan to parade. Bring out the green, gold, and purple streamers and paint to decorate your wagon. “Let the good times roll.”

What is the Thanksgiving Food Drive?

The Parental Involvement Committee of the Child Care Council arranges for barrels from the food bank to be brought to the Center. For the two weeks before Thanksgiving, Center families bring non-perishable food to the Center to donate to the food bank. The families are encouraged to include their children in this “giving” project.

What is the Family Picnic?

On Two Fridays a year – one in the fall (October) and one in the spring (late April or early May) - parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family members, and friends of all ages come to the Center for lunch. Several volunteer Dads grill about 200 burgers on Center grills. Several volunteer Moms help in the kitchen preparing lettuce, tomatoes, and onions. Beginning at 11:00 am with parents from the infant and toddler rooms, many hungry friends, and family come to have lunch. At 11:30 am T2 parents eat, and at noon T1 parents eat. It is a rain or shine event.

If it should rain, we will eat under our many covered decks on picnic blankets. Bring a chair if you wish. The menu is burgers (grilled with a secret sauce), chips, lemonade, and cupcakes. Watch the bulletin board for sign up sheets. Mark your calendar for a long lunch on that day. See you at the picnics!

What is the Pumpkin Carving Party?

At about 4:00 on a Friday in October , the SACC facilities committee arrives at the Center to arrange 35 tables in the front yard at the Center. Lights are set up to illuminate the activity as the sun goes down. The children are usually outside playing in the Center back and side play yards, unaware of the fun and good times being planned for them.

Inside T1, members of the staff and the party committee are busy setting up THE SPOOK HOUSE. (Our spook house is totally and unmistakably age appropriate. In the past even the strongest hold outs have given in and ventured through the doors into the blackness of the room.)

By 5:30PM , the last child has been picked up from the Center. The tables are ready, the final touches are put on the spook house, and the pizzas are on the way. The Center is locked down for the weekend. All is over but the waiting.

Around 6:00 pm, families start drifting from the parking lot area into the front yard. They are carrying and/or dragging ice chests, strollers, children, pumpkins, and chairs. Each family chooses a table. Some look for friends; some look for their child's classmate; some look for their teacher; some look for relatives; some families take up an entire table to themselves. Soon all the tables are filled with people, and pumpkins, and babies, and beverages.

The pizzas arrive and the announcement is made "let's eat". Pizza, plates, and napkins begin flying everywhere. Somewhere between picking a table and eating pizza some very creative, and in some cases, complicated pumpkin carving happens. Children, parents, and pumpkins seeds are everywhere. Everyone is having a great time!!

Just when you think it can't get any better the announcement is made that the SPOOK HOUSE is open. Children rush to get in line outside of T1. Once in the room, some scream for fun, some laugh, some touch things, some cling to Mom or Dad. The feeling in the spook house is eerie, but still they come back again and again. After at least 6 or 8 trips through the darkened room, parents gather their children to start the process of going home.

Families leave as they came – by ones and twos, by families, with friends, with teachers, with relatives, with a carved pumpkin, and a painted face. They slowly leave the party to travel home for bath and story and bed time. Everyone is tired. Everyone had a great time. Everyone can't wait till next year. Some families are a bit sad because it was their last pumpkin carving party with their Center friends. (Even though they know they are invited back every year).

After the crowd has vanished into the outer reaches of the parking lot, the clean up crew goes into action. The tables are taken down; trash is moved to the street; the Spook House is packed way for next year.

On Monday morning the Center will again be ready to receive children. The staff will be in place. The families will be on schedule to drop their children off for the day. Only a carved pumpkin and the memory of a great time in the front yard on Friday night will remain in the minds of parents, children, and staff.

Ya'll come It's a great time for everyone.

PS. In the event of rain the party will be moved to the covered porches at the Center.

What type of training does the staff get on an on going basis?

The Department of Social Services through the Child Care licensing document requires that staff receive 12 hours of "state approved" training every year. In addition to the twelve hours staff must have three hours in Health and Safety or Medication training annually and the staff must be certified in CPR. The twelve training hours can be chosen from a brochure of pre set training topics or the director can customize training to meet the needs of the Center.

In order to qualify for more stars in the QRS program, the some of the staff will soon enroll in the CDA or Child Development Associate credential. This program requires 120 hours of course work, plus an evaluation or assessment of staff in the classroom. The CDA is a national credential. It is recognized throughout the United States.

Why do we keep toys in storage?

Our goal is for each lead teacher to have a complete set of toys for age 13 mos. – 40 mos. These ages cover the children in the continuity of care classes. Those toys that are not appropriate for the age in the classroom at the time are stored in the "toy shed". The infant room, blue room, t2 and t1 are equipped with the toys and furnishings needed for the age most often using those spaces. Teachers may have specific items they prefer to use in their curriculum stored in the shed.

Do the T-1 teachers have parent/teacher conferences?

The answer to this question is “yes” and “no”. Conferences are scheduled on an as needed basis. The teachers in T1 will have a conference with you if you feel that you need one. Likewise the teachers will ask you for a conference if they feel that they need to talk with you. Some years we schedule conferences with all parents. Other years we only schedule conferences as needed. Please tell Tina or Latrenda if you would like to have a conference.

Where does all the money go?

A copy of the Child Care Center annual budget is available in the Center office. The budget explains where the money is spent. Salaries and salary related expenses make up 91% of the budget. Because we are in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, there is a mandatory retirement plan that all full-time staff must participate in. The Center matches retirement contributions with 7% of employees' wages.

The diocese offers a group health plan that is optional to staff. Eleven fulltime staff members are on the Diocesan Health Plan. The Center pays over 2/3 of the health insurance premium for each employee covered by the policy.

The remainder of the income goes to food, consumables, equipment and building repair, licensing, and other expenses. Playground equipment, classroom furniture, toys, and other supplies are purchased with the profit from the fund raiser. Profit from the fund raiser is not in the operating budget because the total is not predictable. Any donations from the families in response to the “wish lists” in the classroom, frees up budgeted monies and fund raiser profits to purchase other items. If you have any questions about the budget or other money matters, please ask

Will my child learn to read at St. Aloysius Child Care Center?

The answer is maybe - maybe not. “Learn through play” is the educational philosophy of the Center. Play is hard work for children and we expect them to work hard. We believe that children learn through the experiences they encounter; the people and friends they meet and play with; the questions they ask; and the problems they are faced with and they solve each day. We believe that the most important thing in your child's day is that they are in a loving, warm, secure, trusting, understanding, positive, and safe environment. While they are comfortable in this enriching environment, they are playing and learning.

The teachers in the preschool at St. Aloysius School tell us that our graduates know all they need to know when they enter pre-school. Most can recognize and even write some letters and, in most cases, their name. Most can count to who knows how high. They recognize shapes in places other than in the classroom blocks and can sort objects by one or more characteristics. But the bigger accomplishment that our graduates experience is that they know how to play. They know the role of the teacher in the group and they know how to get along with friends. They know how to be fair and just. They know how to be kind. They have strong socialization skills. They know how to listen and understand directions. They know how to “use their words”. This means they can speak for themselves in a conflict situation; they recognize their own feelings and can express them to a friend. If your child learns to read in our three year old class, it tells us that your child is ‘ready’ to read. If your child learns to read in our three year old class, it is a rare and special result of learning through play.

Will my child learn to read in the Center?

This poem was published in the newsletter of a child care center in Florida. IT is the answer to the question.

Just Playing?!

Today I did my math and science.
I toasted bread I halved and quartered,
I counted, measured used my eyes
and ears and head.
I added and subtracted on the way
I used a magnet, blocks, and a memory tray.
I learned about a rainbow and how to weigh.
So please don't say, "Anything in your
bag today? "

You see I'm sharing as I play.
I learned to listen and
speak clearly when I talk, to wait my turn, and
when inside to walk. To put my thoughts into
a phrase and to guide a crayon through a maze.
To find my name and write it down,
to do it with a smile and not a frown.
To put my pasting brush away,
So please don't say, what, "Nothing in your
bag today?"

I've learned about a snail and a worm,
remembering how to take a turn.
Helped a friend when he was stuck,
learned that water runs off a duck.
I looked at words from left to right,
agreed to differ, not to fight.
So please don't say, "Did you only
play today?"

Who cares for my child when our primary caregiver is ill, on vacation or takes a day off?

Miss Linda, Lucy, and Theresa work four ten hour days. They are each off one day a week. One staff is designated to step into the classroom when these ladies are off. Miss Laurie works a 32 hour week. She is also off one day a week. One staff is designated to step into the classroom when Laurie is off.

On some occasions, mainly between college semester breaks, when the college staff is working full time that, our college staff may substitute for staff on vacation, or ill. In making decisions about placing substitutes in any given classroom, a big part of the decision is how well the staff knows the children and the children know the staff. The "fit" of substitute staff is in a classroom very important.

Keeping up with the names of the college staff can be a challenge for parents. Most of our college staff stay at the Center for their full four or five year term in college. Some work only during semesters and others work only in the summer and between semester breaks. It is normally the "long term" colleges staff who will substitute for primary staff.