



Family Handbook

Revised September 2026

The Mini University Mission

To provide the best working environment for staff so that they can provide the highest quality accredited early childhood programs for children.

All communication between programs and families should be based on the concept that parents are and should be the principal influence in children's lives.

Mini University, Inc. · miniuniversity.net
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Welcome & Who We Are

Welcome to the Mini University School Family

We are so glad you have chosen our program for your child. We look forward to providing a safe, clean, play-filled, and stimulating early learning environment where your child can grow.

We promise to work in partnership with you to support your child's developing mind and abilities. We are dedicated to creating a personal, family-friendly transition into our program, built around your child's needs. Thank you for trusting us and sharing your child with us.

We believe in positive partnerships with families and will always keep open communication with you. Please begin sharing information with us, so we can learn about your expectations and your hopes and goals for your child. Ask us questions, and feel free to call or stop by anytime.

We also want to create opportunities for you to meet other Mini University families — so introduce yourself, and talk with your child's teachers about ways to get more involved. Thank you for choosing us to share in the wonderful experience of early childhood with you.

Respectfully your partner in education, The Mini University Leadership Family

Our Centers

Center	Address	Contact	Hours
The Hope Center for Families	1816 Harvard Blvd. Dayton, OH 45406	(937) 739-HOPE (4673) hope@miniuniversity.net	7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday – Friday
Miami University Child Development Center	401 Western College Drive Oxford, OH 45056	(513) 529-8383 miami@miniuniversity.net	7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday – Friday
Sinclair Community College Early Childhood Education Center	140 S. Perry St., Building 9 Dayton, OH 45402	(937) 512-2234 sinclair@miniuniversity.net	6:30 a.m. – 5:45 p.m. Monday – Friday
Wright State University Child Development Center	3640 Col. Glenn Hwy. Dayton, OH 45435	(937) 775-4070 wsu@miniuniversity.net	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday – Friday

Evening and overnight care is not currently provided at any Mini University location. Find us online at www.MiniUniversity.net.

NAEYC Accreditation — The Gold Standard



All Mini University programs are accredited by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** — widely regarded as the gold standard in early childhood education. Less than 5 percent of early learning programs in the country are accredited.

Accreditation is voluntary and rigorous. To earn and keep it, a program must meet all **9 NAEYC standards**: Relationships · Families and Community · Curriculum · Teaching · Assessment · Health · Physical Environment · Professionalism · Leadership and Management. Accredited programs are re-evaluated on a five-year cycle and are always prepared for unannounced quality-assurance visits — which means the quality you saw on your tour is the quality your child experiences every day.

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ)



Step Up to Quality is Ohio's quality rating and improvement system, which recognizes programs at Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels. It exists to help families identify early learning programs that go beyond the minimum standards of licensing, and rated programs demonstrate higher levels of quality in a number of ways.

EVERY DAY MATTERS

There are roughly 1,892 days between a child's birth and the first day of school. All Mini University programs hold the highest **Gold Level rating**, and every classroom has a degreed teacher committed to the quality expectations the Gold rating represents.

Our Philosophy — Places for Childhoods

Mini University strives to create environments filled with texture and warmth, where children and adults feel free to experience life. Jim Greenman's *Caring Spaces, Learning Places* outlines the beliefs behind environments like these:

- Good settings respect children's ability to learn, and believe in active, hands-on learning.
- Good settings recognize and respect children as individuals, and understand their need for care.
- Good settings are built and maintained by adults who learn by observing children, and by drawing on their own experience as children and as adults.
- Good settings respect adults' ability to learn and adults' need for comfort.
- Good settings know that “life has loveliness to offer” — and work hard to provide it.

“Given the time children spend in them, it is not an exaggeration to view child care programs as places for childhood.”

— Jim Greenman

In creating these environments we consider the needs of children and adults alike, and we make modifications for any child or adult with special needs. We provide space for quiet and active play, for large and small muscle activities, and for spontaneous interaction. Soft, warm, messy, watery, wonderfully safe environments are provided indoors and out, to help children feel secure exploring the world.

Respect from the Very Beginning — RIE at Mini University

“Do less, observe more, enjoy most.”

— Magda Gerber, founder of RIE

Our infant and toddler care is grounded in **RIE — Resources for Infant Educators** — an approach developed by infant specialist Magda Gerber and built on one idea: even the youngest baby deserves respect. RIE matters because infants who are treated as active participants in their own care — spoken to, listened to, and given freedom to move — develop confidence, body awareness, and secure relationships with their caregivers.

You will see RIE in practice every day at Mini University. You will not find high chairs, pumpkin seats, swings, or other restraint equipment in our Nursery — infants are held in a teacher's arms while being fed, and spend their play time free to move on the floor, rolling, reaching, and eventually crawling and pulling up on their own timetable. Educators tell babies what is about to happen before it happens — “I'm going to pick you up now” — make eye contact, and wait for the child's response. Care moments like feeding and diapering are never rushed; they are the curriculum.

The Power of Play

Reprinted with permission from NAEYC.

Have you ever heard someone say of an early childhood program, “all the children do there is play”? At good programs — including ours — there is a great deal of play, and there should be.

“Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations as a right of every child.”

— American Academy of Pediatrics

Years of research document the benefits of play for children's intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and language development. Children at play are actively creating themes, exploring, building environments, solving problems, and developing shared understanding.

Children play in many ways. They play independently, sometimes near each other but each absorbed in their own activity. They engage in parallel play, perhaps using each other's toys or talking, but not coordinating. They also play cooperatively, organizing roles and scenarios together.

As children play with each other, they learn to see other points of view and become more empathetic. They come to understand the customs and rules of their own culture and to appreciate those of others. They learn to use language in new ways.

Play is fun — but it is also serious business that pays real dividends to its young investors. We believe strongly in the power of play. To learn more about what children are learning in your child's classroom, talk with the teacher or any Center Leader.

Hours of Operation & Closings

Holidays and scheduled closings

Each center follows a holiday schedule aligned to its sponsoring organization. All centers are closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, and New Year's Day. Hope Center for Families, Sinclair, and Wright State are also closed for Veterans Day. All centers close for one week in August for Teacher Inservice, and for Holiday Break between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. Exact dates are published each year in the Financial Policies.

Weather-related closings

We do not anticipate closing, but our centers follow the direction of our sponsoring organizations. If Miami University, Sinclair Community College, or Wright State University closes campus, that Mini University center also closes. The Hope Center for Families follows the Sinclair closing schedule. If severe weather occurs across the Dayton and Oxford areas, please watch local television to see if our sponsoring universities are closing. We will also post to our Mini U Facebook page and send a message through our Family Engagement app.

Loss of power, heat, or water

If a loss of power, heat, or water is not expected to be brief, the center will close. We consider the risk to the health and well-being of children and staff, the amount of natural light, the temperature, and our ability to heat food and formula. Families and emergency contacts are called to pick up children within the hour, and a notice is posted on the door.

Your Child's First Day

This is an exciting day. Before it arrives, you will have completed your enrollment paperwork and electronically signed our Financial Policies.

You and your child may have met the teachers during your enrollment tour. If you have not, please make an appointment to do so. We recommend a class visit for your family, so your child can see you in this new environment. Meeting the teachers makes the first week's adjustment much easier.

Arrival

- Arrive 15 to 30 minutes before you need to leave so you are not rushed. Your child needs to see and feel that you are relaxed and comfortable here.
- Use the computer system at the office to sign your child in.
- Take your child and their belongings to the classroom, and place a change of clothing, blanket, and other items in the cubby marked with their name.
- Please switch off your engine while parked — our lots are idle-free zones.

Interaction

- Getting your child involved in an activity, or spending a few minutes reading together, usually makes the separation easier.
- Parents of babies: we strongly encourage you to change your child's diaper before leaving — talking with your child, describing what you are doing, asking for their cooperation. It is a wonderful way to connect. We encourage the same routine at pick-up.
- Hellos and good-byes: Creative Curriculum encourages families to build a routine around arrivals and departures. Reading together, or simply pausing to look your child in the eye and truly connect, helps you both after time apart.

Separation

- After spending a little time with your child, tell them you are leaving. Something like “I have to go to work now, and I will be back to pick you up this afternoon” helps your child understand that you are going and that you will return.
- Give a hug and a kiss, and leave the room. Often, the longer you stay to say goodbye, the harder the separation becomes.

SOMETIMES SECOND DAYS ARE HARDER

It is completely normal for a child to take two to three weeks to fully adjust to a new routine. Children in part-time schedules, and children who have never been in group care, may take longer. Later on, if a vacation or illness interrupts the routine, your child may go through another adjustment period. This is expected, and we will work through it with you.

A piece of home for the day

Before the first day, we invite you to bring in a family picture. Teachers place family photos where children can see and reach them — on a classroom family wall or in your child's cubby — and you will be amazed how often a child visits that photo during the day. When missing you washes over your child, walking to the family wall, touching your picture, and hearing a teacher say “your family always comes back” turns a big feeling into a manageable one. Your photo lets your child hold onto you all day long.

Signing In & Out

Every child must be signed in and out by a parent or guardian using the computer system at the front office, and the parent or guardian must accompany the child to the classroom. Attendance is taken again in each classroom at arrival and departure.

Families receiving publicly funded child care must also TAP in and out every day using the Ohio Child Care Time, Attendance and Payment (TAP) system on the center tablet. A PIN is created on your child's first day; each authorized adult uses their own credentials, and PINs are never shared. Approve any missed TAPs promptly — failure to TAP daily results in disenrollment.

Releasing Your Child to Others

- All parents and guardians must give written authorization for anyone to pick up their child — on the enrollment form, or by written note to the front office.
- Anyone picking up a child must be 16 years of age or older.
- Everyone entering the center is visually identified. Anyone unfamiliar to front office staff must present photo identification before having contact with, or leaving with, any child.

PLEASE TELL YOUR EMERGENCY CONTACTS

We ask everyone we do not recognize for photo identification. We do not mean to offend — grandparents in particular are sometimes surprised by it. It is how we keep every child safe, and we would rather apologize for not knowing a face than release a child to the wrong person.

Custody Situations

When applicable, we require court orders or divorce decrees granting temporary or permanent custody. This information is shared with your child's teacher, and the confidentiality of everyone involved is respected. Our focus is on the child's interests.

A parent who is not the residential parent is permitted unlimited access to the center and has the same rights as the residential parent, unless there is court documentation limiting that access. Upon entering the center, any parent or guardian notifies the administrator or designee of their presence.

Custody paperwork generally identifies who may pick up the child. Whoever holds legal custody is responsible for completing enrollment paperwork accurately, so we release your child only to the adults you have designated.

Late Pick-Up

We are grateful to families who are respectful of our teachers' time and pick up before the center closes. Most centers close by 6:00 p.m. — your center's closing time is listed in Part 1 — and families must be out of the building by the posted closing time.

Late pick-up policy

Fee	\$35.00 per child for each 15 minutes, or any part of 15 minutes, that the family is late or still in the building after closing, up to one hour.
After one hour	If a child is left at the center more than one hour after closing, the police are called.
Grace period	There is no grace period.
Repeat occurrences	Families are disenrolled if late pick-ups occur more than three times per calendar year.
Payment	Late fees are due at pick-up, or before drop-off on the next scheduled day. No tuition assistance is available for late fees.

Ratios & Group Sizes

Our ratios are better than Ohio requires. We hold NAEYC-aligned ratios for the majority of the day, because smaller groups and lower ratios directly shape the quality of your child's experience. When each teacher is responsible for fewer children, they can respond quickly to each child's needs, spend more time in one-on-one conversation, and truly know each child — their interests, their moods, and how they learn best. Research consistently links smaller group sizes to warmer teacher-child interactions, stronger language development, and safer classrooms, because teachers can see and hear everything happening in a smaller group. For our youngest children, low ratios also support the secure attachment that comes from being cared for by the same familiar adults each day.

Age group	Ohio minimum	Mini University / NAEYC
Nursery — 6 weeks to 18 months	1:5 · 2:12	1:4 · 2:8 · 3:10–12
Toddlers & Twos — 18 to 36 months	1:7–8 · 2:14–16	1:5–7 · 2:10–14
Pre-Kindergarten/KReady — 3 to 5 years	1:12–14 · 2:24–28	1:10 · 2:20/22
Summer Camp — 6 to 10 years	1:18 · 2:36	1:14 · 2:28

Ratios and group sizes are also posted in a noticeable place at each center.

Age Groups & Classroom Transitions

Nursery 6 weeks – 18 months · **Toddlers & Twos** 18 – 36 months · **Pre-Kindergarten** 3 – 5 years

NAEYC and RIE both hold that a child's teachers and environment should stay consistent. Our goal is to keep your child in the same class as long as possible, to support secure attachment. Besides age, we consider your child's development and schedule, input from you and the current teacher, and total enrollment in each class.

When it is time to move, your child's teacher will contact you first. Transitions typically happen twice a year, in June and August, and occasionally in January. The Director and teacher will build a written transition plan with you, including the start and end dates of the transition and a schedule. Most transitions take one to two weeks.

Curriculum

We use The Creative Curriculum by Teaching Strategies — *Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos* and *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* — aligned to Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards.

Teachers plan across ten areas of development and learning:

Area	Objectives include
Social-Emotional	Regulating emotions and behavior; building positive relationships; participating cooperatively in groups
Physical	Traveling and balancing skills; gross-motor manipulation; fine-motor strength and coordination
Language	Understanding increasingly complex language; expressing thoughts and needs; conversational skills
Cognitive	Positive approaches to learning; remembering and connecting; classification; symbolic thinking
Literacy	Phonological awareness; alphabet knowledge; print concepts; comprehension; emergent writing
Mathematics	Number concepts; spatial relationships and shapes; comparing and measuring; patterns
Science & Technology	Inquiry skills; living things; physical properties; Earth's environment; using tools

Area	Objectives include
Social Studies	Knowledge about self; how people live; change; simple geography
The Arts	Visual arts; music; dance and movement; drama
English Language Acquisition	Progress in understanding and speaking English

The Nursery and Toddlers & Twos

Alongside Creative Curriculum, our youngest classrooms draw on NAEYC accreditation criteria and the RIE philosophy described in Part 1.

Programs for children under three are not scaled-down versions of a preschool program. Change happens far faster in infancy than at any later point; all areas of development are intertwined; infants depend entirely on adults; and very young children are especially vulnerable to stress.

Routines are the curriculum

The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos is built on a simple truth about this age: for very young children, routines *are* the curriculum. Diapering, mealtimes, and naps are not interruptions to learning — they are the day's richest opportunities for language, trust, and connection, and our teachers plan them just as intentionally as any activity. Alongside those routines, teachers plan hands-on experiences based on their daily observations of each child, so what happens in the classroom follows each child's emerging interests and abilities rather than a one-size-fits-all lesson.

Daily routines: hellos and good-byes, diapering and toileting, eating and mealtimes, sleeping and nap time, getting dressed. **Experiences:** playing with toys, imitating and pretending, stories and books, music and movement, art, tasting and preparing food, sand and water, going outdoors.

Schedules and diaper checks

All children in the Nursery eat and sleep on demand, and every schedule is individualized. Diapers are checked at least every two hours, and more often during routine care such as eating, sleeping, and dressing. A schedule specific to your child's classroom is posted on the class bulletin board.

Daily information for infant and toddler families

Teachers record feeding, diapering, and sleep for each infant and toddler, and that record is shared with you every day through the Family Engagement app or in person at pick-up.

Pre-Kindergarten

Our Pre-Kindergarten classrooms use **The Creative Curriculum for Preschool**, a comprehensive research-based curriculum featuring exploration and discovery as the way children learn. Classrooms are arranged in Interest Areas — art, blocks, cooking, discovery, dramatic play, library, music and movement, sand and water, toys and games, and outdoors — with literacy, math, science, social studies, and the arts woven throughout, indoors and out.

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness

Both Pre-Kindergarten and KReady classrooms use the Heggerty curriculum — short, playful daily lessons in rhyming, syllables, and the sounds inside words. Phonemic awareness is one of the strongest predictors of how easily a child will learn to read, and these few minutes a day build that foundation long before formal reading instruction begins.

KReady — The Year Before Kindergarten

In the year prior to attending kindergarten, most children transition to our KReady room. KReady continues The Creative Curriculum while sharpening the focus on the skills, routines, and independence children need for a confident kindergarten start. Because consistency matters most in this year, arrival by 9:00 a.m. is mandatory in KReady classrooms (see Part 4).

We also use **Learning Without Tears — Get Set for School** in KReady. Its music, movement, and hands-on materials build body awareness, cooperation, turn-taking, listening, crayon grip, drawing, building, and letter and number formation.

Kindergarten readiness

Children need support in every area of development to be ready for kindergarten. Ohio assesses entering kindergartners in four areas, and this guide follows them. Can your child:

Social skills & independence

- Separate from a primary caregiver without anxiety?
- Use self-control — keeping hands to self, sharing and taking turns, cooperating with other children?
- Follow directions, follow routines, and communicate needs to adults?
- Manage self-help tasks — using the restroom independently, putting on and zipping a coat?

Language & literacy

- Recognize and name most letters, including those in their first name?
- Hear rhymes and beginning sounds in words?
- Retell a familiar story and speak in complete sentences?
- Write their first name?

Mathematics

- Count objects to 10 or beyond, and recognize some numerals?
- Sort and compare objects, and name basic shapes?

Physical well-being & motor development

- Use classroom tools — cutting with scissors, holding a pencil or crayon with a proper grip?
- Run, jump, climb, and balance with confidence?

Aligned to the four areas of Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

A Typical Pre-Kindergarten / KReady Day

Time	What's happening
6:30 / 7:00 – 9:00	Arrival, breakfast, and Choice Time in all Interest Areas
9:00 – 10:00	Brief group meeting and read-aloud, then small-group work
10:00 – 11:00	Choice Time in all Interest Areas
11:00 – 12:00	Outdoor play and gross motor activities
12:00 – 1:00	Family-style lunch, toothbrushing, stories, and I Love You Rituals
1:00 – 3:00	Nap and rest time
3:00 – 3:30	Snack
3:30 – 5:00	Choice Time in all Interest Areas
5:00 – 5:45 / 6:00	Outdoor play and departures

A schedule specific to your child's classroom is posted nearby.

How We Know Your Child Is Growing

Assessment tells us where each child is, so teachers can plan where to go next. We gather developmental screening information when children enroll and annually after that, and teachers watch children play and gather observation data every day, so they can plan for and document growth. The tools we use:

Tool	Purpose
ASQ-3 — Ages & Stages Questionnaires	Developmental screening, completed by families
Teaching Strategies GOLD	Ongoing observational assessment of development and learning, with formal checkpoints four times a year
e-DECA	Social, emotional, and behavioral health screening, aligned to Conscious Discipline
Heggerty phonemic assessments	Progress in phonemic awareness — KReady classrooms

Your observations are part of the record, too — contribute them by completing the ASQ-3, by sending what you notice at home through the Family Engagement app anytime, or at drop-off and pick-up; teachers fold family input into each child's assessment documentation.

None of this looks like testing to your child — it looks like playing, talking, and being noticed. Teachers use the results to plan individualized instruction: small groups built around who needs practice with what, materials chosen for each child's next step, and honest, specific conversation with you at conferences about your child's growth.

YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL

Individual child data is never shared with the Ohio Department of Children & Youth or any outside agency. Your child's file — health, safety, and assessment information — is kept confidential at all times and is available only to Center Leaders and teaching staff, to you as parent or legal guardian, and to regulatory authorities. You have full access to your child's file and may request copies at any time. Our staff follow the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct in full, and screening tools may change over time — see the Assessment Plan & Confidentiality Policy provided at enrollment.

Summer Camp — Our “Seniors”

Our oldest children, ages 5 to 10, are affectionately known as the Seniors. Summer Camp is offered only at our Wright State and Miami University programs. Summer Camp emphasizes group activities built on cooperation and respect, with time to explore, socialize, and work on projects together.

SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

School-age children may run short errands inside the building or use the restroom without an adult present, as long as they remain within hearing distance of a teacher. The teacher checks on them regularly until they return to the group, and the restroom is for the exclusive use of the center.

Regular field trips and weekly swimming are highlights of the summer — destinations have included the Boonshoft Museum and COSI, Wegerzyn Gardens and local parks, the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, and the Cincinnati Zoo.

Outdoor Play

Every day, teachers take children outside to enjoy nature, dig in the sandbox, run, ride trikes, and play. Outdoor play happens every day for children of all ages, including young babies — infants are taken for buggy and stroller rides outside daily, even if only for a few minutes. When children cannot go outside, large motor activities move to classrooms or hallways.

Daily outdoor play is a national best practice: *Caring for Our Children*, the AAP's national health and safety standards, recommends that infants go outside two to three times a day and that toddlers and preschoolers get 60 to 90 minutes of outdoor play across the day — and our schedules deliver it. Time outside builds gross motor strength, restores attention, and gives children room for big movement and loud voices.

Children go outside in all kinds of weather, so please dress your child for the conditions — hats, mittens, boots, and warm coats in winter. Going Outdoors is a Creative Curriculum category on the weekly lesson plan posted outside each classroom.

When we limit or cancel outdoor play

- On very hot or very cold days, outdoor time is often shortened to 5 to 10 minutes.
- On weather advisory days — temperature, humidity, wind chill, ozone levels, or pollen count — children may go outside only early in the morning, generally before 10:00 a.m.
- Children do not play outside during lightning or ice storms.

Napping & Resting

There is a quiet nap time in each center, generally between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., for all children except those in the Nursery. Depending on age, children sleep or rest quietly on their cots, or engage in quiet activities so that those who need sleep can have it.

THE ABCs OF SAFE SLEEP

A is for **Alone** · B is for on the **Back** · C is for an empty **Crib**. Every baby in the Nursery sleeps in a sleep sack, provided by the center and used only for naps. Nothing else goes in the crib — no blankets or stuffed animals — though a pacifier is fine. Ohio requires that infants be placed on their backs to sleep. Babies sleep on demand, and children are placed in their beds only when sleepy.

Toddlers, Twos, and Pre-Kindergarten: a small blanket, pillow, or stuffed animal may be sent for your child's cot. Please label everything with your child's name. Cot and crib sheets are provided and laundered at least weekly, and cots and cribs are disinfected weekly. Items brought from home go home to be laundered once a week.

KReady children transition out of nap and rest time during the summer before they leave for kindergarten, replacing it with quiet activities — helping them adjust to a full-day kindergarten schedule before the first day arrives.

Clothing

Please send washable, comfortable play clothes your child can manage independently, clearly marked with your child's last name or initials, and dressed for the weather. Please provide two complete sets of extra clothing.

Messy is a badge of honor here — paint, mud, sand, water, glue, and food are all part of a hands-on day, so please dress your child in clothes that are allowed to get dirty. Dress for the season, head to toe: a warm coat, hat, mittens, boots, and snow pants in winter; light layers and closed-toe shoes in summer. Elastic waists and simple fasteners help children practice dressing themselves, and please check your child's cubby weekly to restock extra clothing as your child grows.

SAFETY NOTE

Long or dangling drawstrings on jackets and sweatshirts, and long scarves, can catch on playground equipment and tricycles — please remove drawstrings. Shoes should be closed-toe, such as tennis shoes; sandals should be avoided. Mini University does not assume responsibility for loss of or damage to clothing or other items brought from home.

Water Play & Swimming

Written permission is required for all recreational and instructional swimming and water play, and you will be asked to indicate whether your child is a swimmer or non-swimmer.

Water play for all ages

Water play is one of childhood's best classrooms — pouring, splashing, sinking, and floating are early physics and fine-motor work in disguise, and water is naturally calming. All children enjoy water play twice a week during the summer, right on our playgrounds. Teachers review water safety rules with children before every water activity, and Mini University staff actively supervise children at all times. On water play days, please send a swimsuit and towel labeled with your child's name.

Summer Camp swimming

Our Summer Camp Seniors also swim weekly at a local pool. Mini University staff actively supervise our children at all times, in addition to the lifeguards of the swim program. Name-to-face attendance is taken multiple times during every swim outing.

Field Trips & Transportation

Mini University maintains its own vehicles for field trips and routine trips, and teaching staff carry a cell phone on every trip. Staff and parents may never transport children other than their own in privately owned vehicles for any Mini University function.

Routine walking trips are a regular part of our day — to nearby green spaces, gardens, and campus destinations. Occasional field trips may be offered for Toddlers and Pre-Kindergarten — a farm, a grocery store, a park. Summer Camp takes regular field trips throughout the summer. Information about each trip is posted for families beforehand, and written permission is required prior to all trips.

On every field trip and routine walking trip

- Each child wears a seat belt — one child per belt — or is secured in a car seat, and the number of children never exceeds what the vehicle allows.
- Each child is assigned to a specific staff member.
- At least one staff member holds current certification in CPR, pediatric first aid, and management of communicable disease, and first aid supplies travel with the group.
- Children are never left unattended in vehicles. Drivers check the vehicle at every destination.
- Vehicles are entered and exited at curbside.
- Drivers are at least 25 years old and hold a CDL. Vehicles receive weekly and annual safety inspections, documented on file.
- Every child wears a name tag, t-shirt, or vest showing the center name, address, and telephone number.
- Teachers carry signed permission slips, emergency forms, and health records for every child.
- Name-to-face attendance is taken multiple times on every trip, including swimming.

How families can help on trip days

- Return signed permission slips promptly — a child without one cannot join the trip.
- Dress your child for walking: closed-toe shoes and weather-ready layers.
- In sunny months, apply sunscreen before arrival and leave your labeled bottle at the center — teachers reapply with your written permission.
- Arrive before the departure time posted on trip day.
- Come along! Parents are always welcome as trip companions.

Bringing the world to us

Not every adventure requires a bus. In addition to field trips, Mini University regularly brings experiences into the center — community helpers like firefighters, dentists, and librarians; musicians and storytellers. Many of our best visits come from our own families — a parent's career or hobby can light up a classroom for weeks — and our youngest children, not yet ready for trips, get the same wonder brought right to their room.

Every Day Matters

Consistent attendance is one of the strongest predictors of how much a child gains from an early learning program — and this is especially true for preschoolers. Children who attend every day build the habits, friendships, and stamina that carry directly into school success, and research links strong preschool attendance to stronger kindergarten readiness. Attendance is a habit families build years before the first school bell rings.

Children also thrive on routine. A predictable morning — arriving at the same time, greeting the same teachers, joining the day as it begins — helps your child feel secure and ready to learn. Please plan for your child to arrive by 9:00 a.m., and earlier if your child will be eating breakfast with us, so they never have to join a day already in motion.

KREADY CLASSROOMS

In KReady, 9:00 a.m. arrival is mandatory. The kindergarten year will demand being present, on time, every day — and the KReady year is where that muscle gets built. Morning instruction in KReady begins promptly, and the literacy and math foundations of the day happen early; a child who regularly arrives late misses the same learning again and again. Arriving on time all year means your child walks into kindergarten already owning its most basic expectation.

Absences

Tuition is charged regardless of attendance or absence. We appreciate knowing when your child will be out — if your child will be absent, please let the center know through the Family Engagement app, where you can mark absences, vacations, and illness, or call the center.

If a Child Does Not Arrive as Expected

Occasionally a child is scheduled to arrive from another program or activity — for example, a school district transporting a child from public preschool — and does not arrive. The Director or Enrollment Coordinator will contact you and the other program to find out where your child is. Most often the child is absent for illness or vacation and the center was not notified. We always call, because we always want to know that every child is safe.

If You Receive Tuition Assistance

Some funding sources carry their own attendance requirements. Not meeting them can affect both your authorization and your billing.

Funding source	Attendance requirement
Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC)	Full-time authorization: at least 7 hours per day and 33 hours per week, including holiday weeks and weeks when the center is closed one day. Part-time authorization: at least 10 hours per week, including holiday weeks and weeks when the center is closed one day.
Preschool Promise	Your child must attend every day unless ill. If attendance falls below 60% of scheduled service in any two months — not necessarily consecutive — eligibility ends.

Absent days for publicly funded families

Children do get sick, and a child who is ill should never be brought to the center. The state allows up to 20 absent days every six months, allocated January through June and July through December. Please try not to exceed this. Full details are in the A-B-C Addendum to Financial Policies, signed at enrollment.

Staff Health & Safety Training

Ohio requires that at least one staff member trained in each of the following be present during all hours of operation: pediatric first aid, CPR, child abuse recognition and prevention, and management of communicable disease.

NAEYC criteria require that at least one staff member certified in emergency pediatric first aid, CPR for infants and children, and emergency management of choking is always present. Mini University ensures all employees earn and maintain these certifications, so the adults with your child always know how to keep them safe.

Management of Illness

We provide children with a clean, safe, and healthy environment. Careful cleaning and disinfecting, regular handwashing, and staying home when sick are the foundation of keeping everyone well.

Children are observed as they arrive to assess their general health. A child with any of the following symptoms will be immediately isolated and sent home:

- Temperature of at least 101°F (100°F if taken axillary), in combination with any other sign or symptom of illness
- Diarrhea — three or more abnormal, unexpected, or unexplained loose stools within 24 hours
- Severe coughing — causing the child to become red or blue in the face, or to make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Redness of the eye or eyelid, thick pus discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching, or eye pain
- Untreated infected skin patches, unusual spots, or rashes
- Unusually dark urine, or gray or white stool
- Stiff neck with an elevated temperature
- Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestation
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting more than once, or once when accompanied by any other sign of illness

Isolation

If your child develops symptoms of illness during the day, they are brought to the front office and isolated — kept comfortable on a cot, and within sight and hearing of a staff member at all times. Parents are contacted immediately, and emergency contacts are called if we cannot reach you. Your child must be picked up within one hour. If your child's condition worsens while waiting, we will call you again — or 911 if the situation requires it. The cot and linens used are washed and disinfected before being used again.

Returning to the center

Children may return after being free of fever without medication, and free of other symptoms, for at least 24 hours. If your child is not symptom-free, we will need a note from your doctor stating that your child is not contagious.

Symptoms not listed above

Any child showing signs of illness not listed here will be isolated and carefully observed, and you will be notified. If your child does not feel well enough to take part in activities, we will call you to come and pick them up.

Communicable disease

The Communicable Disease Chart is posted in the front office area where families can read it. If your child has been exposed to a communicable disease, you will be notified no later than the end of the next business day.

Handwashing — our first line of defense

Handwashing is the single most effective thing we do to keep illness from spreading, and both Ohio licensing rules and NAEYC standards set the times we must do it. Children and staff wash with soap and running water: at arrival, before and after meals and food handling, after toileting or diapering, after outdoor play, after wiping noses, and after contact with any body fluid. Staff also wash before and after feeding a child or giving medication, and after cleaning or handling garbage. Teachers make handwashing part of the routine — with songs and counting — so children build a habit that lasts a lifetime.

Medication

Whenever possible, please schedule medications to be given at home. Mini University administers medication only when it must be given during child care hours, and only with a completed **DCY 01236, Health Care Plan Documentation & Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs**. Our teams follow **DCY 01580** and **DCY 01581**, *Your Prescription for Safely Administering Prescription/Non-Prescription Medication*, dose by dose:

- Medication arrives in its original container — a pharmacy label with your child's name, or the manufacturer's label with age- or weight-based dosing.
- Your child receives the first dose at home (emergency medications excepted); forms are valid up to twelve months, and we never administer past the label, the physician's dates, or the expiration date.
- All medication is checked in and stored in a separate container or refrigerator at the front office, inaccessible to children — never in a cubby or backpack — and every dose is documented.
- Based on national safety recommendations, we do not administer over-the-counter cold or cough medicine to children under age 4.

HEALTH CARE PLANS & MEDICAL FOODS

If your child has a chronic health condition, food allergy, or requires medical foods or a modified diet, we will work with you to complete a **DCY 01236, Health Care Plan Documentation & Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs**. A separate plan is written for each condition, with written instructions from your child's physician. Speak with the Director — we want the plan in place before your child's first day. Emergency medications required by a Health Care Plan — such as an inhaler or epinephrine — are always available to your child and administered by trained staff.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Mini University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including the administration of medication and other care procedures for children with disabilities. If your child needs an accommodation, please talk with the Director so we can plan together.

Immunization Records

Ohio requires that we keep a dated immunization record for every child, showing the month, day, and year of each dose your child has received. Mini University requires your child's immunization record before the first day of attendance, and an updated record every 13 months after that. Please give us an updated record any time your child receives additional immunizations.

The easiest and most accurate way to provide it is to attach a printout from your child's doctor or from Ohio's immunization registry (ImpactSIIS). If you do not have a printout, you can record the dates on our Child Immunization Record form, provided in your enrollment packet.

Immunization is required against chickenpox, diphtheria, Hib, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza (when a seasonal vaccine is available), measles, mumps, pertussis, pneumococcal disease, polio, rotavirus, rubella, and tetanus. Children attending kindergarten or above at an elementary school are exempt from this requirement.

Immunization records are confidential, and are subject to review by the Ohio Department of Health for disease outbreak control and immunization level assessment.

Care of children without immunizations

We believe completed immunizations and screenings support a child's success as an early learner. A child may be enrolled without a complete immunization record in the following situations, each of which requires a written statement on file:

- The child is in the process of being immunized — statement from a physician, physician assistant (PA), or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN).
- Immunization is medically contraindicated for the child — statement from a physician, PA, or APRN.
- Immunization is not medically appropriate for the child's age — statement from a physician, PA, or APRN.
- The parent declines immunization for reasons of conscience, including religious convictions — your own written statement is sufficient. No physician statement or official form is required.

If a child or adult in the program has a vaccine-preventable disease, the following takes place:

- Immediate notification to the parent of the under-immunized child to come and pick up.
- Immediate removal of the child, if necessary, to a secure supervised place in the building where they are not directly exposed.
- The child is picked up within one hour, as our communicable disease policy requires.
- The Director discusses the incubation period of the disease with the family and requires written medical clearance before the under-immunized child returns.
- The Director stays in contact with the family, including about when it is safe to return.

Safety & Supervision

Supervision is our most important safety practice, and we practice it actively. Active supervision — the national best practice for early learning programs — means teachers position themselves to see the whole space, scan and count children continuously, and stay close enough to reach any child quickly. Counts are matched name-to-face at every transition: leaving the classroom, arriving on the playground, coming back inside. Here is what that looks like every day at Mini University:

- An adult supervises all children at all times. Our staff maintain situational awareness of every child in their care at all times — aware of what each child is doing, near enough to protect them and respond immediately, and always able to summon another adult in an emergency.
- Telephones are available for use in an emergency.
- Emergency phone numbers are posted readily in view in each classroom and every space used by children — including emergency squad, hospital, police, fire, poison control, and the local health department.
- A weather and fire alert plan is posted in each classroom and every space used by children, with a diagram showing evacuation routes and instructions for safely evacuating.
- The Director conducts fire drills and tornado drills at varying times each month. A record of drills is kept, and attendance is taken after each one.
- In a tornado or severe weather, children are taken to and seated in the hallway, and staff remain with them at all times.
- Infants are placed in evacuation cribs and moved to a safe designated area in case of fire or severe weather.
- All outlets are covered with safety caps or child-protected plates.
- Our campuses are smoke-, vape-, alcohol-, and weapon-free at all times.
- Classrooms, playgrounds, and equipment are checked daily, and toys and materials are monitored against Consumer Product Safety Commission recalls.

- Please keep toys from home at home unless the teacher requests them for a special day — small items and latex balloons are choking hazards, and treasures from home are easily lost.

Sunscreen, Insect Repellent & Topical Products

Sunny days and buggy evenings are part of an outdoor childhood, and Ohio licensing requires your signed written permission before we apply any topical product to your child. Families provide their own sunscreen, insect repellent, diaper creams, and lotions — in the original container, with the manufacturer's label, marked with your child's name — and teachers apply them according to the manufacturer's instructions, with sunscreen going on before outdoor play in the sunny months. Use beyond the product label, and any prescription or medicated topical, requires physician instructions (see Medication). On hot-weather days, please apply the first coat before arrival.

If Your Child Is Hurt at School

Even in the most carefully supervised classroom, children fall, bump, and collide — it is part of being a child in motion. When it happens, our first response is always your child: comfort first, then first aid from staff trained in pediatric first aid and CPR.

WE WILL CONTACT YOU RIGHT AWAY — NOT JUST AT PICK-UP — WHENEVER:

- Your child receives a bump or blow to the head, of any severity
- Your child is bitten and the skin is broken
- Your child needs medical attention or emergency transportation
- Anything happens that we would want to know about if it were our own child

For every illness, accident, or injury requiring first aid, a bump or blow to the head, an injury requiring emergency transportation, or any unusual or unexpected event that jeopardizes a child's safety, staff complete a **DCY 01299, Incident/Injury Report for Child Care** and give you a copy at pick-up that same day. The report tells you what happened, how your child responded, and what care was given — because you deserve the whole story.

The center also reports any serious incident, injury, or illness to DCY by the next business day.

Universal precautions

Universal precautions means every person is treated the same way regardless of known or unknown infectious disease. Any time first aid is administered, all persons are treated as if they have an infectious disease — protecting both the child and the employee.

Emergencies & Accidents

If an emergency occurs

- No child is left alone or unsupervised.
- If there is any question of a back or head injury, an ambulance is called and the child remains where they are until moved by a paramedic. The child's health and medical records go with them to the hospital.
- If a child must be transported and permission is on file, a staff member accompanies the child with their medical records to the emergency facility.
- If a child needs medical attention but the situation is not life-threatening, the child stays at the center and you are contacted to transport your child to a medical facility.
- You are notified immediately and told where your child is — at the center, or transported to an emergency facility.
- When 911 is called, all decisions for medical care are left to the emergency medical team. While waiting, a staff member trained in emergency first aid attends to the child.
- Children not involved are supervised in the area, or taken where appropriate supervision can be maintained.

Emergency Treatment When Transportation Is Declined

Your Child Enrollment Form includes an emergency transportation authorization. Most families give permission to transport. If you do not, child care services are still provided.

The Director will meet with you to understand your decision and the action you want taken, and staff will follow the safety procedures in this handbook while being mindful of your wishes.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND

If your child becomes ill or injured and 911 must be called, all decisions for medical care are left to the emergency medical team — including transport, even where “no transport” has been indicated on the enrollment form. You will always be contacted immediately, and your child is never left alone or unsupervised.

Parking Lot Safety

Our parking lots hold our most precious cargo at its least predictable — please drive as if a child could step out at any moment, because one can. Drive slowly, follow the posted traffic pattern, put phones away while your vehicle is moving, and hold your child's hand from the car to the door and back, every time.

To protect the air our children breathe and play in, all Mini University parking areas and drive lanes are idle-free zones. Please switch off your engine while parked or waiting — exhaust settles at exactly a child's height.

Secured Entry

Every Mini University center has one monitored family entrance, and keeping it secure is everyone's job. All visitors enter through the front office, where staff greet and visually identify every person, and anyone unfamiliar to office staff presents photo identification before going further (see Part 2). Please never hold or prop a door for someone you do not know — even a friendly face — and never let another adult follow you in. If you notice a propped door or an unescorted adult you do not recognize, tell any staff member immediately.

Threats of Violence

We wish this section did not need to exist, but you deserve to know that we are prepared. As required by DCY, every Mini University center maintains a written Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan covering medical emergencies, severe weather, evacuations, loss of utilities — and lockdowns due to threats of violence. Every staff member is trained on the plan annually.

If a threatening situation arises, an administrator immediately calls the police department or campus Public Safety. Because three of our centers sit on the campuses of their sponsoring institutions, university police and public safety departments are minutes away and familiar with our buildings. Wherever possible, children and staff are quickly and quietly moved to a safe area, and staff work to isolate the situation. Once safety personnel arrive, they are in charge of the emergency.

DCY also requires that we practice emergency and lockdown drills each quarter of the year. We know no family loves the thought of these drills — we don't either. Teachers conduct them calmly and in age-appropriate ways, much like a fire drill: children practice moving quietly with their teacher to a safe spot, without frightening details or scary language. Practicing means that if the unthinkable ever happened, the adults caring for your child would act from training, not panic.

If we ever need to evacuate

If any emergency — fire, a gas leak, a loss of utilities, severe weather damage, or a threat — ever makes our building unsafe, a relocation site has been identified for each center, most within walking distance. Older children walk with their teachers; infants ride in evacuation cribs, buggies, and strollers. Name-to-face attendance is taken before leaving and again on arrival, and emergency contact information travels with the staff. You will be contacted through every means we have — the Family Engagement app, phone, and text — and told exactly where your child is and where to meet us.

Meals at Mini University

Mini University is responsible for ensuring your child's nutritional needs are met while at the center. We provide breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack, meeting at least one-third of your child's recommended daily dietary allowance.

All meals are offered family style — children sit at the table with a few friends, serve themselves as much as they can including pouring their own milk, and talk together around the table. Because the kitchen runs on a schedule, we ask that children who arrive after a mealtime have already eaten.

Meal	What it includes	Sample menu
Breakfast	Milk, a fruit or vegetable, and a grain or bread	French toast, oranges, and milk · or scrambled eggs, toast, blueberries, and milk
Lunch	Milk, meat or protein, grain or bread, fruit and vegetable	Chicken, peaches, green beans, bread, and milk · or spaghetti with meat sauce, cheese, apples, cucumbers, and milk
Afternoon snack	One serving from any two food groups, and water	Cheese, crackers, and water · or carrots, apples, and water

The weekly menu is posted by the front office, and copies are available on request. Water is available in every classroom and outdoors.

IF YOUR CHILD IS A PICKY EATER

All children are encouraged to try everything offered. If your child does not like something, please let us serve it several more times. Families often tell us, “I don't believe it — why won't my child eat vegetables for me?” Eating alongside friends gives children a reason to taste something new, and we have had great results.

Birthdays & celebration treats

Birthdays are a big deal here, and families are welcome to send a treat to share. Because we must be able to read the ingredients for every child's allergies, all food sent for celebrations must be store-purchased and prepackaged, in its original unopened packaging with the ingredient label attached — homemade treats, made with love, cannot be served. Healthy treats are preferred: fruit cups, string cheese, yogurt tubes, or mini muffins. Please plan with your child's teacher a few days ahead, so we can check the class count and allergy list and fit the celebration into the day. Non-food celebrations are wonderful too — donate a favorite book in your child's honor, or send stickers. Being the birthday kid is really the point.

Food Supplements & Modified Diets

Because of state and federal child nutrition regulations, we cannot change the menu for an individual child, or substitute or eliminate any food or milk, without documentation. If your child requires a food supplement or modified diet, Ohio licensing requires it to be documented on a **DCY 01236, Health Care Plan Documentation & Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs**, with written instructions signed by your child's physician before we change what your child is served. A separate plan is written for each condition and is available in your child's classroom.

Milk substitutions

Following Ohio licensing rules and the CACFP meal pattern, we serve whole milk to children 12 through 24 months and low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk to children older than 24 months at breakfast and lunch. If you choose to have your child not drink cow's milk, complete a **Milk Substitution Request (ENR-31)** and select one approved substitute — soy milk, unsweetened almond milk, or water are the only substitutes we provide and serve. Soy milk meets USDA nutrition standards for a fluid milk substitute; almond milk and water do not, so those choices require your child's physician to document the medical reason on the form. The completed form, with your physician's signature, must be on file before a substitute is served, and is renewed each year. To return to cow's milk, just notify the office in writing.

Food substitutes

When a documented allergy or modified diet means your child cannot eat something on the menu, the substitute must be a comparable food from the same food group, so your child's meal still meets CACFP nutrition requirements. If your child is allergic to pineapple, applesauce is a perfect trade; crackers are not. When your child's Health Care Plan calls for the family to provide the substitute, please send it labeled with your child's name. Substitutions are for documented medical needs, not preferences. If your child simply does not care for a menu item, we handle it the way we handle every picky eater, not by replacing the menu from home.

Infant Feeding

Infants are fed on demand, according to each baby's own schedule and your written instructions. Bottles are never propped, and every infant is removed from the crib for feedings and held or fed sitting up.

New foods are introduced only after your child has tried them first at home. Breast milk you provide is labeled with your baby's full name, the date the milk was expressed, and the date the bottle was prepared, and stored following state guidelines so the oldest milk is always offered first. A daily written record of feeding, diapering, and sleep is provided to you every day.

Nursing mothers are always welcome: a comfortable place to breastfeed or pump is available at every center, anytime.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

Mini University strongly supports breastfeeding and encourages nursing mothers to continue breastfeeding or pumping as long as they wish — in the comfort of the Nursery, or in a more private space within the center. Please ask your baby's caregiver or the Director if there is anything we can do to make this time more comfortable for you and your child. We also encourage nursing mothers to provide expressed milk, so fathers can share in this feeding and bonding time.

Child and Adult Care Food Program

Meals at participating centers are offered through the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <http://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistant-secretary-civil-rights/how-file-usda-discrimination-complaint/how-file-program-discrimination-complaint> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Our Approach

Children are taught problem solving and conflict resolution through role modeling and language. Teachers use the seven basic skills of Conscious Discipline to encourage positive relationships and guide behavior. Our teaching staff help every child learn to identify emotions and self-regulate, so that each child develops self-discipline through careful, supportive guidance.

Your child will be treated with love and respect — children treated with respect learn to respect their teachers and peers in return.

Expectations are kept within each child's capabilities, and children are made aware of them.

“Discipline is not something you do to children — it is something you instill within them.”

— Dr. Becky Bailey

Conscious Discipline, created by Dr. Becky Bailey, is different from traditional discipline in one fundamental way: it treats every conflict, tantrum, and hard moment as an opportunity to teach a missing skill, rather than punish a bad choice. It is built on brain research — a child who is scared or angry literally cannot reach the thinking part of the brain, so adults help children feel safe and connected first, and problem-solve second. The School Family is its heart: rituals, classroom jobs, and routines that give every child a sense of belonging and significance. And because children learn self-regulation by watching regulated adults, Conscious Discipline asks the most of us — our teachers practice composure first, so they can offer it to your child. The seven skills below are the framework they train in and use all day, every day:

Skill	What it means
Composure	Self-regulation in action — the skill adults need before guiding children
Assertiveness	Clear, vigilant communication that focuses children on what we want them to do
Encouragement	Helping others creates belonging, so the desire to be of service outshines attention-seeking
Choices	Internally motivated choices foster an optimistic “I can” attitude and improve decision-making
Empathy	Teaches emotional regulation so children can take responsibility for their actions
Positive Intent	We must see children differently in order for them to behave differently
Consequences	Teach children to examine behavior, reflect on impact, and make changes

When behavior is not appropriate

In addition to teaching and using Conscious Discipline, all Mini University employees will:

- Use techniques that are developmentally appropriate to the child's age and circumstances.
- Use developmentally appropriate separation from the situation only as necessary.
- Communicate and consult with you before implementing any specific behavior management plan.

WHAT WE WILL NEVER DO

- Subject a child to physical punishment, humiliation, verbal abuse, or the withholding of food, rest, or toilet use — and discipline is never delegated to another child. These protections are required by Ohio licensing rule and reflect what we believe.
- Expose children to inappropriate language, media, or behavior.

Biting

When young children are together, some aggressive behavior is very common. Babies and toddlers often cannot yet express themselves in words and may use physical means to get what they want. Biting is a natural developmental stage for infants, toddlers, and twos, and typically ends by the time a child enters Pre-Kindergarten.

How we prevent it

- Scheduling plenty of activities to keep children engaged.
- Offering alternative toys when several children want the same one.
- Encouraging “soft touches” and being “gentle” with each other.
- Encouraging children to use words — “No, I want that toy” or “I am looking at that book.”

When biting happens

We immediately tell the child who bit: “Gentle, gentle, gentle. You may not bite children — biting hurts.” We offer an alternative, such as a teething ring or a cracker if the child is hungry.

We care for the child who was bitten, stroking their cheek or arm and reflecting their feeling: “I see you are crying. Biting hurts. Your friend needs to be soft and gentle with you.” The bite is cleaned with soap and water and ice is often applied. If the skin is broken, the family is contacted. The teacher completes an Incident Report, and the parents of the child who bit are also notified.

How families can help

Encourage “soft touches” and using words at home, and demonstrate what those words mean. Please also remember that young children cannot distinguish playful biting from real biting — nibbling fingers may seem like fun at home, but it can lead to biting at school.

In extreme circumstances, conferences are held with the family of a child who bites chronically. If every other effort has failed, the child's schedule may be reduced or paused for a time. Only in very rare cases is a child temporarily disenrolled for biting.

Families & Teachers Working Together

Guiding children's behavior is a shared responsibility between parents, extended family, and teachers. When behavior is disrupting the learning environment, you will be notified, and together we will build a plan to teach the desired social behaviors.

Additional community resources are available to support your child, your family, and our teaching staff. The Director coordinates those services, meets with you, and documents concerns in writing. A behavior management plan may be written in consultation with you, consistent with Ohio licensing requirements.

The safety of all children is always our primary concern. If a child is consistently endangering themselves, their peers, or staff, more formal referrals will be made. Our goal is not to disenroll a child, but to find the right supports so the child can learn new social skills and rejoin the class.

Social-Emotional Support & Referrals

Every young child is still learning to manage big feelings, and research suggests 5 to 15% of young children will need more intensive social-emotional support at some point. There is no shame in that at Mini University — social-emotional needs can carry a damaging stigma, and we are deliberate about treating every child and family with respect and strict confidentiality, guided by our Social/Emotional Support and Referral Policy.

Support starts with knowing each child — completing an e-DECA to assist in identifying Conscious Discipline strategies that help meet the individual needs of the child at school and at home, and keeping consistent, regular communication with the family. When a child needs help, teachers respond first inside the classroom — Conscious Discipline strategies, adjusted routines, and changes to the classroom environment.

If a child needs more than the classroom can provide, we ask for your written Release of Information — nothing about your child is shared with any outside agency without it. A formal observation follows (typically one morning and one afternoon), then a family meeting within a week to review what was seen and recommend next steps. We partner with trusted community organizations — including state early childhood mental health consultants who can be in the classroom within days — and referrals are completed within 90 days, with results always shared with you.

Supports along the way may include extra help for the teacher, a temporarily reduced schedule, a brief pause in enrollment while services begin, or services outside Mini University, including public preschool — whatever placement truly serves your child. Our goal is always to limit or eliminate suspension and expulsion. What we ask of you is partnership: following through on recommended services is a condition of continued enrollment, and in the rare case a family declines services their child needs, disenrollment may result, always with written notice.

Suspension, Expulsion & Termination of Enrollment

After reasonable efforts have been made to integrate a child or family into the program, enrollment may be suspended or terminated if the child or family is chronically disruptive. This is an extreme circumstance, considered only when all other options have been exhausted.

What happens first

Generally, a family would take part in at least two conferences with the teacher and/or Director and receive at least one written warning before suspension or disenrollment. During one of those conferences a Plan of Action is developed to improve the situation. As part of that plan, a child's schedule may be reduced, or enrollment briefly paused, while supports are put in place. Parents are equal partners in this process.

A pause with a purpose

A reduced schedule or a temporary suspension is never a punishment — it is breathing room with a plan. Shortening the day or the week often lets a struggling child collect wins instead of collecting hard days. During a suspension, we ask families to actively pursue the outside supports recommended in the Plan of Action — an evaluation, therapy, or the community services described in our social-emotional referral process — so your child returns with new tools and a real chance to succeed.

We also want to be honest about the weight of these decisions. No Center Director wants to suspend a child's enrollment, and none does it lightly — by the time a leader reaches this step, every other option in this part has been tried. When it happens, we ask for your trust: the decision protects every child in the classroom, including yours, and it comes with a plan for the way back whenever one is possible.

Situations that may result in disenrollment

Situation	Detail
Chronic disruption	After conferences, a written warning, and a Plan of Action have not resolved the situation
Declining recommended services	When a family declines services recommended for their child, after every effort to partner — written notice is always provided
Harm, threats, or unlawful acts by an adult	Immediate termination if an adult harms another person, commits an unlawful act, or directs abusive, threatening, or profane language — including cursing — at any Mini University employee, during center hours or at any Mini University event
Non-payment	Failure to make timely payments, per the Financial Policies
Repeated late pick-up	More than three late pick-ups in a calendar year
Repeated NSF payments	Three occurrences within a one-year period may result in disenrollment
Failure to TAP	Publicly funded families who do not TAP in and out daily as required
Loss of authorization	Publicly funded families whose authorization ends and is not renewed

We would always rather solve a problem than end an enrollment. If your family is struggling with any of these, please talk with the Director early — there are often options.

The Procure Family Engagement App

Building a strong school-family connection matters to us. Procure is the database we use for attendance, schedules, and billing — and the app is how we stay connected with you day to day.

How do I get the app? You will receive an email from Procure with a 10-character invite code and instructions to download and log in.

Each classroom uses an iPad to access the app. Your child's teacher shares photos, videos, and your child's daily report. You can share information back — feeding and sleep schedules, anything the teacher should know that day — and mark absences, vacations, and illness right in the app, saving you a phone call.

Photos & social media

Photos are part of how we share your child's day: teachers post pictures through the app, visible only to your child's authorized contacts. A photo of your child appears in Mini University marketing or on our social media pages only with the media consent you sign at enrollment, and we never publish a child's full name with a photo. We ask families for the same care — when you photograph your own child at a center event, please make sure other children are not identifiable before you post.

Babysitting & personal connections

Our teachers love your children, and clear boundaries protect everyone. Mini University employees do not babysit, transport, or provide private care for enrolled families outside the center — arrangements like these fall entirely outside our licensing, insurance, and supervision, and the center cannot be responsible for them. For the same reason, teachers do not connect with current families on personal social media accounts or communicate about your child through personal texts or direct messages. Everything about your child flows through the app, the center phone, or a face-to-face conversation — channels that are documented, professional, and shared with our leadership team.

Family resources

Growing readers and strong families are part of our mission beyond the classroom. Every Mini University family can enroll in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library — a free book mailed to your child every month from birth to age five; ask at the front office for the sign-up. Every center also keeps free family literacy guides for ages birth to three and three to five, age-by-age readiness-skills handouts, and Read Together, Grow Together resources — take what helps. And if your family is ever looking for a connection to community resources — food, health care, or family supports — your Director will help quietly and quickly.

Ways to Be Involved

Please feel free to

- Share information with your child's teacher in the app before arrival.
- Take time each day to talk with your child's teacher.
- Join us for breakfast, lunch, or afternoon snack.
- Visit the center anytime. All parents have unlimited access to all areas of the center used for child care during hours of operation.
- Schedule a conference with the teacher or any Center Leader to discuss your child's progress or any concern.

Regular opportunities include

- Field trips — parents are always welcome.
- Parent, career, or special interest visits. Many topics we explore are enriched by the cultural and career diversity of our families. Let the teacher know if you would like to share your talents.
- Family programs such as Fall Harvest, holiday celebrations, and end-of-year programs.
- Family Participation Days every few months — water play days, snack with families, summer learning day, and read-alouds.

Please look for

- Daily schedule and lesson plans posted on classroom bulletin boards.
- Photos posted in classrooms and throughout the center.
- The weekly menu posted near the front office.

Family–Teacher Conferences

Communication with families is part of every day here. You can meet with teachers at drop-off or pick-up, and you may always request a conference, meeting, or video call with your child's teacher or a Center Leader.

Formal conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and spring, and you may request them more often. During a formal conference, time is set aside for the teacher to step out of the classroom so you can talk without distraction. Conferences are a chance to review your child's development, share your goals for your child, and discuss any concerns on either side.

“Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero to me.”

— Fred Rogers



Tuition & Financial Information

THE FINANCIAL POLICIES ARE THE GOVERNING DOCUMENT

This part is a summary for convenience. The Mini University Financial Policies — which you sign at enrollment — govern in the event of any difference between this handbook and that document. Publicly funded families also sign the A-B-C Addendum to Financial Policies.

At a Glance

Summary	
Registration fee	\$75 per child, charged to enroll, re-enroll, or join the waiting list. Non-refundable.
Tuition deposit	\$100 per family, due within 24 hours of accepting a space. Credited back after one year of enrollment when three weeks' written notice is given. Held per family — stays on your account while any sibling is still enrolled.
Monthly tuition	Charged on the first of each month for the schedule you selected. Co-pays are charged 4 or 5 times based on the number of Mondays. Never pro-rated for partial months.
Absences	Tuition is charged regardless of attendance or absence.
Closings	Tuition is charged regardless of how many days the center is open in a month, because most teaching staff are paid on those days.
Late tuition fee	\$35 on any account not paid by the 4th. Services discontinued on the 7th if unpaid. More than three late fees in a calendar year ends services.
Late pick-up fee	\$35 per child per 15 minutes past closing. See Part 2.
Payment methods	ACH, credit card online, or the Touch clock-in device. Tuition Express gives 24/7 access to your balance and history. Semi-monthly ACH available when monthly tuition exceeds \$800.
Responsibility	By enrolling, your family accepts financial responsibility for full tuition and all fees. Maintaining eligibility and paperwork for any tuition assistance is each family's responsibility.

Tuition Assistance

Child care is a significant investment, and several programs may help. You may qualify for more than one, and some can be combined. Ask your Center Director — we will help you figure out what you qualify for and how to apply.

- Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) and the Child Care Voucher Program (CCVP)
- Ohio Preschool Program (OPP) — formerly the ECE Grant
- Preschool Promise — Montgomery County
- CCAMPIS — for eligible college student-parents
- Child Care Aware — for military families

A full summary, including which programs can be layered together, is provided at your tour and at enrollment.

Changing Your Schedule

When space is available, you may change your child's schedule effective the first of the month by submitting a Change of Schedule Request by the 15th of the prior month. Because some age groups have waiting lists, please give as much notice as you can. You will receive written approval or denial for every request.

If You Have a Concern

We want to hear from you early, while a small problem is still small. Most concerns are resolved fastest at the classroom level, but you never have to stop there.

Step	Who to talk with	What to expect
1	Your child's teacher	Best for day-to-day questions about your child's care, routines, or development. Talk at drop-off or pick-up, or request a conference.
2	The Center Director	For anything unresolved, or any concern about policy, billing, staffing, or safety. Expect a response within two business days.
3	The Home Office	If a concern remains unresolved after speaking with the Director, contact the Home Office through your center or at (937) 426-1414.
4	DCY licensing	You may report a suspected violation of licensing law or rules at any time by calling DCY at 844-234-KIDS (5437), Option 3 — the toll-free number is also listed on the center's license. See the Center Parent Information notice in the Appendix.

You will never be penalized for raising a concern.

Withdrawing

We never want a family to leave before their child is ready for kindergarten, and we always welcome the chance to resolve a concern first. Three weeks' written notice is required. After a child has been enrolled at least one year and three weeks' notice is given, the tuition deposit is credited back to your account. Because the deposit is held per family, it stays on your account while any sibling remains enrolled, and is credited only when your last child leaves. See the Director for the Notification of Withdrawal form.



“There are two lasting bequests we can give our children: one is roots, the other is wings.”

— attributed to Hodding Carter

Appendix — Center Parent Information

The text below reproduces Appendix C to Ohio Administrative Code rule 5180:2-12-07 (effective 7/1/2026), which is provided to every family at enrollment as required by rule 5180:2-12-07(B)(6).

The child care center is licensed to operate legally by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY). This license is posted in a noticeable place for review.

A toll-free phone number is listed on the license and may be used to report a suspected violation of the licensing law or administrative rules. The licensing rules governing child care are available for review online at <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/chapter-5180:2-12>.

Administrators and each employee of the center are required, under Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code, to report their suspicions of child abuse or child neglect to the local public children's services agency.

Any parent of a child enrolled in the center is permitted unlimited access to the center during all hours of operation for the purpose of contacting their children, evaluating the care provided by the center, or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the premises, the parent or guardian is to notify the Administrator of their presence.

Licensing records, including licensing inspection reports, complaint investigation reports, and evaluation forms from the building and fire departments, are available for review upon written request from DCY. Early care and education program information and inspections are also online using the Child Care Search Tool on the DCY website at <https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/for-families/early-care-education/child-care-search>.

It is unlawful for the center to discriminate in the enrollment of children upon the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 104 Stat. 32, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq. To file a discrimination complaint, write or call Health and Human Services (HHS) or DCY. HHS and DCY are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Write or Call:	Write or Call:
OCC/ACF/HHS Southwest Region 1301 Young Street, Suite 958 Dallas, TX 75202 214-767-3849	ODJFS Bureau of Civil Rights 30 E. Broad St., 30th Floor Columbus, OH 43215-3414 (614) 644-2703 (voice) 1-866-277-6353 (toll free) (614) 752-6381 (fax) 1-866-221-6700 (TTY) or (614) 995-9961 bcr-fax@jfs.ohio.gov (e-fax) Civil_Rights@jfs.ohio.gov (e-mail)

For more information about child care licensing requirements as well as how to apply for child care assistance, please visit <https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/for-families>.

For more information on Medicaid health screenings and early intervention services for your child, please visit <https://medicaid.ohio.gov/families-and-individuals/citizen-programs-and-initiatives/healthchek/> and <https://ohioearlyintervention.org>.

For information on cash food assistance, please visit <https://jfs.ohio.gov/cash-food-assistance>.