

Introduction

Welcome to Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place ("Abi's Place" or "the school"), where we believe that children deserve to LIVE, LAUGH, AND LEARN. As you enter our school, we want to make you feel right at home. We always address the family as a whole. Therefore, when you see or hear the word "you" or "your", this automatically includes children, parents, and other family members. We are sure that you are going to have questions, so please read this handbook to see if your questions are answered. We do ask that you sign the "Acceptance" page, to confirm that you agree with the policies in this Handbook. If you have any questions regarding this Handbook, please see Abi's Place's Director.

Non-Discrimination

Abi's Place welcomes students regardless of sex, race, religion, national and ethnic origin, physical, mental, and emotional disability. All of the rights, privileges, programs, and activities are made available to students at the school. Abi's Place does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, national and ethnic origin, physical, mental, and/or emotional disability in administration of our educational policies, admission policies, scholarships, loan programs, and/or other school-administered programs.

Mission and Philosophy

Our mission is to provide a safe, clean, stimulating environment that includes parents, teachers, and therapists in their child's education. Personalized educational plans are developed through an evaluation process to accommodate the documented needs of our students in six areas: cognition, language, fine motor, gross motor, social-emotional, and independent functioning. Teachers and therapists work together to help each child reach his/her goals through a variety of research-based strategies, proper equipment, and assistive technology. We pride ourselves on providing the social interactions that our children need in order to learn. At Abi's Place, we believe in children through fun, positive experiences that are reinforced through repetition and everyday practices.

Enrollment and Registration

Registration is a time for everyone to meet and get to know each other. Each child is evaluated during their registration process; this evaluation will help us to determine the child's present level of performance, and for our staff to start building a relationship with your child. Parents and staff will discuss their wishes for your child and reach mutual goals to achieve each year.

PLEASE NOTE: The yellow and blue school forms are required from your pediatrician according to County's standards. We also ask for parents to fill out questionnaires to help us to get to know your child's likes and dislikes. We always welcome parents to observe your child's progress and to communicate any concerns that you may have at any time.

Your child's student file is rather cumbersome due to county standards and requirements. We will give you all the required forms but please note that we need your help in creating your child's student file. You are responsible to return all forms to the teacher/therapist or Director. We thank you for your assistance in this.

Application and Student Record

Student files are completely confidential and are required by the state. The school does ask for assistances from teachers and parents in order to ensure that the proper paperwork is included in each student files. The files are kept in a locked cabinet which is available only to the Director, lead teacher, and parents. In case of any emergency, the files must be available for emergency contact information and procedures. Please Remember, the student files are completely confidential!

a. Student Files Include:

1. Enrollment Form #1 or its equivalent with date of child's birth and date of enrollment and parent signature included. (APPLICATION)
2. PASSWORD form
3. Medical Release form
4. Medication form
5. Alternate Nutrition Plan if applicable (our school is responsible for snacks only and parents for lunches)
6. Insurance card copy front and back
7. Prescription for therapies
8. Current evaluations

9. Immunization Record #680 (yellow form must have expiration date and signature/stamp to be valid)
10. Statement of Good Health #3040 (this statement is good for two years, blue form)
11. Know your child care center #4 (signed statement that parent has received pamphlet)
12. Accident/Incident Reports form
13. Field Trip Permission(s) if necessary

Also included is the completed child questionnaire to provide Abi's Place with information regarding the likes and dislikes of your child.

Payment, Scholarships, and Late fees

There is a non-refundable registration fee of \$150.00 to enroll your child and to guarantee a seat in our classroom since space is limited. Class placement is on a first-come, first-served basis. There is an annual tuition of \$17,000 that covers the costs of teachers, therapist, equipment, and supplies for your child. Our school is a non-profit center that is only able to service children through tuition, donations, scholarships, and fund-raising. Tuition payment options can be in monthly, bi-annual, or annual payments. Annual tuition is paid on an installment basis and is not refundable due to days closed or absences. Monthly tuitions are due at the beginning of every month and each month has five days grace period. After your five-day grace period there is a \$25.00 a day late fee. We do accept cash, checks, and credit cards.

Corporate Scholarships are available on a financial need basis. If your combined annual income is below \$80,000, you might be eligible for a scholarship. Scholarships are available through our school, private organizations, the county, and corporations. Abi's Place is continuously engaged in a variety of fund-raising efforts, and applies for government and private grants in an effort to help support our students.

McKay Scholarship, we are listed as a participating school but you, as a parent must apply to the McKay Scholarship first and choose us as your school of choice. Deadlines are strict, therefore please read the McKay Scholarship guidelines posted on the School Choice Web Site.

Policies

Termination of Enrollment

In order to terminate your enrollment, proper notice is required to withdraw your child from Abi's Place. "Proper notice" is defined as written notice received thirty (30) days before the withdrawal date. Upon receiving proper notice and payment of all tuition due and owing, up to the withdrawal date, a student may be withdrawn without further tuition obligations.

Hours of Operation and Days Closed

Abi's Place is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Classes run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. You can arrive as early as 8:30 a.m., but we do ask that children are picked up *no later than 2:10 p.m.* Unless they are enrolled in after- school enrichment courses, the after-school program, or other services are arranged with the therapist. If for some unforeseen reason you are not able to pick up your child by 2:10 p.m., and you have not made specific arrangements, your child will automatically go to the after-school program. In such cases, Abi's Place will contact you and bill you accordingly. **Unfortunately, if you are late more than three times afterschool, you will be charge \$1.00 per minute fee. In any event, please contact the school to arrange for after-care to help us ensure proper staffing.**

Days that Abi's Place will be closed are listed on our school calendar. However, in the event of a weather- or emergency- closing, Abi's Place will follow the Broward County Public School emergency closing decisions as broadcasted in the local media. Every reasonable effort will be made to notify parents or a designated person on the student's emergency pick-up form in such cases. If a weather- or emergency- closing decision is made by Broward County Schools and announced in advance by the local media, such as a hurricane, Abi's Place will be closed. Parents may call the school to confirm, and notices will be included on our phone system.

Health Policies

No child may attend school at Abi's Place for longer than two (2) weeks without submitting the state-required health forms. Currently, the Florida Department of Health requires two (2) forms, # DH 3040 (yellow) and # DH 680 (blue). These forms are obtained from the student's doctor. It is the parents' responsibility to maintain their currency and to deliver them to Abi's Place. We will remind you

about these forms and their expiration dates. Forms must be delivered before the expiration date in order to ensure uninterrupted attendance.

Parents and staff share the responsibility for reducing exposure and to prevent the spreading of communicable diseases. Abi's Place's illness policies, as well as state regulations, require that children need to be free and clear of the following symptoms/illness BEFORE returning to childcare:

- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool per day and suspicious)
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Severe Cough
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes, or unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool.
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping or pus-filled
- Stiff neck
- Difficult or rapid breathing or wheezing
- Complaints of severe pain
- Fever of one hundred degrees (100) degrees Fahrenheit or higher, Taken by the auxiliary method, with any other signs of illness
- Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)
- Infectious nasal discharge

If a child demonstrates any of the above signs, he/she will be isolated and you will be notified. It is your responsibility to pick up your child immediately or to make arrangements for someone else to do so (with proper authorization). These precautions are taken in an effort to protect the health of all children at Abi's Place.

A child with head lice will not be permitted to return to school until treatment has occurred. Treatment shall include the removal of all lice, lice eggs, and egg cases.

If a child has mild cold symptoms for three (3) days or more that do not impair his/her functioning, he/she may remain at Abi's Place and you will be notified when you pick up the child. This means that in order to continue attending Abi's Place, your child must be able to participate fully in all program activities, including therapy.

If a child will be absent due to illness, parents should call and notify the school. If a child contracts a communicable disease, Abi's Place should be notified so that staff and other parents may watch for symptoms. To maintain consistent staffing, in the event of a child's absence due to short-term illness, parent will still be billed for the usually scheduled hours. When a parent has prior knowledge that a child will be absent due to illness (i.e., scheduled hospitalization), you should contact us to make appropriate arrangements.

The single-most significant step that individuals can take to reduce the spread of disease is to improve hand washing. As a childcare program, all staff members at Abi's Place wash their own hands frequently according to the hand-washing guidelines, and we carefully instruct children on how to adequately wash their hands. Our staff is trained in suitable hand-washing procedures, which include running water, soap, scrubbing and rubbing. Our staff will wash their hands after diapering or assisting with toileting or nose wiping, and before all feeding, food preparation or service.

Parents are requested to continue proper hand-washing instruction at home to reinforce the procedures learned at school. We also wash our toys, furniture, countertops, bathrooms, floors, and equipment daily to prevent spread of germs and infections.

Sign-In, Sign-Out, and Release of the Child

Sign-in and Sign-out sheets are posted daily in the classroom(s) beside the child's attendance chart for record-keeping purposes only.

Occasionally, parents are late for pick-up due to unforeseen circumstances. Please remember that "Abi's Place" will only release children to individuals previously authorized on the Pick-up Information and Authorization form with the proper password given. Until we get to know the parents and other authorized persons, we will require picture identification before releasing the child to unfamiliar faces.

In an emergency, parent can authorize others to pick up your child on a one-time basis. This authorization should be in writing and sent to our office.

Please use caution upon entering and exiting the building. On occasion, people travel down the sidewalks on bicycles or scooters. You also never know when a driver is not paying attention while in the parking lot. Please watch yourself and your child(ren) when entering and/or exiting Abi's Place.

Medication

“Abi’s Place” staff members may administer medication only with written permission from a parent on a Blue H.R.S. # 5 form. The medication must be in the original container, clearly marked as to the type of medication contained, and the correct dosage. The # 5 form must contain all requested information (please request forms if needed). Please hand the medicine personally to the student’s teacher or the Director so that it may be properly secured. Do not put any type or form of medication (cough drops, lozenges, etc.) in your child’s backpack or lunch box.

Emergency and Evacuation Procedures

Evacuation procedures are taught to children in case of an emergency. We encourage parents to teach their children about safety as well. If an individual child is injured during attendance at Abi’s Place, a staff member will take the necessary emergency steps and contact you as soon as possible. Medical procedures will not be undertaken without parent contact, except in the case of a medical practitioner’s determination that immediate action is necessary. Any transportation of an injured child will be by ambulance or other emergency transport.

Accidents

An Incident/Accident Report form is used by staff to report all occurrences which result in injury. This information includes the date, a description of the occurrence, and treatment, if any. Parents are asked to sign the incident report and can then be given a copy. If you have further questions, please speak to the teacher or other representative that was present and dealt with the occurrence to obtain more information. For anything other than a minor injury, you will be contacted as soon as possible. Parents are responsible for ensuring that Abi’s Place has updated emergency information.

School Decorum

Abi’s Place believes that children need a safe and peaceful environment in which to LIVE, LAUGH AND LEARN – as well as to grow and feel comfortable. Our environment is structured in a way that allows children to safely explore, live, laugh, and learn.

Classes start at 9:00 a.m. during the regular school year. Parents should drop their children off before 9:00 a.m. Many important activities occur during the early part of the day, such that your child will be at a disadvantage if he/she is consistently late.

Our rules are intended to ensure everyone's safety and to maintain a calm environment. Teachers establish and enforce basic ground rules, which include:

- Children are taught to share
- Children must refrain from climbing on furniture
- When indoors, children must use inside voices
- Children are redirected to express themselves appropriately rather than hitting or misbehaving

We do understand that some children may have existing behavior problems that will be discussed during the evaluation meeting. We support each family and will work with families to organize behavior protocols and respond appropriately.

We do ask for the help of parents by being consistent at home. For further suggestions regarding home environments, support will be given upon request.

Grievance Procedures

Abi's Place is an extremely family-friendly facility. If there are any concerns, questions, comments or complaints, please feel free to discuss them with the lead teacher and/or the Director at any time. You can choose to express yourself appropriately in private whether verbally or in writing. We are here to support families and to help our children progress.

Meals and Snacks

At this time Abi's Place is not equipped to provide hot lunches. We do ask parents to send a bagged lunch for your child. Abi's Place supplies daily snacks. Please make staff aware of your child's allergies or other pertinent information. The "Alternate Nutrition Plan" provided to each parent when enrolling gives a good basic guideline to a balanced lunch. Please include napkins and any necessary utensils.

Abi's Place Speech therapists are available to work with your child during lunch - just speak to the teachers and/or Director to schedule appropriately. If your child receives their nutrition via G-Tubes, please make the teachers aware of their feeding schedule. If a child with G-Tubes wishes to eat orally, we must have a doctor's note that states the child is medically capable of doing so.

Dress, Diapering, Toileting and Supplies

Extra clothing is requested in case of an accident, and should be made available daily in a bag with your child's name on the bag. We also ask for a supply of diapers, if applicable. We encourage toileting for all children that show signs of potty readiness and will work with families to be consistent. If there are any other supplies that are necessary in order to care for your child, please label them with your child's name (such as bibs, oral syringes, personal comfort toys)

Parent Involvement

Parent Meetings

Parent meetings are generally held only on the request of the parents. This would be considered a special private meeting with the teacher to discuss any concerns, etc. This meeting will be in addition to the annual education goal meeting. Please keep in mind - parents are encouraged to be involved with your child's education and to communicate with teachers and the Director weekly, if not daily.

Individual Education Plan

At Abi's Place, we understand that the word "IEP" could put knots in your stomach. However, at our school, we want to change that feeling. This meeting is simply a time that teachers, specialists, and families meet to establish common goals for each child, *period*. We are here to support children with special needs, not to create conflict. This meeting will take place annually when all parties can be present, or via phone conference. The Individual Education Plan will address School Readiness Skills, daily living skills, communication, social and emotional, and independent and physical goals. Taking care of children with special needs is truly a team effort. We understand that parents or teachers alone cannot make a difference - it is only through collaboration that we can make this joint effort successful.

Fundraising

Fundraising is undertaken as often as possible to help off-set the expenses of running Abi's Place. Through fundraising efforts, we are able to offer your children adequate therapies, assistants, teachers, and low ratios. In addition, annual fundraising is necessary to ensure the existence of Abi's Place for years to come. Therefore, parent commitment is a requirement at Abi's Place since we are a family-oriented facility and a non-profit school - we must work together to keep Abi's Place alive.

To help ensure that we can provide the best for our children, we mandate all parents to participate in some way - You can participate in fund-raising by committing to raising \$5,000 annually; you can volunteer your time twice a month in the classroom; or you can volunteer to donate products and services to Abi's Place which will benefit us. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation to this end which helps to make Abi's Place truly a family-oriented facility.

Volunteering and Observation

Family volunteering and observations are always welcome. Parents, families, and specialists may sit in and observe or participate in our activities pretty much at any time. Some families wish to have their nannies or nurses present while their child is in school. This is also acceptable as long as there are no distractions and everyone understands that your child is our main focus.

Authorization to photograph or video

Abi's Place may, on occasion, take photographs and video of class activities. We need to know your comfort level regarding how these photographs and/or videos can be used. Please check the box or boxes below that you feel comfortable with:

- I authorize Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place to use my child's school photographs and video in the classroom for educational purposes.
- I authorize Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place to use my child's school photographs and video for training and educational use by/for teachers and other professionals.
- I authorize Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place to use my child's school photographs and video to publish in school newsletters, brochures, and/or other promotional items, at Abi's Place sole discretion.
- I do not authorize Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place to photograph or videotape my child.
-

Thank you for taking the time to review this Handbook.
If you have any questions, please contact our director.

PLEASE SIGN & RETURN THIS PAGE TO A TEACHER OR THE DIRECTOR.

_____ (Please initial) Name: _____ Date: _____
By initialing above, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and accept the
terms and policies outlined in the “School Handbook”.