



MOUNTAIN SHADOWS

EXCEPTIONAL KIDS

Parent Handbook

970 Los Vallecitos Blvd Ste 130
San Marcos, CA 92069
Phone Number: 760-743-3714 ex 111

Dear Parent(s):

Welcome! You are now part of "our family" here at Mountain Shadows Exceptional Kids. It is my sincere desire that your association with our center be a happy and rewarding experience. In our efforts to provide quality child care in a safe and nurturing environment, we have staffed our program with qualified teachers and aides who will work closely with your children.

Our Parent Handbook is intended to provide you with program guidelines and policies, as well as to familiarize you with the overall program. Please take the time to read it thoroughly. If you have any questions about this handbook or any of the policies please contact me or call our office for any additional information you may need or to address concerns about our programs and services. This Handbook will hopefully answer most questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

Heide Fields
Director

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THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING MOUNTAIN SHADOWS EXCEPTIONAL KIDS

Hours of Operation: Mountain Shadows Exceptional Kids is open year-round Monday - Friday from 6:30-AM – 6:00 PM. We are closed on all major holidays: New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, President’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, as well as two floating in-Service Days.

Purpose and Services:

Vision: All children have the right to learn and be given the opportunity to expand their mind and knowledge base through creative learning no matter what their developmental status. Our center will provide families and their children a caring, friendly, and inclusive environment to grow and learn, as well as encourage families to participate in their children’s education.

Mission: MSEK’s mission is to offer all children, no matter their developmental level, a high quality learning experience and provide nursing services to support those children in need to reach their highest potential. by focusing on the whole child (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development). We will offer nursing services for those in need and create, encourage, and maintain an environment for learning and creativity for all

Philosophy: MSEK focus is on readiness skills based on a child's developmental level and allow each child to develop at his or her own rate. Principles and practices that best support our vision and the needs of our children are:

- Focusing on the whole child (social, emotional, physical, cognitive) development
- Recognizing, acknowledging and supporting children’s individual learning styles
- Encouraging creativity and inquiry
- Aid children in developing self-discipline skills and problem solving skills
- Helping children develop a healthy sense of self image and sense of security
- Encouraging the development of children’s abilities to observe, question, explore, communicate, and imagine
- Designing and maintaining an enriched environment that stimulates the imagination and promotes creativity
- Valuing the child as an individual within the context of the family and the community
- Supporting parents in their role as primary caregivers by providing community resources and information of benefit to the development of their child

Mountain Shadows Exceptional Kids provides care to the following age ranges and provides the following ratios:

Type of Care	Age Range	Supervision Ratio
Two Year Olds	2-3 years of age	1:10
Preschool	3-5 years of age	1:12

For Your First Day: Knowing what to expect your first day makes the transition easier. We recommend that you give yourself at least 15 extra minutes so you aren't rushing to drop off. Please make sure your child has the following items when dropped off for their first day:

- A backpack
- A crib sized sheet AND a blanket (labeled with their name)
- Two extra change of clothing including underwear and socks (to be kept in their cubbie)
- Diapers or pull ups (if needed)
- Wipes (if needed)
- Any other necessary items for your child

Admission Procedures: MSEK welcomes children 2 years to 5 years of age. Children may attend MSEK until they are ready for Kindergarten.

Interested parents may contact the Director to schedule an appointment to visit MSEK in order to ensure that placement at our center is appropriate for their child(ren). Pertinent information regarding the program will be given to parents at the time of the visit. A non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 This secures a child's space in the program.

In compliance with California State Law, an up-to-date and completed Physician's Form/Immunization Record is required to be returned to the Director before a child can begin enrollment into the program. Other required forms that are required to be completed before admission are: Notification of Parents' Rights form, Personal Rights form, Identification and Emergency Information, Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment form, Child's Preadmission Health History – Parent's Report, and Needs and Services Plan (for infants and children with special needs).

We recommend that the child also takes a tour of MSEK along with a trusted adult (parent, close family member) in order to feel more comfortable for the first day. This experience will allow the child to gain a familiarity with his/her classroom and for the child to meet his/her peers and teachers of the center.

Waiting List and Placement: Waiting list is established on a first-come, first-service basis. Families concurrently enrolled in MSEK needing additional time or space and siblings of children concurrently attending MSEK will receive first consideration when seeking to change hours or days. Other enrollments will be processed in order of receipt and based upon availability.

Communication: As you begin this journey of your child's education, either here or anywhere, the parent-teacher-school relationship will be one of the most important relationships to maintain and grow. We encourage open communication at all times. Our communication will come in the form of emails, phone calls, newsletters, reports, and parent-teacher conferences. As a parent you will always be welcome to observe and participate in your child's day. Please do not wait for a parent-teacher conference to address safety, developmental or general questions or concerns. If pick up time is not a convenient time for you, please call the office to set up an appointment or to speak to your child's teacher during naptime. During this time the teacher can give you their undivided attention.

Staffing: All of our teachers and teacher aids have an educational background in the field of early childhood education and exceed the educational background required by State Licensing. Our teaching staff participates in continuing education classes, workshops and conferences throughout the year. All teachers

are trained in First Aid and Pediatric/Child CPR and must keep their training current. As professionals, we are dedicated to continuing education and the most current and updated information as it pertains to early childhood education. Besides our teachers, our staff includes highly educated and skilled licensed nurses to provide care and aid the children that need require nursing services.

Absences: If your child is going to be absent, we ask that you notify the center office by 9:00 AM. The nature of the illness is also important to us particularly if the illness is contagious. There will be no reduction in tuition for absences. You are paying to hold your child's position in our program.

Arrival and Pick Up: When you arrive at MSEK each day, be sure to sign in at the front desk with a full signature. You should then proceed with your child to their classroom or to their teacher. Due to necessary staffing patterns and student/teacher ratios at times we will have combined classes until a certain time, please continue to take your child to the combined area with a teacher.

When your day comes to a close and you return for your child be sure that you sign out at the front desk. Please check the parent communication board that is located in front of your child's classroom and check their cubbie for communication log, ouch reports, and/or art projects. Please speak to the teacher in charge of your child's group before you leave.

Only authorized adults 18 years of age or older will be allowed to pick up your child each day. MSEK requires legal identification for all unknown adults seeking to pick up children from our center. This includes custodial parents. When staff members feel comfortable that they personally know the adult seeking to pick up the child, identification will no longer be required. Authorized adults are only those listed as acceptable in the personal file of each child or by written authorization of a custodial parent. If an emergency arises, we will accept over the phone authorization with proper identification. MSEK will not become involved in parental disputes. We will only act upon the instruction of the enrolling parent and when necessary per the instruction of a court of law.

If you are an hour late picking up your child and all people on the contact list have been exhausted, we will call the local authorities to come get your child.

Birthdays: Your child's birthday is a special day. We enjoy being a part of it with them. We ask that if you want to celebrate your child's birthday in their classroom please notify your child's teacher and / or Director in advance. You are welcome to bring a special snack for their class that is store bought with a list of ingredients attached. Also we ask that you do not give favors or treat bags to each of your child's classmates. Instead, to make a birthday a special occasion for the child, please allow your child to select a special gift to be presented to the classroom to commemorate his/her birthday. The teacher will allow the child to unwrap this special gift to the class, and if appropriate, it will be marked with his/her name and the date. Of course the gift to the class is optional.

Holidays: We will celebrate the traditional holidays at our center through activities and celebrations. These will include: Easter, Independence Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah, and Kwanzaa. Parents are encouraged to help facilitate and participate in these activities/celebrations. If parents/guardians do not wish to have their child participate, please take the responsibility to alert the Center Director prior to the scheduled celebrations.

Cleanliness: All classroom equipment including but not limited to toys and tables will be disinfected at the end of each day.

Clothing: Your child will be spending a large part of the day engaged in play and creative activities that can become rather messy. We encourage you to dress your child comfortably in washable clothes that they can manage themselves. For the protection of children, we recommend the children wear sneakers to school. All children will go to the playground every day unless there is precipitation or extreme heat. Please dress your child appropriately.

Please mark all jackets, bags, lunch boxes, and other belongings with your child's name. Please bring the change of clothes in a Ziploc bag with your child's name on it. This will be kept in their cubbie. This will be used in case of accidents or spills.

Discipline Policy: Corporal punishment and harsh words are not part of the philosophy of MSEK and are not in compliance with a child's personal rights. Such techniques offer models of behavior that we do not believe should be fostered in children. Discipline means guidance in the form of helping children change undesirable behavior into more acceptable, satisfying behavior. Guidance is a process. It is our policy that discipline is in the form of positive redirection and one that improves, strengthens, molds and helps a child. For that to happen we must have consistent guidelines for the child(ren) to follow, give positive reinforcement, provide acceptable choices, set realistic limits, encourage a child to express feelings with words when they are able to, use consequences that are age-appropriate and related to the behavior, and listen carefully to what our child(ren) are trying to communicate to us. We also ask for your support in this, as to comply with this policy when help support what we do. If any of our staff members observes you discipline your child by using physical force, we will ask you and your child to leave immediately and you will be subject to termination from the program.

If needed the child's teacher with support of the Director will schedule a conference with the parent(s) in order to discuss the needs of the child as it pertains to helping with his/her behavior. If unsafe behaviors continue after meetings, you may be subject to termination from the program. (See termination section)

Non Discriminatory Policy: MSEK admits children of any race, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability to all the rights, services, programs, and activities made available to the children at the center. It does not discriminate in the administration of its educational policies, admission policy or other school-administered programs.

Payment Provisions / Tuition:

Registration & Materials Fee: Parent shall pay to MSEK a non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 per child, or \$75.00 per returning child for registration at the time of enrollment. This payment is due upon date of enrollment agreement.

Basic Rates: Parent shall pay to MSEK the rate agreed upon in the Child Class Tuition Rate Schedule for the basic services. There are two options for tuition payment: monthly, or weekly. If paying monthly, tuition is due on the first of every month.. If paying weekly, tuition is due on the Friday before the week of attendance. There is a \$10.00 per day late charge for payment not received on the due date. After one week (5 working days), the Director may choose to discontinue services. If terminated, payment is still due for the full balance. Further late tuitions will also result in termination and/or your child will lose his/her space in the program. Prior to any rate change parents or guardians will be notified 30 days in advanced. For rate changes due to children being eligible for the next age group, the rate change will depend on your payment

option. If monthly, new rate would be due at the beginning of the next month. If weekly payments are set up, new rate is due by the Friday of the new week. You will be responsible for fees when the child is sick or on vacation.

Payment Options: Monthly Weekly

Method of Payment: Unless otherwise expressly provided in this Agreement, any payment to be made by parent or guardian to MSEK under this Agreement or otherwise may be made by cash, check, or money order made payable to Mountain Shadows. If any payment by check is returned unpaid, Parent shall pay MSEK a service charge of \$25.00. Should this occur more than one time future payments must be made by cash or money order. All payments must be made directly to the Administrator at MSEK.

Financial Assistance Information: There are opportunities available for assistance with the fees through the YMCA or CDA (California Development Association) and these are available to you if you are eligible. Please speak with the Director to find out more information. If indeed you qualify for one of the programs and would like to use it to assist you in paying the fees, the director will go over with you how the fees will be paid. Parent still may be subject to pay a small amount of their fee. If payments must be made, the fees must be paid by the Monday that falls within their desired payment option. There is a \$10.00 per day late charge for payment not received on the due date. After two weeks (10 working days), the Director may choose to discontinue services. If terminated, payment is still due for the full balance.

Late Child Pick Up: If a parent picks up their child after 6:00 PM the following will occur:

1st Offense: Written warning

2nd Offense: A charge of \$1.00 per minute for the first 15 minutes. After the first 15 minutes, a charge of \$5.00 per minute thereafter.

3rd Offense: A charge of \$5.00 per minute for every minute until pick up.

These fees can be paid by check, cash, or money order. Three violations may result in immediate termination of child care services from the program. Failure to pay late fees may also result in termination from the program. Should this happen, the closing staff will present you with a receipt showing the actual minutes you are responsible for and these charges will be added to your statement.

Meals and Snacks: MSEK provides a nutritious lunch, and two snacks for each child. Please note the specific time of meals and snack on example schedule. We offer a menu full of variety that is compliance with recommended USDA standards. Menu changes will be posted on the information board at the front office area. If your child has any allergies please let us know when enrolling. You must have the physician fill out the food allergy form detailing the allergy and special accommodations needed. You may be asked to bring in the accommodations with the child's name on it and it will be kept in our kitchen.

Nap Time: All children who spend a full day with us will be required to rest. Children are expected to rest quietly allowing those who need to sleep the opportunity to do so. Sleep mats are provided by the center. Parents are required to provide a crib sized sheet and blanket labeled with their child's name for naptime. Parents can leave them in child's cubbie through the week and take them home on Friday for laundering. Also a small stuffed toy is a wonderful addition to their nap time and should be taken home on the weekends.

California state law requires that all children have a sheet to use for naptime. If your child does not have a sheet for use at naptime you will be charged a \$9.00 fee for us to provide them with one. This sheet will become the child's property.

Personal Belongings: MSEK supplies all classrooms with age appropriate educational materials and toys. Therefore, we feel it is best if the child does not bring toys, money, candy, or other personal items from home throughout the week. MSEK will always take due diligence in the case of all your child's belongings, however, MSEK is not responsible for any personal items that may get lost or broken while at the center.

Reporting of Child Abuse: MSEK is required by law to report any suspected incidents of possible child abuse or neglect to CPS.

Termination: We would not want to dismiss any child/family from our center, but to ensure the health and safety of others we reserve the right to terminate a child from the program. A child or any member of the child's family can cause termination if they are disruptive, abusive, unruly or uncooperative to the extent that their participation in the program will seriously impair our ability to provide services to other children who are attending our center. Other grounds for dismissal are as follows:

- 1) Disruptive or Aggressive Behavior: In the judgment of the MSEK Director that a child's behavior threatens the physical or mental health or well being of one or more of the other children at MSEK.
- 2) Child is emotionally and physically unable to adjust in the school environment.
- 3) Parent fails to pay the fees on a timely basis and or check for payment is returned uncollected on continuous basis.
- 4) Continuous late pick ups. This includes parents who fail to pick up child promptly when notified child is ill.

Toileting: We will help your child learn to use the toilet when they are ready. Please have your child wear pull-ups while training, and bring at least two changes of clothes for easier cleanup of accidents. Children entering into the 3 year old to Pre-K classes must be toilet trained. We do understand, however, that children in this age group are still prone to accidents. Please be advised that should the need arise your child's teacher will change his/her clothes.

Medical Policies:

Vaccinations: All children attending MSEK must receive routine vaccinations as specified by the State Health Department. If you have a belief against the vaccination of your child, you can sign a medical release affidavit and we will accept your child into our program. However, if a communicable disease occurs, your child will be excluded from the program until the contagious period for all of the children ends.

Illness: Every effort is made to ensure that we keep our center a healthy environment for all of our children. We do not have the facilities to care for sick children. Please do not send your child to the center if they are not well, as they expose other children and teachers to their illness. Please keep your child home if they have a fever, is vomiting, has a rash, loose bowl movements or any other questionable symptoms. If your child is absent for more than 3 days, we require a note from the physician detailing that your child is no longer contagious and can return.

We conduct morning health checks whereupon the teachers will observe your child as they enter and if found to be sick, not feel well, or have lice, we will ask you to take your child home until they are well enough to return.

If your child becomes sick or is found to have lice while at MSEK you will be contacted to come and pick your child up. If you are called please ensure that you can make arrangements to have them picked up.

Children must be fever and symptom free for 24 hours prior to returning.

Parents are asked to call the center when their child is absent due to illness. Contagious illness must be reported to the center immediately. The child may not return to the center until a doctor verifies that the child is free from all symptoms and able to return.

Thank you in advance for respecting this very important policy. It is enforced not only to protect other children and staff but to protect your child as well. Working together we can keep everyone healthy and happy.

Emergency Medical Treatment: MSEK is required to have a signed and dated consent form for Emergency Medical treatment. Minor injuries sustained at the center will be handled by staff using basic first aid. If your child sustains a minor injury (cut, scrape, bruise) you will be notified either by phone or for less serious injuries, through an “Ouch Report” at the end of the day. There will be times your child will sustain a scratch, bump, or other minor injury and simply proceed without letting staff know. In these cases you will not receive an Ouch Report.

In cases of emergency we will call 911 for prompt medical attention for your child.

Medication: A medication consent form (LIC 9221) must be completed before your child will be able to receive any medicine while at the center. Teachers will sign and date when medication is given. We will give medications at the time that is prescribed. Please do not put vitamins or any medications in your child’s lunchbox. Please directly provide the medication to the teacher. Please note that the medication must be in the original bottle with your child’s name on it and that we cannot give expired medications. We cannot give medications past the date written on the consent by the parent for non prescription medications or past the date written on the order for prescription medication. We cannot give medications on an “as needed” basis; we must have exact dates and times.

Smoking is prohibited on MSEK grounds

Nursing Care for Children: If your child requires specialized nursing care the following LIC consents/forms must be signed and completed prior to our staff providing the nursing services:

- Blood Glucose Testing Consent/Verification – LIC 9222
- Nebulizer Care Consent/Verification – LIC 9166
- Gastrostomy-Tube Care: Physician’s Checklist/Child’s Evaluation for Appropriateness of Care – LIC 701 A
- Gastrostomy – Tube Care Consent / Verification – LIC 701 B

We also have a licensed nurse available to those children who require additional nursing services.

Withdrawing Your Child from the Center: A two (2) week notice is required if you decide to alter or change your contract in any way. Should you decide to withdraw your child from MSEK, a written notice must be turned in to the office at least 2 weeks prior to the expected date of departure.

Grievances: If at any time you have any concerns or complaints regarding our program, you may use the following guidelines to address your needs. Your first line of communication is with your child's teacher. If you feel you have not reached a satisfactory answer or resolution, you may contact the Director for a meeting to listen to and discuss your concerns.

It is our hope that open communication will always take place between us and the parents of our center. We will always maintain an open door policy, especially when it concerns our students, families or staff. We are here to work with you as partners in creating a special learning and playful experience for your child.

We consider the first month of enrollment an adjustment month for both the parent and the child(ren). If you have any concerns regarding any part of the program, it is your duty to discuss this with your child's teacher first.

Community Disaster Plan: In the event of an emergency evacuation / natural disaster (fire, earthquake, etc.) we will take the proper precautions for safety of all children. In the event that we need to close the school due to any of emergency/natural disasters, we will follow the closure of San Marcos School District. Using your child's Disaster Release Form, we will also follow the instructions you leave with us for such circumstances.