



Community Montessori School

Parent Handbook 2019-2020

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WELCOME!

The Staff & Board of Directors warmly welcome your family to Community Montessori School. We encourage you to participate fully in all CMS has to offer!

About Montessori

Maria Montessori was an Italian physician, educator and innovator, who developed an educational approach based on the way children naturally learn & develop. A true pioneer, she was the first woman to graduate from medical school in her native Italy. Dr. Montessori had a keen interest in children and applied scientific methods to the study of their development.

The first Montessori school, the Casa dei Bambini or Children's House, opened in Rome in 1907. Following world-wide acclaim for the success of her method, Dr. Montessori traveled the world, advocating for children and giving voice to a new perspective on education. She was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1949 for her work on education & peace and continued advocating on behalf of children until her death in 1952.

There are now more than 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States and Maria Montessori's method is embraced in at least 110 countries worldwide. At CMS we wholeheartedly embrace the philosophy and approach established by Maria Montessori. Our mission is to provide children with an authentic Montessori education and we strive to meet all Guidelines established by AMI for Montessori classrooms and schools.

About CMS

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 by a group of 13 families who wanted to bring Montessori education to Georgetown and surrounding areas. We are proud of our beautiful 18-acre campus! CMS serves children from 8 weeks to 8th grade.

CMS is a non-profit, tax-exempt private school governed by a Board of Directors and licensed by the Association Montessori International Teachers of Texas (AMITOT) and the state of Texas as a child care facility (TDFPS). CMS follows AMI guidelines regarding class size, program content, hours, and age groupings, and participates in the AMI School Recognition program.

The CMS Board of Directors establishes overall policies and directives governing the school and delegates to the Executive Director the responsibility to see that these policies and directives are followed, consistent with Montessori philosophy and the best interest of students, parents and staff members. CMS staff consists of Montessori Classroom Guides & Assistants, Extended Hours staff, and Administrative & Support staff, including the Executive Director, Admissions Director, Business Manager, Facilities & Land Manager, and Office Coordinator.

Montessori Classrooms Have:

- *Mixed age groupings to foster collaboration & peer learning*
- *Uninterrupted blocks of work time allowing for deep concentration*
- *Student initiated choice of activity*
- *A prepared environment tailored to the developmental needs of the child*
- *A complete set of Montessori materials*
- *An appropriate number of children to ensure social development*
- *A Guide trained in the Montessori method and certified for the age level of the class*

The mission of Community Montessori School is to provide authentic Montessori education in a nature-rich environment that cultivates collaboration, curiosity, love of learning, and respect for oneself, others and the world.

Our Programs

The Montessori Method places children in mixed age classrooms that meet the needs of children during a particular developmental stage. To fully experience what Montessori offers, it's important for the child to complete the cycle. Placement follows Admissions policies of the school but takes individual development into consideration.

Our Programs

Montessori Programs:

- *Nido – 8 weeks to 15 months*
- *Casita – 12/15 months to 3 years*
- *Children's House – 2 ½ to 6 years*
- *Lower Elementary – 6 to 9 years (1st to 3rd grades)*
- *Upper Elementary – 9 to 12 years (4th to 6th grades)*
- *Adolescent 12 to 15 years (7th & 8th grades)*

Extended Hours Programs:

- *Before School Care (7:15 to 8 am)*
- *After School Care (3:00 to 6:00 pm)*

Additional Programs:

- *Summer Camp – offered for 9 weeks in summer. Registration & schedules available in February.*
- *Spring Break Camp – offered during CMS Spring Break week.*
- *Enrichment Classes – offered to Children's House & Elementary students. Classes are held afterschool on the CMS campus.*
- *Before/After Care Daily Rate – offered if space is available. Pre-registration is required.*

Nido (children ages 8 weeks up to 15 months)

The Montessori infant community is a homelike environment created to serve the developmental needs of infants. The Nido & Casita together comprise a 3-year cycle, with infants transitioning to the Casita environment between 12 & 15 months, once they are walking well.

Casita (children ages 12 months up to 3 years)

Our Casita environments are designed specifically for toddlers learning to care for themselves, with an emphasis on language development and independence, including mastery of the toileting process.

Children's House (children ages 2 ½ up to 6 years)

The Children's House environments encourage curiosity & exploration. Beginning students rest after lunch while older students "extend" their day with an additional afternoon work period. All students enjoy outside play at the end of the school day.

Elementary (children ages 6 to 12 years)

The Elementary curriculum blends mastery of fundamental skills with individually chosen projects. The "Great Lessons" excite the imagination and inspire students to want to learn more. The Elementary curriculum spans all 6 years. Students are grouped into Lower Elementary (6 to 9 years) and Upper Elementary (9 to 12 years). Students at this level extend their educational endeavors with field trips and, for older students, overnight class trips.

Adolescent (children ages 12 to 15 years)

The Adolescent program supports students as they move from childhood toward adulthood. Academic work is combined with real world experiences and creative self-expression for project-based learning with a STEM twist. Students extend learning off campus on day trips and embark on 2 "Odyssey" trips, with additional opportunities to participate in overnight trips.

Extended Hours Programs

In the Nido & Casita programs, Before and After School Care are an extension of their school day and take place in their familiar classroom environments. Students at the Children's House, Elementary & Adolescent levels, go to designated spaces where they can enjoy snack, games, crafts and other activities. These environments do not offer Montessori materials but they do incorporate Montessori practices such as guided choice of activity, caring for the environment, and treating others with kindness and respect. Students enjoy additional time outdoors after school.

Additional Programs

Additional programs offered at CMS include Summer Camp, Spring Break Camp and a variety of Enrichment classes offered after school. Summer & Spring Break Camps are for current CMS students. Alumni and siblings are allowed to enroll as space allows. For Nido & Casita students, Camp continues the school day routine in a familiar environment. For Children's House, Elementary & Adolescent students, camps offer a blend of outdoor play, themed activities, and, for Elementary & Adolescent students, field trips off campus.

Enrichment classes are offered after school for Children's House, Elementary & Adolescent students. Class offerings may vary. Past examples include Suzuki violin lessons, soccer, yoga and science. Registration information is provided during the school year.

CMS POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Hours of Operation

- Operating Hours - 7:15 to 6:00
- Office Hours - 8:00 to 4:00
- School day - 8:00 to 3:00
- Before School Care - 7:15 to 8:00
- After School Care - 3:00 to 6:00

Arrival & Departure

Arrival time for all students is 8:00 am. Staff members are on hand at the Circle Drive for the first 15 minutes of the day to greet children and see them from their car to their classroom. Parents are asked to use the Car Line (Car Line Procedures are covered in that section of this Handbook). The Montessori approach promotes the child's independence as much as possible and that includes their arrival at school. Encourage your child to walk on their own to class! Those parents who prefer to park in the parking lot and walk their child in should say their goodbyes at the Arrival Benches. CMS staff will see that your child gets to their classroom safely.

Your child's day is greatly affected by arriving late! Activities are already underway in class and a child arriving late feels left out and behind. Please do your best to be on time for school. **Late arrivals MUST come to the office and sign in.** Please do not drop your child at the Circle Drive after staff has left the area. We cannot guarantee your child's safety if you do! Classroom doors are locked after 8:15 and office staff must walk your child to class to open the door for them.

Departure for school day students is 3:00 pm. As with Arrivals, CMS staff are on hand at the Circle Drive to see children to their cars. Children are asked to remain seated on the benches until a staff member walks them to their car. If another person is picking up your child, please inform them of our procedures. We ask that you refrain from engaging staff in lengthy conversations during Arrival and Departure. We love to wave and say hello, but we must keep our attention on the safety of students at this time.

Arrival & Departure for Extended Hours programs

Students enrolled in Before School Care must be walked to the door of that classroom and **parents must sign in** with staff on the tablet. Before School staff will walk children to their classrooms when the school day begins.

If your child is enrolled in After School Care, please park and walk to the door of the classroom to pick them up. **Parents must sign their child out** with staff on the tablet. If you arrive when children are on the playground, you may go to the playground to pick up and sign your child out. Please be respectful of staff that work late hours caring for children & pick up your child by 6 pm. We understand issues may arise on occasion. Late fees are assessed for children picked up after their departure time, as stated on the CMS Tuition & Fees Schedule. If someone else is picking up your child, please inform them of CMS procedures.

Authorized Pick up Persons

On your child's enrollment form, there is a section asking parents to list individuals that have permission to pick up their child. CMS assumes biological parents have this right, unless we have legal documentation on file saying otherwise. Giving authorization to pick up your child is not the same as an emergency contact. Please contact our Admissions Director if clarification is needed.

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, they must be listed as an Authorized Pick up Person on your child's enrollment form. If this person is unknown to our staff, they may be asked to show a photo ID. To add or remove a person from your child's Authorized Pick Up list, please call the CMS office. CMS Staff cannot be listed as Authorized Pick up Persons without a signed release waiver on file in the office.

Attendance

Attendance is taken daily after arrivals. Children arriving through the Car Line are signed in by staff - there is no need for parents in the car line to sign them in. Your child's progress may be affected by excessive absences. Student Conference Reports list the number of days absent.

Car Line & Driving on Campus

For many years, CMS has employed a staff-supervised Car Line during school day Arrival & Departure. The Car Line encourages independence as part of your child's daily routine, speeds up the process for parents, and keeps children safe. Parents should plan to spend about 10 minutes getting through the car line. For the car line to operate safely, drivers must adhere to the following:

- **Do not pass other cars in the line.** The CMS drive is a 2-way street and exiting traffic uses the drive as well. Please be a positive role model for your child by waiting patiently in line.
- Be respectful of others by moving through the car line as quickly as possible. If your child needs additional time, pull into a parking space in front of the Red building.
- **Stay inside your vehicle.** Staff will help your child out or in.
- Staff members are not permitted to buckle your child. Please pull into a parking space if you need to get out of your vehicle to do this.
- Please limit questions and conversations with staff working the Car Line

Cell phones should be stowed while driving on the CMS campus. Pleasant Valley Drive is a residential street with a speed limit of 30 miles per hour. The school drive has a speed limit of 20 miles per hour. Parents, staff and visitors to our campus are asked to follow the posted limits and to be attentive around school parking areas and driveways for any children or parents who may be walking about.

Clothing

Clothing worn by children at school becomes a part of the “prepared environment” and can affect behavior during class time. Please do not send your child in clothing with cartoon or video game characters that may be distracting or frightening to other children.

The following items should stay at home:

- Pretend play clothing such as capes and camouflage
- Shoes with wheels, high heels or shoes that may pose a safety hazard when running, climbing and playing outside
- Belts, scarves, necklaces or other items that may pose a safety hazard
- Pull up diapers are not allowed at CMS

Please label your child’s clothing! Students of all ages store extra clothing in class for “oops” moments. Your Guide will provide information regarding what to bring for this purpose. Children should come equipped for the weather. We go outside even when it’s cold or damp.

Communication

Good communication is essential for school and parents working together on behalf of the child. The most effective means of communicating with your child’s Guide is email. During class time, Guides are focused on working with the children. Emails and phone calls are answered during lunch breaks or after school. You can expect a response from your Guide within 24 hours, or in case of a weekend or holiday, the end of the next school day.

If you have an immediate need or message, please call the office. The main number is **512-863-7920**. Messages received after 4pm will be answered the following day.

Families with children enrolled in Extended Hours Care may need to contact staff outside of office hours. Please use these numbers only for immediate needs. Nido, Children’s House & Elementary Before and After School classes can be reached by dialing the school number (512-863-7920) and entering the extension code at the prompt.

- Nido - 230
- Children’s House/Elementary - 231
- Casita families are asked to text the Casita After Care cell phone at (737) 808-5805.

Celebrating Birthdays

Birthday celebrations at CMS focus on the child’s passage through time rather than traditional birthday customs like cake and candles. Parents are respectfully asked to enjoy those things at home. Your child’s Guide will provide specific information on how birthdays are celebrated in class. Parents may request assistance from the CMS office in sending a group email invitation to the class for a birthday celebration held outside of school. We cannot help with written or paper invitations or cards. Please note that the email invite will go to the entire class group.

Stay Informed

- **Weekly Emails**
The CMS Director sends a weekly email to all families every Tuesday and Guides also send weekly email updates with information specific to their classroom. This is our primary means of communicating school news & events. Please read your weekly emails!
- **CMS Newsletter**
Twice a year, a newsletter is emailed, with more in-depth news, and info on Montessori, CMS, parenting and child development.
- **CMS Website**
The school website is a good source of information such as calendars, links for forms, volunteering and more.
- **Facebook & Social Media**
Like us on Facebook! See current events & share with friends & family.

The CMS Library has a tradition of “Birthday Books,” which are donated by students in honor of their birthday. Books selected reflect the needs of the CMS Library and are available for purchase in the CMS office. A placard acknowledging the donation is placed in the book. More information about Birthday Books is available in the CMS office.

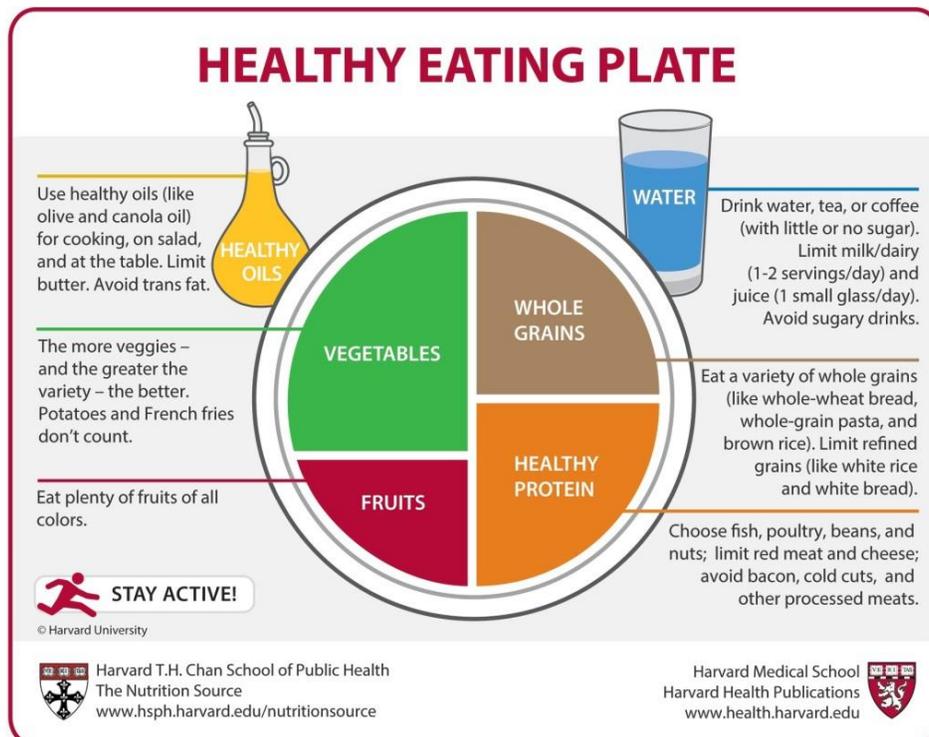
Celebrating Holidays & Special Occasions

Our school community is a wonderful tapestry of ethnicities, religions, family compositions and cultural identities. All are welcomed and respected. Students learn about customs and traditions around the world. CMS socials and gatherings bring students and/or families together to socialize rather than celebrate a particular holiday. Other occasions celebrate achievements of students, such as the Moving Up Ceremony or MMUN Showcase. These events are noted in weekly emails and on the CMS Calendar. If you have questions regarding celebrations at CMS, please contact the Executive Director.

Lunch & Snacks

Morning snacks are provided in Nido, Casita & Children’s House classrooms and consist of organic fruits & vegetables, which are offered to children during the work period. Water is always available. Elementary & Adolescent students can bring a snack in their lunch box to eat during the school day. After School Care students also are provided with a snack in the afternoon.

Lunch at CMS is a relaxed experience, with time to enjoy pleasant conversation and good food. Students set tables with glasses, silverware and dishes. Water is served and students are asked not to bring other drinks for lunch. Healthy eating is important to sustain children throughout their day. We are a no/low sugar campus and limit the amount of sugar students consume while at school. Please do not send sweets in their lunchbox. To ensure the safety of students with food allergies, **CMS is a peanut-free campus.** Students with a food allergy are required to submit an Allergy Plan that is posted in the classroom kitchen. Other food preferences or sensitivities are addressed on an individual basis. Now is the time to educate kids about making good choices. The Harvard “Healthy Eating Plate” is a great place to start!



On occasion, classes will have a special lunch of some kind. Your child's Guide will provide more specific information for their class. Cultural lunches are a fun tradition at CMS. They provide an opportunity for students to explore the tastes of other cultures, in conjunction with country research projects. Cooking is a popular activity for students at CMS and takes a variety of forms depending on the age level - from baking biscuits in Casita to cooking pasta in Elementary. Students also assist with snack preparation, such as slicing vegetables and fruit.

Items Brought to/from School

Our Montessori environments are thoughtfully and carefully prepared. Please do not allow your child to bring toys, or other items to school. Your Orientation Packet provides information on what children need to bring. Other items should remain at home or in the car. If an item from home does find its way to school, Guides will hold on to it or send it to the office for safe keeping until departure. Sometimes school items, such as Pink Tower cubes or golden beads, find their way into a pocket and come home. Because each item plays an important role in the environment, we ask that parents please return them promptly. We thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Field Trips & School Trips

Off campus trips at CMS are limited to Elementary & Adolescent students only. Parents are notified in advance, with details of departure and return times, location, and activities planned. Volunteer drivers may be used to transport children. Parents wanting to volunteer must submit a copy of their driver's license and proof of insurance to the office at the start of school.

In addition to day trips in our local vicinity, full cycle Lower Elementary students (3rd grade) take one overnight camping trip each year in the spring. Upper Elementary & Adolescent students take overnight trips twice a year (Fall and Spring) and may elect to participate in the Montessori Model UN program, which requires an additional trip to NYC in early Spring. Parents of students enrolled in these classes will receive additional information from their Guide regarding overnight trips.

Observations

Our classrooms are open for observations from October through April and parents are encouraged to sign up. Observations are for 30 minutes during the morning work period and are scheduled through the CMS office. Observers sign in and receive a visitor's badge and guidelines for observations before being walked to class. **Cell phone use and photography is not permitted** during observations. Our classrooms are also open to observations by teachers, college students, and prospective parents. All observers are expected to respect the privacy of our students.

Parent-Guide Conferences

Parent-Guide conferences are scheduled twice a year in Fall and Spring. We have 2 school closure days set aside for these meetings. Additional conferences may be requested any time there is a concern or question, and may be initiated by the parent or the Guide. Printed conference reports are provided to parents and signatures are requested.

Transitions

Classroom environments at CMS are tailored to meet the developmental needs of children during specific stages of growth. When a child nears the time when we would expect them to transition, Guides, in coordination with the Executive Director and Admissions Director, observe the child and meet to discuss their readiness. Generally, children in Elementary and Children's House classrooms transition at the start of the new school year in August. Nido and Casita children transition during fall and spring blocks where they have ample time to adjust to their new environment before breaks in the calendar occur.

At all levels, an individualized transition schedule is created, which includes visits to the new class, interactions with their new Guide, parent observations and parent meetings with both the old and new Guides. The specific form and timing of this process varies by age level. All parents receive a Transition Packet with information and orientation materials for their new class. Any questions about transitions at CMS can be directed to our Admissions Director.

Animals on Campus

We are fortunate to have a beautiful 18-acre campus. Nature and time outdoors are an important part of healthy development for children and our spacious campus provides ample opportunities. The fields and gardens at CMS occasionally bring wild visitors like rabbits, snakes and birds. Our staff teaches children to be respectful and stay at a distance. We have a flock of chickens, which Upper Elementary students help to care for, and a barn cat (who spends more time in the office than the barn). Some Guides choose to have an animal in class, such as a hamster or fish. As per state requirements, small animals on campus are seen by a veterinarian at least once a year.

Ethics & Confidentiality

Adults working with children provide guidance and act as role models for behaviors such as courtesy, kindness, tolerance, and respect. CMS staff members and volunteers are obligated to act in ways that we would wish the children to emulate and that serve the best interests of the child. All CMS staff and volunteers should be aware that any and all information seen, heard, observed or overheard is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone not authorized to receive that information.

Safe Environment Policy

Our mission at CMS is to provide a Montessori education, which promotes curiosity, a love of learning, collaboration, and respect for others. We partner with families to foster the healthy growth and development of our students. The collaborative community experienced in Montessori classrooms helps children learn to assert their individual personality while still functioning harmoniously and peacefully within the group.

At CMS, we recognize that consistent limits, strong role models, clear expectations, and instruction that focuses on what to do rather than what NOT to do, helps children learn appropriate behavior. CMS Staff are trained to provide guidance and support for students as they discover how to balance the needs of the self with the needs of others.

Behavior Policy & Addressing Behavior Issues at School

Community Montessori School expects students, parents, staff & visitors to be respectful of oneself, others, and the world. This encompasses how children treat one another, how adults treat one another and how they treat children, and includes the school environment, property of the school, and property of others in the environment. This culture of respect is demonstrated in different ways, depending on the age group. Children at CMS are learning appropriate social behaviors and it is the job of staff and the CMS community to support them in this process.

Safe Environment Policy

One benefit of Montessori education is that children learn at their own individual pace and classrooms support a wide range of learning styles. When a child does not appear to be thriving in one or more areas of development, we ask:

- *Is the child a peaceful member of the community?*
- *Do they have healthy social relationships at school?*
- *Are they able to make appropriate choices and work respectfully in class?*

If the answer to these questions is no, it may be that CMS is not able to serve the needs of that child. If we answer yes but still have concerns, we may request additional support such as tutoring, assessment, or counseling to help a student that is struggling.

CMS retains the right to address behavioral issues in accordance with professional discretion and school policies, as they pertain to individual situations. When aggressive or inappropriate behavior occurs, adults present will address it immediately. Minor incidents may be resolved with redirection or verbal mediation. Parents will be informed of more significant or repeated issues. An Incident Report will be sent home to inform parents of what has happened and the child's Guide may request a meeting with parents to discuss the situation. CMS reserves the right, in cases of serious or ongoing behavioral issues, to suspend or expel a student or family from CMS immediately. The privacy of students & families during this process is expected. Generally speaking, we follow this plan for action:

- Immediate redirection and/or verbal mediation with student(s)
- Email to parents
- Meeting or phone call between Guide and parents
- Conference with parents, Guide, and Executive Director (student involvement may be requested in some situations)
- Development of an individual Behavior Plan, which may include a request for counseling, diagnostic testing or other outside interventions arranged by parents, with a timeline for assessing progress
- Student may be sent home for the remainder of the day
- Student may be suspended or expelled

Parents who are concerned about the impact of another student's behavior on their child should follow the communication guidelines given here and are asked to respect the privacy of the individuals involved by not discussing their concerns with other parents. First, contact your child's Guide to report your concern. Allow the Guide time to address the issue. If the situation is not fully resolved, then contact the Executive Director. If your concerns are about a situation that occurred during Extended Hours Care, please email or call the Extended Hours Coordinator. If the situation is not fully resolved, then contact the Executive Director.

The culture of respect at CMS encompasses a positive attitude about children and their individuality. Adults are expected to model desired behavior and to follow the standards we ask children to follow - using positive phrasing to communicate what one should do rather than what they have done wrong, speaking respectfully to others and avoiding sarcasm, teasing, and overreacting. The following are prohibited at CMS: corporal punishment and the threat of such; humiliation, ridicule or subjecting children to harsh or profane language; punishment associated with food, naps or toileting; requiring a child to remain still or silent for an inappropriately long period of time. Questions regarding discipline and behavior policies at CMS should be directed to the Executive Director.

Other School Policies & Required Notifications

Parents should note that in accordance with Texas Penal Code, the CMS grounds are a gang-free zone and any criminal offenses related to such are reported to law enforcement immediately. (We are required to report this to you by the State of Texas.) Parents may ask at any time to view a copy of the Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and/or the most recent inspection report for our school. These items are accessible in the school office.

Concealed weapons Policy - Concealed weapons or weapons of any kind are not allowed on the CMS campus. Persons on our campus with a permitted weapon must lock them in their vehicle while they are on the CMS campus and children are present.

Tobacco, Drug & Alcohol Policy - The Community Montessori School campus must be free of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and/or controlled substances whenever children are present. Alcohol

may be served at adult functions on the CMS campus if held outside of school operating hours and when no children are present. Use of tobacco & drugs is never allowed on campus.

CMS reserves the right to request drug and/or alcohol screening from any employee or volunteer that appears to be under the influence of such substances while on CMS grounds during operating hours. The Executive Director has the right to send home any staff member or volunteer suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on campus during operating hours.

Conflict Resolution Policy

CMS is committed to settling differences by focusing on mediation to find resolutions that are mutually beneficial to all parties involved. This process allows for open discussion of disputes without retaliation. The first step is the direct and timely discussion of the problem between the parties involved. For example - parents concerned with classroom operations should discuss their concern with the Guide. If a mutually-satisfying result cannot be found, then either party may inform the Executive Director who will assist in resolution, by meeting with both parties to find a solution. Confidentiality and respectful communication is expected from all parties involved.

Zero Tolerance for Harassment or Discrimination

Discrimination or harassment of any person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity, familial status, political affiliation, disability, or ethnicity will not be tolerated by Community Montessori School. CMS maintains an environment free of harassment and discrimination for all students, staff, visitors and volunteers. Employee violators of this policy are subject to immediate termination. Non-employee violators of

this policy are subject to immediate expulsion from CMS grounds. Furthermore, CMS may report violators to the appropriate authority. Any harassment or discrimination observed or experienced should be reported promptly to the Executive Director.

Contact Information

Community Montessori School
500 Pleasant Valley Drive
Georgetown, TX 78626
512-863-7920

www.community-montessori.org

- *Child Abuse Reporting Hotline
1-800-252-5400*
- *Texas Child Care Licensing is now part of Texas Health & Human Services. Our local CCL office is in Austin at 14000 Summit Drive. Phone is 512-834-3426*
- *CMS posts CCL and other required Inspection Reports in the front office*

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

If a CMS employee or volunteer has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires them to report it to the Texas Department of Child Protective Services or a law enforcement agency within 48 hours. The individual reporting may do so anonymously or may elect to inform the Executive Director. If CPS comes to our campus to investigate a report, CMS staff will cooperate fully with their process.

All employees of CMS undergo a criminal history background check and fingerprinting, which includes a search of the central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Our staff receives annual training on the recognition, reporting and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Illness & Injuries

Young children with developing immune systems tend to get sick more frequently than adults. A child who is ill or has been diagnosed with a communicable illness should stay home until they have been fever free and symptom free for at least 24 hours. This is a state requirement that is also appreciated by your fellow parents!

If a child becomes ill at school, parents are called to pick up immediately. Parents are asked to inform their child's Guide and/or the CMS office if their child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness so we can notify other families in the class. The Texas Department of Health provides licensed child care centers with a chart detailing communicable illnesses, their symptoms and rules for exclusion and return to school. This chart is posted in the office.

Head lice is a communicable disease! A child with head lice must be picked up immediately and treated at home. **The child must be checked by CMS staff prior to returning to class.** Parents are asked to wait in the office until their child has been cleared.

Our staff emphasizes the importance of hand-washing & covering coughs and sneezes, as the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness. Classrooms are cleaned daily with disinfectant to prevent the spread of germs.

CMS staff members have current certification in CPR and First Aid. If your child is injured at school, appropriate First Aid will be administered and an Incident Report describing what happened completed. Parents are asked to sign this form when they pick up their child. If you have questions about an injury that happened at school, please contact your child's Guide. More significant situations may result in a phone call to parents to inform them of the injury and ascertain what treatment may or may not be necessary. In the event of a serious injury, such as a broken bone, 911 will be called. See the Emergency procedures section of this Handbook.

Medication

Medication should never be sent to school with a child or placed in a child's lunchbox. All medications are stored in the office for the safety of the children, except for EpiPens, which are stored in the child's classroom, out of reach of students. Medication should be given to a child by a parent at home, whenever possible. If a child must have medication during school hours, the following procedures are followed:

1. Prescription medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, date, directions or dosage, and the physician's name.
2. Non-prescriptive medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name and the date the medication was brought to school.

Conditions for sending a sick child home or keeping a sick child home:

- *Armpit temperature at or above 100 degrees - accompanied by behavior changes or other signs of illness (oral temp over 101)*
- *A diagnosis by a health-care professional of a communicable illness that requires exclusion from school (per Texas Dept. of Health guidelines)*
- *Symptoms & signs of illness including diarrhea and vomiting*
- *If the illness prevents the child from participating in school activities or*
- *If the illness requires care beyond which CMS staff can provide.*

CMS must follow State Guidelines. A child must be fever free/symptom free for 24 hours before returning.

3. Parents must bring the medication to the office and fill out the Medication Form authorizing staff to administer medicine.

Safety Drills

The safety of our students is a high priority at CMS. We make every possible effort to keep our grounds, buildings and practices consistent with those promoting the safety of the children. CMS is inspected annually by the Fire Marshal, Health Department and state child care licensing agency. CMS staff conducts playground checks, monthly fire drills and weather/building emergency drills throughout the school year. Evacuation routes are posted in all buildings and our staff is trained in safety and emergency procedures.

Emergency Procedures

*It is important that CMS have **current contact information** for ALL parents, as well as backup contact persons, in case an emergency takes place during school hours.

Medical: Should a major medical emergency occur while a child is at school, staff will administer First Aid and call 911. Parents will be notified immediately after 911 is called. If transport to a hospital is required, the Executive Director or other staff member will accompany the child and stay with them until parents arrive. Staff will follow instructions given by EMS. In the case of a minor medical emergency, staff will give appropriate First Aid and parents will be contacted immediately. If medical attention is required, parents may choose to take the child to visit their own doctor or to a medical center of their choice.

Building: In the event of a Building emergency, such as a fire or other situation that makes school buildings unsafe for children, staff will evacuate children following the posted evacuation routes and call 911. If first responders determine that it is not safe for children to re-enter buildings or remain on campus, parents will be notified via email and via text through our automated notification system, and asked to pick up their child. Staff and students at CMS regularly conduct practice drills and consistent measures will be taken in the event of an actual emergency.

Severe Weather: In the case of a severe weather emergency, such as a tornado, everyone on campus will be moved to a “safe zone” to await further instruction. Children outdoors are brought inside. Staff and students at CMS regularly practice responding to severe weather emergencies and each building on our campus is equipped with an emergency weather radio. Parents are contacted if the weather emergency results in a situation that requires students to leave campus. Notification comes via our automated phone system & email. If severe weather prevents students & staff from safely traveling to school and a closure is necessary, parents will be notified by email and text, via our automated notification system. CMS follows the lead of public schools and universities in the area in determining if closure is necessary. This information is usually available via local radio and television stations.

Other Emergencies: Should an emergency situation occur on campus that involves a person intending to cause harm, staff will take children to the “safe zone” they know for weather emergencies. 911 will be called immediately and children and staff will not resume normal activity until responders have cleared the school and its grounds. Please note that CMS has yearly visits from the Community Relations Officers at Georgetown Police Department and they work with us on best practices for keeping children and staff at CMS safe.

Safe Sleep for Infants

Staff members who work with infants in our Nido program receive annual training on Safe Sleep practices and these guidelines are followed in our Nido environment at all times:

- Infants under 12 months of age should always be put to sleep on their back
- Infants always sleep on a firm surface free of toys, pillows, blankets or other soft items

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Volunteering

Parent involvement is important to the school community and to the academic and social success of children. At CMS, **families are asked to contribute 25 volunteer hours each school year.** We have many ways for parents to be involved and encourage you to find what best fits your family. Like to garden? Volunteer to help your child's Guide with their backyard garden or come to a Community Day to help with tree trimming and other campus-wide projects. Enjoy party planning? Every year we host an Auction Fundraiser which is organized by parent volunteers. Have a flexible schedule? Take a shift in the CMS Library - open from 8:30 to 11 each school day.

Many of our volunteer opportunities are listed here, but parents are also urged to read the weekly emails, which have many opportunities and volunteer needs listed. CMS utilizes an online site for posting events, volunteer needs and also tracking hours, called Track It Forward. Please note that volunteers who will be working with our students are required to have a background check on file in our office.

1. Room Parents - these wonderful volunteers sign on to help out their child's Guide in coordinating special events and social opportunities for the class. This group, and others interested in helping out with classrooms, meet monthly as the "Classroom Support Committee."
2. Friends of the Library - in addition to manning the Library during the mornings, these volunteers shelve and repair books and help with the Birthday Book program at CMS. A Library Orientation meeting is held at the start of the school year for interested volunteers.
3. Special Events - each year we host a variety of events on campus that require volunteer support. These are listed in the weekly emails and on Track It Forward. Events vary but typically include the International Festival, Elementary Field Day and CMS End of Year Celebration.
4. The Oak Tree Auction is a fun annual event that brings together our CMS community for a night of dinner, cocktails and auction items. Volunteers help their classroom Guide in putting together class auction items as well as helping with the event itself.
5. Drivers & Chaperones - Elementary & Adolescent students occasionally need parent volunteers to help them with a planned trip. Driver & Chaperone Orientation is held each year at the start of school. All volunteers must have a copy of their driver's license & proof of insurance on file in the office.
6. Parent Events - your participation counts toward volunteer hours! CMS 101, the Montessori Journey, monthly Guide-hosted coffees, Bring Your Parents to School Night, and other events grow our partnership and the children benefit greatly.

Fundraising & Donations

CMS strives to keep tuition as affordable as possible, so we can offer Montessori education to a wide range of families. Tuition and fees cover the basic expenses of the school. Fundraising is undertaken to improve our campus, facilities and programs. CMS is a registered 501(c) (3) non-profit organization and all donations made to the school are tax deductible. Many employers offer matching donations and parents are encouraged to take advantage of these programs. Annual Fund donations can be made through FACTS. Other fundraising programs are listed in our weekly emails. All donations, large and small, benefit our students and we are truly grateful for them!

Thank you for reading this Handbook and for joining our school community. We look forward to a productive, peaceful and successful year!