



# TELEGRAPH HILL

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center  
Preschool Program

## FAMILY HANDBOOK

## **WELCOME TO TELEGRAPH HILL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER!**

Our staff and administration are deeply committed to providing the highest-quality early education program available. We are fully licensed with the State of California's Community Care Licensing Department. Our teachers provide a loving, caring, and creative environment where all children can learn and grow. Your child will benefit from an excellent curriculum and enriching family experience.

Communication is a key factor in the success of your child's education. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the information and policies in this handbook. We encourage you to voice your comments and ideas. Our preschool manager and staff are always available to you, so feel free to call or visit us anytime.

Thank you for your ongoing support and interest in the Preschool Program at Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center.

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# GENERAL INFORMATION

## History and Guiding Principles

Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center (Tel-Hi) was founded in 1890 to improve the quality of life for individuals and families living and working in northeast San Francisco. Tel-Hi provides comprehensive programs for 600 seniors, children, and families each day.

The center is considered a home away from home for many participants. The children in our preschool range in age from 2 ½ years old through 5 years old. Tel-Hi has a diverse population of caregivers and children, all from various cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and nationalities. The exposure to a diverse environment is a positive experience for each child because it promotes awareness of similarities and differences within the community. Tel-Hi welcomes children with disabilities and will make reasonable accommodations to meet their needs.

The Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center operates as a not-for-profit agency governed by an executive director under the guidance of a board of directors. Tel-Hi functions on a non-discriminatory basis, affording equal treatment and access to services without regard to race, religion, ethnic or national origin, sex, or physical disability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Our program refrains from any religious instruction.

Our Philosophy embraces the teachings of Jean Piaget. His teachings are based on a foundation of security, hands-on learning, positive social interaction, and stable, appropriate emotional responses. Our philosophy guides us to provide a warm, nurturing environment that will foster developmentally appropriate practices through hands-on activities and play. The program is designed to equip children with critical thinking skills, peacemaking skills, and conflict resolution. Tel-Hi is committed to enhancing children's growth and abilities in all areas.

Our Curriculum encourages children to participate in a rich environment of active experiences rather than passive observation. Learning activities are planned to meet the needs of each child. Each day's activities include: art, language development stories and games, pre-literacy skills, science experiments, math games, music appreciation, and healthy socialization. Children enjoy outdoor play for physical development, gardening, and walking field trips within the neighborhood.

Our Goals are to provide a fun, safe, enriching, and educational environment that prepares children to embrace a lifetime of learning. We aim to promote optimum development in four key areas:

1. Physical development: the growth of the body and ability to accomplish fine and gross motor tasks
2. Social and emotional development: the capacity to enjoy and get along with other people while having the confidence and understanding of one's self as a person
3. Intellectual development: the capacity to acquire and understand facts and concepts and use them to evaluate and solve problems
4. Language development: the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings to others

## **Program Staff**

Tel-Hi program staff includes an executive director, program director, program managers, teachers, and volunteers. The staff is trained and experienced in multiple areas of education and child development. Preschool staff are CPR and First Aid certified. Many of our teachers are bilingual, speaking English and either Cantonese, Mandarin, or Spanish. Our staff is sensitive to cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity. **A ratio of no less than 1 teacher to 8 children is maintained for preschool.**

Volunteers are recruited, trained, and evaluated by Tel-Hi's volunteer manager. Prior to employment, all staff members undergo fingerprinting and a rigorous screening by the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Tel-Hi preschool staff is comprised of fully qualified, highly motivated teachers. They are hired for their ability to engage children in a caring and respectful manner and to communicate effectively with adults. Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center encourages all teaching staff to actively pursue a Child Development Teaching certificate, associate's degree, and/or bachelor's degree in education or early childhood education while employed at the preschool.

## **PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

### **Family Involvement**

We invite your family to take full advantage of the wonderful programs Tel-Hi offers. We also encourage families to become active participants in our preschool. Because your partnership with the staff is vital to helping us reach the high standards we set for our center, we ask each family enrolled to offer six hours of volunteer service per year.

Families can choose from a number of opportunities, including:

- Chaperoning field trips
- Assisting at fundraising events
- Participating in classroom activities
- Lending a hand on weekend maintenance days
- Becoming a member of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)

### **Family Resources**

We believe that good communication is essential to your child's enjoyment here. Daily news, event information, and preschool policies are all posted on the Parent Bulletin Board, located near the entrance to your child's classroom. We also provide parents with mail slots near the sign-in desk for more personalized communication, such as your child's daily reports. These reports give our staff an opportunity to share how your child's day progressed, including napping, eating, social behavior, and academic progress.

Tel-Hi invites all families to use our Parent Resource Library, which contains current information on community events, health and safety, and family education materials. We also publish a monthly newsletter, available in hard copy or via e-mail.

## Field Trips

Periodically we take the children on field trips to heighten their awareness of the community, explore new concepts, and promote learning. Parents are always welcome to join our school outings as chaperones. Chaperones can also be grandparents of an enrolled child or any adult who has the parent's approval to be with their child away from the center.

We ask parents to sign a general permission slip for field trips. We will notify you of upcoming field trips at least one week in advance. We also ask chaperones to **not** use cell phones while supervising children during trips.

## Food and Nutrition

Tel-Hi participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). We provide all meals and snacks to families at no extra charge. We use healthy, nourishing food, including fresh seasonal produce delivered weekly. All meals are well balanced, culturally sensitive, and meet CACFP guidelines. Meals are served family style with staff members sitting with the children to model good table manners, facilitate social interaction, and encourage children to try new foods. Menus are posted on the Parent Bulletin Board and in classrooms.

Please inform our staff if your child has any dietary restrictions or allergies. We have a **No Nut Policy** and ask that children do not bring snacks from home, especially candy, gum, chips, soda, or any nut products. Please refer to our Allergy Policy for more information.

## Holidays and Birthdays

At Tel-Hi we celebrate children and families. We refrain from religious instruction or worship, but we embrace various holidays that children from diverse backgrounds celebrate. This approach allows families to bring their cultural traditions to the center to share with everyone. Some of Tel-Hi's long-standing events include a Halloween parade, Thanksgiving celebration, Christmas tree sale, and Lunar New Year celebration.

Our preschool observes most national holidays. We close for New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. We also close for staff development days. Exact closure dates may be found on the Parent Bulletin Board.

We celebrate children's birthdays at school with special songs and activities (unless otherwise instructed). If you would like us to celebrate your child's birthday, just tell your child's teacher at least two weeks in advance. Also consult with our staff about treats. These must consist of nutritious finger foods or small treats, and there must be enough for the whole class. **NO nut products are permitted at the center. All food labels and ingredient lists must also be brought to school for posting due to allergies.**

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

Twice during the school year, parents sign up for a parent-teacher conference to discuss your child's development at school. These formal conferences are part of our individual education plan for your child. You are also welcome to schedule a conference at any other time throughout the year with our staff or preschool manager.

## **Parent Advisory Committee**

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) provides an organized forum for parents to be directly involved with Tel-Hi. Meetings are held monthly. Childcare services and a light dinner are typically provided. The committee is designed to work with staff from Tel-Hi's Preschool Program and After School Academy. Through PAC, you may be asked to give feedback on various activities or policies. Parents are also encouraged to assist in planning center-wide events, such as Movie Nights, holiday celebrations, and special guest-speaker events. For more information on joining the Parent Advisory Committee, please ask our preschool manager.

## **TUITION, PAYMENTS, AND SCHOLARSHIP ASSISTANCE**

Tuition is due the **1<sup>st</sup> day of each month**. Your tuition is **past due on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day** of the month and a late fee of \$25 will be added to your tuition bill.

Non-payment of tuition and/or noncompliance with center policies will result in a suspension of your child's enrollment. Your child may not return to our program until the tuition bill is paid in full. We do not credit you for absences due to vacation, holidays, illness, or suspension.

Tuition may be made by instructing your bank to automatically pay from your checking/savings account once a month. Tuition should be withdrawn on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month for the following month (i.e., on September 20 for October 1). This will give your bank enough time to submit payment without incurring a late fee. If your check is returned for insufficient funds, there is a \$20 per check charge in addition to your payment and \$25 late fee. We must receive your payment on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month to avoid late fees.

### **Subsidized Childcare Services**

Tel-Hi's preschool is fortunate to offer subsidized child care services to families who qualify based on need or income. Please see the preschool manager for applications and more information on the California Department of Education (CDE) Preschool Program.

### **Scholarship Assistance Program**

Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center offers a limited number of scholarships to families who qualify based on need and income. This scholarship assistance is made possible by private funding, community support, and annual fundraising events. Scholarships are determined on an individual and confidential basis. Please see our preschool manager for scholarship and financial assistance applications.

## **RULES AND REQUIREMENTS**

We want everyone to enjoy their time at Tel-Hi and ask that you respect the following rules and requirements.

## General School Rules

- All children must be completely potty trained to be enrolled.
- Children at the center or playground **must** be supervised by a parent or staff at all times.
- Children may **not** bring toys, candy, money, or valuable jewelry to school.
- Staff are **not** responsible for lost items from home.
- Children must wash hands upon entering the center.
- Children are **not** allowed to open doors or gates without the assistance of a parent or guardian.
- All late payments and pickups will incur a fee/fine. No exceptions.

## Absence Notification

All families are expected to notify the preschool when their child is going to be absent. Voicemail is available during the hours the center is closed. Illness, family emergency, or court-ordered visitation are considered excused absences. If your child is absent for more than three (3) consecutive days due to illness, you must provide a doctor's note.

## Arrival and Pickup Policies

### Arrival

Tel-Hi is open from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. All preschool children should arrive at school **prior to 9:30 am**. Arriving at this time gives teachers the opportunity to assist your child through a smooth transition. Please speak with your child's teacher to develop a drop-off plan that works for your child and the classroom.

### Pickup

Tel-Hi closes at 6:00 pm. If you are not able to pick up your child by 6:00 pm, or if you have an emergency, **please call the center at (415) 421-6443, ext. 19**. If you are more than 15 minutes late, the staff will contact a predetermined adult on your child's Emergency and Identification form. If you pick up your child past 6:00 pm, you will be billed a late pickup fee of \$25 for any increment of the first 15 minutes and \$2 per minute thereafter. Three late pickups is cause to terminate your enrollment agreement. Notification does not excuse a late pickup.

Please note:

- If you are more than 15 minutes late, the staff will try to reach you by phone.
- In the event that we cannot reach you by phone, the staff will call the predetermined emergency contacts on your child's Emergency and Identification form.
- In the event we cannot contact those people in a timely manner, we will call the San Francisco Police Department and ask them to become responsible for your child at that time. Tel-Hi staff will accompany your child to the Central Police Station at 766 Vallejo Street, and police will contact parents from that point on.

**Remember it is your responsibility to update emergency contact numbers.**

## Sign-in/out Policy

It is mandatory that **all** children be signed in each morning when you enter the building and signed out each afternoon when you leave the building. The sign-in/out sheet is located in each classroom as you enter. Please include the time you drop off and the time you pick up with **a full signature of first and last name**.

All people responsible for picking up a child must be at least 18 years of age and listed on the emergency contact form. Parents may issue a written notice to the preschool manager if their child will be picked up by a minor. We will not allow your child to leave the building with anyone we do not know. Please revise your Emergency and Identification Form with the preschool manager anytime you wish to add (or delete) a name from your list. Also inform listed persons that we will ask for photo identification before we allow your child to leave with them.

In the event of an emergency, you may call the center and speak to the program director or preschool manager regarding an emergency pickup. Please provide a physical description of the person picking up your child and inform them to bring a photo ID. We will NOT release children to an adult not listed on your contact form or if the adult is suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## **Clothing**

Children should wear comfortable clothing for rigorous play and messy activities. **All items of clothing must be labeled with your child's name**. We are not responsible for lost items. A full set of clothing, including shoes, socks, underwear, top, and bottom, should be in your child's cubby in case of water play, extra messy projects, or if an accident occurs.

## **Confidentiality of Records**

Information in your child's file is confidential and private. Information is only available to those persons at the preschool who are directly involved with your child's progress. Only with parents' written permission will records be released to another person or agency.

Federal, state, and local agencies that regulate our preschool may ask to see children's files and preschool records to verify compliance. Only in this circumstance will a child's file be shared without written permission from the parent. Children's files are never removed from the building. A parent or legal guardian may request to see their child's file at any time.

## **Custodial Parent(s) Policy**

In the event of divorce or separation between parents of a child, and both parents do not have joint custody, it is necessary for us to have on file, a copy of the order which directly states the custodial status. The order must be signed by the court judge. Please know that we will not accept verbal acknowledgement from either parent that custodial rights have changed. It must be in writing.

Tel-Hi will keep all family information in strict confidence. A child **will** be released to his legal parent unless a court order is on file at the center.

## **Media Release Form**

Tel-Hi may seek press coverage for activities at the center, which assists us in obtaining funding support. It is your option to sign a Media Release form, allowing your child to appear on television, Tel-Hi's Web site, newsletter, school displays, brochures, or any other promotional material.

## **Nap Time**

Children nap or have a quiet time each day from 12:30 pm until 2:30 pm. The center provides each child with a nap mat and a sheet. Please bring a small blanket and special soft item which will help your child to fall asleep. Also take your child's bedding home each Friday and return it for nap time the following Monday.

Teachers supervise the children while they are sleeping. If your child does not sleep, they may be removed from the napping area to avoid disturbing the sleeping children. If your child does not take a regular nap, speak with your child's teacher to develop a "rest" plan for your child.

## **Social Interaction and Discipline**

The staff at Tel-Hi uses respectful social interaction to help children develop self-discipline and the ability to regulate emotions. Discipline is viewed in a positive way, as an opportunity to teach and learn. We also work together with families to build and maintain consistency.

We accept that young children are learning about appropriate actions and acceptable social behavior. So our teachers maintain clear, consistent limits that are age appropriate. We encourage children to problem solve and "use their words." We will redirect inappropriate activity as needed and offer children positive ways to resolve difficult situations. Our teachers are gentle but firm and physical discipline is never used.

## **Termination and Withdrawal**

Preschool enrollment may be terminated for a family for any one of the following reasons:

- Delinquent fees.
- Possession of drugs, alcohol, weapons, or replicas of weapons on center property.
- A child or parent who presents a health or safety risk to himself/herself, other children or staff, or to another family. This includes behavior such as harassing remarks, disrespect to teachers or staff, and refusing to follow Tel-Hi policies and procedures.

Tel-Hi may also terminate an enrollment agreement because of non-payment and/or non-compliance with the center's policies. A notice will be given by Tel-Hi's program director except when it is urgent to terminate the child's enrollment sooner. In this case, the preschool manager, with the consent of the program director, has the discretion to terminate enrollment without notice or with shortened notice.

## Withdrawal

If you choose to withdraw your child from Tel-Hi's Preschool Program, a written thirty (30)-day notice is required. This notice must be signed and dated by the child's parent or guardian. You must include the specific date of your child's last day and give the notice to the preschool manager. If you fail to give a thirty-day notice, you are responsible for payment for those thirty days. If you have paid for the month and then decide to withdraw your child, **tuition will not be refunded.**

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The safety of your child and our staff is our **number one** priority. No area of the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center is without the supervision of an adult staff member. Doors to the preschool usually remain closed to discourage unnecessary foot traffic. To assist our efforts, we ask that parents close doors and latch the playground gates whenever you enter or exit the building.

### **Allergy/Emergency Care Procedures**

**We are a nut-free center and ask that all families respect this policy. Please notify the staff at the time of enrollment of any known allergies.**

In the event your child has a life-threatening allergic reaction and requires an epi-pen to be administered, the preschool staff is trained to administer an epi-pen. However, you must have the proper forms completed before the staff can administer the epi-pen. These forms can be obtained from the preschool manager. **It is your responsibility to complete this form at the time of enrollment and to keep the form updated.**

### **Child Abuse Reporting**

All staff members are mandated by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect as listed in Penal Code Article 2.5 Section 11165. Tel-Hi staff is also protected by law from discrimination or retaliation for reporting suspected child abuse and/or neglect of any enrolled child. Parents can feel free to speak with the preschool manager to request any referrals to social, mental, or physical health services.

### **Child Injury/Accident Response**

Should your child be involved in an accident or have an injury, our staff members will provide the appropriate care and proper communication with parents. If only minor first aid is needed, we will use soap and water and apply a bandage. If further treatment is needed, parents will be notified and 911 medical procedures may be put into action.

### **Emergency Plans**

Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center has emergency equipment, first aid supplies, and provisions of food and water for three days, for each child enrolled. Fire and earthquake drills are conducted regularly with the children throughout the year. If evacuation is required, the staff and children will go to North Beach Playground (the cement area on

the northeast corner) at Lombard and Powell streets. For emergency phone contact, parents may call the preschool's main number or Tel-Hi's other phone extensions.

### **Hand-washing Requirement**

All children and teachers must wash their hands with soap and water upon entering the preschool. This is a licensing requirement and best practice for a healthy environment. The preschool also provides antibacterial hand gel.

### **Illness Policy**

It is our desire to ensure everyone at Tel-Hi a healthy, safe, and nurturing experience. The children will be outside playing in our yard every day and should be properly dressed to avoid becoming too hot or cold. We believe children well enough to be at school are well enough to play outside as per our daily schedule. If your child has symptoms of illness, please keep him/her at home.

If your child develops any of these symptoms at school, he/she will be sent home:

- Fever of 101 degrees or higher
- Persistent runny nose (with yellow or green discharge) accompanied by a cough or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea two times in one day
- Vomiting
- Rashes: Your child will be sent home and must have a doctor's note to return to school)
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): A child with pink eye will be sent home and must be treated with medication for 24 hours before returning to school. The eye must be completely clear.
- Lice: Tel-Hi has a "nit-free" policy. Before your child may return to school, he/she must be clear of lice and eggs

Children may return to the preschool when they have been symptom free for 24 hours.

**Any illness we believe to be contagious will warrant an immediate call to you to pick up your child from school.** We will notify you if any contagious or serious illness is diagnosed regarding a child in our program and ask that you notify us immediately if your child is diagnosed with a serious communicable illness. Reports are treated confidentially.

### **Medication Procedure**

The staff may administer prescription medication or over the counter medicine only with the written consent of the parent and in accordance with label directions as prescribed by your child's doctor. Parents are required to fill out Consent for Medication Treatment form, which is available from the teaching staff.

Please note:

- **Children must never carry medicine in their cubby or backpack at any time.** Please give all medicine directly to the preschool manager or head teacher.
- Medications such as asthma nebulizers and inhalers can only be administered if there is a written authorization and instruction given by both the child's parent and doctor. No exceptions.

**State-required Health Forms**

All children attending preschool programs in the State of California must have an annual physical by a licensed physician. Please understand that Tel-Hi cannot permit your child to attend preschool until we have the completed and current health form in our possession. Immunizations must be updated annually.

**Sunscreen Use**

Sunscreen Use forms must be on file for your child. Parents may provide sunscreen or we will use a generic, mild, SPF 30 sunscreen.

## STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE

Please sign and return this page to the Preschool Manager to be kept in your child's file. A copy will be provided upon request.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the Tel-Hi Family Handbook and understand and agree to abide with its policies and contents. Throughout the year, Tel-Hi reserves the right to change policies within this handbook. All parents will be given a copy of any new or changed policies before these are enacted. We suggest that you insert new or changed policies into your handbook when you receive it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child Enrolled

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preschool Manager

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