



Family Handbook

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Desert Spring Mission Statement:

In partnership with parents and the greater community, Desert Spring Children's Center provides an outstanding and comprehensive early childhood program for children and their families.

We will:

- Foster opportunities for children to collaborate in a setting that supports healthy social relationships.
- Create meaningful play experiences tailored to each child's individual needs, interests, and abilities, building foundations for future academic learning.
- Ensure inclusive experiences that reflect and respect all abilities, cultures, ethnicities, genders, and gender identities.
- Document children's learning in order to reinforce the concept that sharing the stories of children is the responsibility of educators, families, the wider community and the early childhood profession.

Desert Spring Philosophy:

We believe every child:

- Is capable and competent.
- Is a unique and complex learner.
- Deserves an environment that supports the optimal development of the whole child.
- Learns through child-directed, child-initiated, teacher-supported play.
- Is a social being who learns through the development of relationships and collaboration with peers and adults.
- Is by nature a creative and curious researcher and learns best through hands-on exploration that is relevant to the child's experiences.
- Deserves trust and respect to facilitate confidence and healthy risk-taking.
- Possesses hundreds of languages with which to describe their beliefs & experiences and express their learning.

Guiding Principles:

- Each child progresses at a unique rate, has an individual learning style and possesses diverse abilities.
- Young children learn through active exploration of their environment when there is a balance between self-discovery and adult-initiated projects.
- Children's learning is based on prior knowledge and experiences guided by nurturing adults.
- Optimal learning occurs in environments where adults are respectful of the child, the family, the language, the culture, and the community.
- Children's learning is best understood using ongoing observation, anecdotal record-keeping, and collection of the children's work.
- Children develop a sense of empowerment by having many opportunities to make choices within their daily routines.
- Children learn best when their nutritional and health needs are met.
- Families are the primary caregivers and educators of young children.
- Families, educators and children are equal partners in children's learning.
- Young children are competent and capable learners regardless of their backgrounds, experiences, and varying abilities.

Goals for Children, Families, and the Community:

All children will experience growth and learning in all areas of development, including cognitive, physical, and social-emotional.

All families will be supported in their role of the primary caregivers and educators of their children.

The community will be aware of the importance of early childhood and the need for high-quality early care and education.

Outcomes:

Based on Tom Drummond's *15 Capabilities for Children*, Desert Spring strives for the following outcomes for children and their families.

When children leave our program, they can:

- Participate as a member of an interdependent community.
- Care for themselves, others, and the community.
- Treat others with love and compassion.
- Cooperate with other children to accomplish group goals.
- Celebrate group accomplishment.
- Laugh and play with a tangible sense of joy.
- Express many human emotions in language and art.
- Be inquisitive.
- Initiate new ideas and invent solutions to problems.
- Stick to different tasks or come back to them in order to succeed.
- Run, hit, catch, throw, kick, and tumble.
- Sing and dance with exuberance.
- Explore creativity through painting, drawing, sculpture, and building beautiful creations.
- Help maintain community spaces with cleanliness and care.
- Greet guests with courtesy and charm.

When families leave our program, they can:

- Be confident in their ability to advocate for their children.
- Understand the importance of involvement in their child's education.
- Experience the joy of parenting.
- Find community resources to meet their needs in caring for their child.
- Describe important aspects of their child's development.
- Feel respected, welcomed, and nurtured by staff.

Enrollment

To enroll your child at Desert Spring, you must schedule a tour first with the director and complete a Registration Form, with your \$150 registration fee. You will then be given an enrollment packet which includes:

- School calendar
- Tuition and fees schedule
- Food guide
- First day reminders
- Supply list
- Blue emergency card
- Getting to know your child form

The emergency card and getting to know your child form must be completed and returned along with a current copy of your child's immunization records prior to attendance. Immunization records must be up-to-date before your child can begin school.

We highly recommend that you tour the school with your child to talk with the director, observe classrooms, and meet teachers *before enrolling your child*.

Desert Spring does not discriminate and will enroll children who can benefit from the services provided by the school, curriculum, and teachers of our program.

Tuition Payment Procedure

Desert Spring is supported by tuition fees, making it extremely important for those fees to be paid on time. Please pay tuition by the 10th of each month or make special arrangements with the director. Desert Spring does not give refunds or discounts for vacations, school closures, or illnesses. The tuition fees are based on our yearly expenses and are divided into monthly payments (See Appendix A, p. 11, for current tuition fees).

Activities and Curriculum

Our program is designed to meet the diverse needs of children 18 months through 5 years old: social interaction with their peers, stimulation for their inquisitive minds, space to build new motor skills, development of their communication skills, and a fostering of independence. We believe children are natural learners. We provide a multi-faceted environment allowing them the freedom to explore and discover their world.

Desert Spring is inspired and influenced by the Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and Waldorf approaches to early care and education, which has influenced our philosophy, goals, relationships with families and the community, and greatly impacts our value of the child as capable, competent, and deserving of the utmost respect. We also use the Quality First framework to guide best practices in regards to program structure and classroom design.

The Desert Spring Day is a balance of indoor and outdoor activities. Our outdoor activities

include riding tricycles, swinging, gardening, large motor activities, water and sand play, socializing, imaginative playing, and organized games. We strongly encourage families to bring your child by 9 a.m. in order to establish a consistent daily rhythm for your child. This gives them the time to transition from home to school and relate to their teachers and friends before morning circle time. Circle time is an opportunity for our classroom community to gather together to sing, introduce new materials and concepts, read stories, share conversations, and participate in movement activities such as yoga and creative movement. Twice a month, singer/songwriter Bruce Phillips leads our singing circle. The morning includes circle time, snack, morning centers and outside play.

Educational Setting

Each classroom is thoughtfully arranged into learning centers that create an engaging and inviting environment for children. The centers include:

Art Center encourages creativity, hand-eye coordination, fine motor development, emotional expression through artistic media, and spatial and design skills.

Math and Fine Motor Centers in each classroom support the development of classification, observation, experimentation, patterning, one-to-one correspondence, ordering, numeration, and problem-solving skills.

Library Center fosters writing, speaking, listening, pre-reading, and problem-solving skills.

Dramatic Play Center supports language development, social problem solving, cooperation, role playing, creativity, and intellectual growth.

Block Centers in the classrooms promote spatial awareness, design abilities, vocabulary development, cooperation, patterning, measurement, and problem solving.

Sensory Tables in each classroom encourage scientific thinking, mathematical exploration, vocabulary development, social problem solving, and calming tactile experiences that can provide comfort for some children. Examples include water, kinetic sand and rice.

Large Motor Play is incorporated daily through outdoor playground experiences that support physical development and coordination.

Language/Pre-reading Philosophy

Desert Spring's philosophy of learning emphasizes the theory of the whole language, which simply means addressing all the aspects of language such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing. All of these aspects are combined and are included in the curriculum in both direct teaching and child-initiated learning experiences. This approach

helps children learn language and reading in a natural way and increases the child's appreciation and usage of the beauty and power of language.

Math Philosophy

At Desert Spring, we believe that young children need experiences in math that are geared to their developmental level and that do not demand abilities they have not yet developed. Children need a hands-on approach for math concepts. They need to be able to see, feel, handle, and manipulate quantities in a game-like manner. Instead of simply having a child count, they should have the opportunity to match concrete objects as they count. They also need many opportunities to group similar objects into categories. We believe that a child will naturally learn these concepts if guided by parents and educators that provide warmth and encouragement.

Play Philosophy

Early childhood educators have long believed that play makes important contributions to children's development and therefore must have a key role in preschool curriculums. Play is a rich, varied and complex process that requires ample time, materials, and resources (Christie, Wardle, 1992). There is a relationship between children's use of symbols in play and their use of symbols in the academic curriculum. Concepts valued in the school curriculum, such as reading, writing and problem solving, are all based on the expectation that children are capable of a certain level of abstract, symbolic thought (Almy, Monighan, Scales & Van Hoorn, 1984). At Desert Spring, children are given liberal amounts of play time and are encouraged to participate in symbolic play so that they can play through their ideas, think, problem solve, and foster creativity and imagination.

Hours of Service

Desert Spring Children's Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., (August through May.) During the summer months (June and July), our hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We ask that all children arrive by 9:00 a.m. (See "Arrival" under Policies, p. 13.)

If you anticipate arriving after the designated closing time to pick up your child, please contact the school through Procure or by phone with your estimated arrival time. If you arrive after 5:30 p.m., staff will remain with your child and keep them engaged until you arrive. **A late fee of \$1.00 per minute** will be charged and added to your monthly statement.

Transportation

Desert Spring does not provide transportation to or from our facility. Families are responsible for arranging drop off and pick up plans for their child(ren).

Transition Plans

Entering the Program

Timeline for joining school at the beginning of the school year:

Before school begins, enrollment packets are mailed to families to provide important information about the start of the school year and to gather information from families in advance. During the week before school starts, families are invited to attend a Teacher Meet & Greet in their child's classroom. This open house-style event gives families and children an opportunity to spend time together in the classroom while becoming familiar with the teachers, classmates, and environment. Families will learn about the program, the Procure app, classroom schedules, toileting procedures, nap routines, and staff members, as well as locate their child's cubby and nap space. It is also a wonderful opportunity to meet other families, ask questions, and share important information with teachers.

Specific activities for joining school at the beginning of the school year:

- **Some children may need to bring a lovey** (special stuffed animal) to help ease the transition from home to school. These special items can stay in your child's cubby and come out when your child is sad.
- **Teachers invite families to bring a family photo** to be displayed in the classroom. These photos are placed at the children's eye level throughout the room. When the children see their photos, they can feel connected to their families during the day.
- **Establish a predictable good-bye routine.** This will let your child know what will happen next, making it easier to cope with the transition. Some examples of good-bye routines include: waving from the gate, playing with a favorite toy, sharing a hug, reading a book, or singing a good-bye song.
- **Families are invited to share a few words of their home language** with their child's teacher. Hearing that "mama or papa will come back" in their home language makes a bridge between home and school, and helps your child feel understood. A word list that contains phrases that your family or your child uses for eating, diapering, sleeping, and family members can help a great deal.
- **Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings.** It is okay to cry and miss a parent. When your child is missing you, they may be encouraged to write a letter or draw a picture for you.
- **Read books about going to school and saying good-bye**, such as:
 - o *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
 - o *Will I Have a Friend?* By Miriam Cohen
 - o *First Day of School* by Anne Rockwell
 - o *When I miss You* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
 - o *Take a Kiss to School* by Angela McAllister
 - o *It's Time for Preschool* by Esme Raj Codell
 - o *A Pocketful of Kisses* by Audrey Penn

Timeline for joining school after the beginning of the school year:

When a child joins Desert Spring after the school year has begun, we work closely with families to create an individualized and gentle transition plan. Families are invited to visit the school before their child's first day. During this visit, families will have the opportunity to meet the teacher while the child explores and plays in the classroom environment.

For children who are new to the Rainbow Room or Monsoon Room, we highly recommend several visits prior to the first day of school. Multiple visits can also be arranged for children who have never attended school before. Each transition plan is thoughtfully tailored to support your child in feeling comfortable, confident, and successful as they begin their Desert Spring experience.

Examples of Transition Activities:

- Teachers will share information about your child and their interests with the class.
- Teachers will talk with the children about ways they can help a new classmate feel welcome.
- Teachers may use a buddy system by pairing your child with a classmate who is especially outgoing and helpful.
- Teachers may incorporate "getting to know you" activities that focus on names and interests, such as songs that include children's names or classroom discussions and charts about favorite foods, activities, or interests.
 - *Bear Feels Scared* by Karma Wilson
 - *Can You Be a Friend?* By Nita Everly
 - *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
 - *Fox Makes Friends* by Adam Relf
 - *My Friend Bear* by Jez Alborough
 - *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister

Transitioning within the Program

Timeline for transitioning to a new classroom within the program:

In June, teachers prepare the children for the end of the year transition from their current room into their new room. Before school begins in the fall, enrollment packets are mailed to families to share information about the beginning of school and to gather updated information from families before the start of the school year. The week before school starts, families are invited to attend an open house in their child's new classroom. At the open house families can spend time playing with their children as everyone becomes familiar with the teachers and classmates in their new room. Families will learn about their child's new classroom, the classroom schedule, toileting procedures, where their child will nap, and locate their child's cubby. This is your opportunity to visit with families you've already come to know as well as meet families new to the program.

Examples of activities for transitioning to a new classroom within the program:

- **In May and June**, teachers talk about the end of the school year and talk with the children about what next year will be like.
- **Teachers will be available for an end-of-year conference** to discuss how the family feels about the upcoming changes.
- **The child's new teachers may visit children in their current classrooms** to introduce themselves.
- **The children's current teacher may take small groups of children** to visit their new classroom.

Exiting the Program

Timeline for transitioning to a different preschool:

We ask families that plan to leave Desert Spring before their child has reached kindergarten age to notify the administrators and teachers at least 30 days in advance. This will ensure that the teachers have adequate time to support the child as they transition out of our program.

Examples of activities for transitioning to a different preschool:

- Teachers talk with your child about their feelings on leaving Desert Spring and joining a new program elsewhere.
- During class conversations, the teacher may invite your child's classmates to ask your child questions about their upcoming adventures.
- Teachers may invite your child to bring in photographs, postcards, or objects that may symbolize the upcoming changes. These items will be great conversation starters.
- Teachers will encourage your child to draw pictures and/or write good-bye messages to their friends.
- Teachers will read books about going to school and saying good-bye, such as:
 - *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
 - *Will I Have a Friend?* By Miriam Cohen
 - *First Day of School* by Anne Rockwell
 - *When I miss You* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
 - *Take a Kiss to School* by Angela McAllister
 - *It's Time for Preschool* by Esme Raj Codell
 - *A Pocketful of Kisses* by Audrey Penn
- **Upon request, teachers will provide families with information about their child** to share with future teachers, these may include developmental checklists or informal observations.
- **Teachers will be available to meet with the family for a final conference** where parents receive the gift of their child's portfolio. Teachers will inquire about how the family feels about the upcoming changes.
- **Families are encouraged to revisit the events of the past year with their child** by looking through their child's portfolio drawings, paintings, photos, and writing. Celebrate how much your child has learned at Desert Spring.

Timeline for transitioning to Kindergarten:

In May, the Sun Room teachers host a celebration for children moving on to Kindergarten. Families receive their child's portfolio, documenting their journey at Desert Spring. During the celebration, the children sing songs while teachers share memories and heartfelt reflections about each child. Afterwards, children, families, and teachers gather for a schoolwide picnic celebration at Catalina Park.

Examples of activities for transitioning to Kindergarten:

- **Teachers talk with children about their feelings as preschool comes to an end.** During class conversations, teachers may record children's ideas about what kindergarten is like. Teachers will also invite children to share similarities and differences between the Desert Spring environment and kindergarten.
- **Teachers encourage children to draw pictures and/or write good-bye messages to their friends.**
- **Teachers read books about going to elementary school and saying good-bye, such as:**
 - o *Miss Kindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
 - o *Seven Little Mice Go to School* by Kazuo Iwamura
 - o *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes* by Eric Litwin (illustrated by James Dean)
 - o *Mom, It's my First Day of Kindergarten* by Hyewon Yum
 - o *Yoko Learns to Read* by Rosemary Wells
 - o *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson
 - o *Will I Have a Friend?* By Miriam Cohen (illustrated by Ronald Himler)
 - o *If You Take a Mouse to School* by Laura Numeroff (illustrated by Felicia Bond)
- **Upon request, teachers will provide families with information about their child** to share with future schoolteachers or specialists, these may include development checklists or informal observations.
- **Desert Spring helps families with their transitions to kindergarten** by providing access to resources. Basic information such as dates for school information meetings for school, contact information for area schools, general enrollment procedures, and visiting opportunities is made available on the school bulletin board and/or information desk.
- **Families are encouraged to revisit the events of the past year** with their child by looking through their portfolio, including drawings, paintings, photos, and writing. Celebrate how much your child has learned and grown at Desert Spring.
- **Families are encouraged to visit their child's new school** to meet the kindergarten teacher and see their new classroom, visit the bathroom, and locate their child's cubby.
- **Families are encouraged to talk to their child about kindergarten classroom activities** such as seatwork, free choice time, and lunchtime. Let

your child know that they will listen to stories, do counting activities, have group time, and play outside. Talk to your child about how long the school day will be and what the daily routine will be like.

- If your child will be taking the school bus for the first time, you will need to discuss bus safety rules.

First Day of School

At the beginning of the school year, both parents and teachers want children to get off to a strong start. To support a smooth transition for families, we strongly encourage everyone to attend the Back to School Meet & Greet event, held the week before school begins. This is also a good time to create a phase-in plan with the director (if needed), allowing children to attend shorter days during their first week as they adjust to the new environment.

We recognize that you are the expert on your child and will work with you as best we can to make the transition as easy and comfortable as possible for you and your child. We encourage you to read books about starting school with your child for the weeks before school starts. A day or two before the child begins, talk in general terms about what the child might expect, e.g., making new friends, riding tricycles, swinging, listening to stories, singing, eating lunch, and resting. When you come through the gate, a staff member will greet you and your child. You may walk your child to their class and help them put away their things. Give the child a quick, loving good-bye and leave the child in the care of the teacher. Some children part easily from their parents and others do not. Be assured that this is normal. Exiting campus is most successful when the child can focus on the new environment and activities at hand. Make your good-bye as brief as possible and trust that the teacher will comfort your child. If you are concerned that the leave-taking was too tearful or upsetting for the child, feel free to send a Procure message asking for an update. A staff member will be able to give you an update of how your child is doing.

When asking your child about the day, do not be discouraged if it is difficult for your child to relay specific events. Usually, the child has been involved in many different activities, making it difficult to remember the details. Our program encourages internalizing accomplishments. We are concerned with process rather than product. Please be patient as your child gradually reveals newly acquired skills and knowledge. In addition to Procure updates, every Friday, each classroom will send out a weekly note (email) that will tell you about the week with pictures & stories. Please read this note with your child to inspire a conversation about their friends and activities that they took part in over the week.

What to Bring

Snacks: Please send a morning and afternoon snack with your child. The snack should be labeled with your child's name, date, and a.m. or p.m. There must be 2 components provided for each snack. Snack suggestions are provided in the Nutrition Guide.

Lunch: Please provide a nutritious lunch each day. We ask that you refrain from sending

sugary foods or highly processed, preserved, and empty-calorie items in your child's lunch. Please read beverage labels carefully, as many "juice" drinks contain only a small percentage of juice and a high amount of sugar. In support of the environment, we encourage the use of reusable plastic containers, utensils (when needed), thermoses, or reusable sealable cups, all packed in a compact lunch box. Lunch boxes are kept in the refrigerator and must be labeled with your child's first and last name, as well as the date. Please note that we do not have facilities to reheat lunches. A moist washcloth makes a wonderful reusable face and hand wipe! Thank you for your cooperation in not sending sweet treats or glass containers.

Lunch time is a busy part of the day. If you are picking up at 12:15 p.m., please arrive promptly, as the rest of the children begin preparing for nap time after lunch.

Water bottle: Please send clean, reusable water bottles **filled with water each day**. During warmer months, teachers encourage frequent "water breaks" while outdoors. Children have access to their water throughout the day, including during meals.

Clothing: We recommend keeping two extra sets of clothing in your child's cubby, including underwear and socks. Water play and occasional accidents often make changes of clothes necessary.

Hats: are also worn while outside regardless of temperature. Please send weather appropriate hats to school each day.

Blanket: This is a napping school! Due to the length and activities of our day, all children are encouraged to nap (sleep). Please keep a blanket at school. All clothing and blankets should be labeled with the child's first and last name.

Diapers: If your child is in the two-year-old class, please bring diapers and wipes. It is your responsibility to make sure your child is always supplied with these essential items. Teachers will let you know when it's time to replenish.

Toys: Generally toys are left at home or kept in the child's cubby. We encourage the sharing of interesting treasures or finds like leaves, rocks, shells, et al. Any type of weapon (guns, swords, knives) – imaginary or otherwise – are not allowed at Desert Spring. Books from home are welcomed every day.

Sunscreen & Bug Spray: You are encouraged to send sunscreen and bug spray which will be applied by a teacher throughout the day. See more about sunscreen and bug spray in the Health Policies section.

Policies

Arrival: It is important that all children arrive by 9 a.m. as this is when classes begin their daily community building routine, such as circle time. Late arrivals disrupt the flow and consistency of the morning activities for all children. Our cut-off time for drop off is 10 a.m. Children will not be allowed to come to school after 10 a.m. unless there is a written or verbal agreement made with teachers and the director beforehand.

Handwashing: Children and staff must wash their hands upon arrival at the center. Children will be assisted by a teacher at the outside sink or inside. They will follow the handwashing posters and sing handwashing songs. Children wash their hands many times throughout the day including, after outside play and before eating.

Sign-in and Sign-Out: Parents will sign in and out using the **Procare app**. State regulations require parents to sign in and out daily using first initial and last name. It is important for your child's security and our attendance record. If you forget to sign in or out, a staff member can only do so if you have signed a permission form and will only be done on special circumstances. Teachers will sign each child in/out upon arrival and departure on their class rosters and keep a running tab of how many children are present at various times in the day.

Procare: Desert Spring uses the Procare app, which provides a secure space for communication between parents and teachers. Teachers may occasionally share photos and highlights from a child's day. Parents can also use the app to notify teachers if a child will be absent or picked up earlier or later than usual. Procare is intended for brief, essential updates, while longer communications are handled by email, phone, or in person.

Authorization to Pick-Up Child: Your child may only be picked up by the individuals authorized on the blue Emergency, Information, and Immunization form. In the case of an unforeseen circumstance, if someone who is not listed on the form is going to pick up, please let us know in writing (Procare or email) the name of the person and what time they will be picking up. The person will need to show a photo ID to the child's teacher and/or the director before the child is released.

Security: Although we maintain an open door policy for families, non-family visitors must be accompanied by a staff member at all times. All visitors must have an appointment with the Director to visit the school.

Provisions for Special Needs Children: All children will be evaluated individually to determine a child's specific need and how Desert Spring can adequately assist in his/her development and growth. Teachers automatically individualize daily activities for the children in their care by tailoring lesson plans to the unique learning needs of the children in their class. In addition, any child with an identified special need will have access to an

Individualized Learning Plan if desired by the parents. This plan will be created with the parents, teachers, and any other professionals or therapists.

Field Trips: All field trips are within walking distance of the school. Children are not transported with private vehicles. Permission slips for walking trips will be provided in advance. No child will be able to leave the school without a permission slip. Any child unable to participate may remain at school with another class. Teachers and other supervising adults will ensure the safety and well-being of the children on field trips. A communication device and First Aid kit will be taken on field trips in case of emergencies.

Supervision of children: Desert Spring teaching staff supervise toddlers by both sight and sound at all times. Teacher-to-child ratios consistent with Arizona licensing requirements are maintained throughout the day and are often lower than the minimum state requirements to provide additional support and individualized attention.

Discipline: The staff at Desert Spring provides a warm and loving atmosphere that encourages each child to develop emotionally and socially. We teach cooperation, caring, respect, and communication skills. Children are encouraged to take responsibility, and to understand and accept consequences for their actions. Positive behaviors and respectful problem-solving strategies are noticed and encouraged. Every attempt is made to redirect inappropriate behaviors. When necessary, a child may be encouraged/helped to take time away from the group with a supportive teacher, until the child is ready to re-engage with the group.

Disenrollment: Desert Spring Children's Center strives to provide an enriched environment featuring self-directed learning activities for children ages 2-5. There are four classrooms in which children are enrolled by age. Each class include independent, hands-on educational experiences for the age group. On occasion, the teaching staff may determine that a specific child is not functioning adequately in the classroom environment. If this determination is made, the following procedures will occur:

1. Parent Conference: A parent conference will be scheduled within one month of enrollment. At the conference, parents will be provided with a written report outlining the areas of concern.
2. Behavior Contract: During the parent conference, Desert Spring staff will outline a proposed behavior contract with the parents. The contract will include goals and timelines. This contract will be signed by parents and staff after review.
3. Follow-up Conference: A follow-up conference will be scheduled within one month of the original conference. At this parent conference, Desert Spring staff will outline results from the behavior contract to date. Desert Spring staff will recommend one of the following options: Continuation of the behavior contract; or Determination of Disenrollment (in writing). Timely parental participation is required.

Daily Transitions: The well-being and comfort of the children at Desert Spring are our utmost concern. For that reason, children are enrolled in a classroom with the same teachers and friends for an entire program year, which runs from August to May.

Children typically move to the next class in the fall. You have the opportunity to discuss this transition with your child's teacher and the director so that together we can decide whether your child should change classrooms at a different point in the year (depending on enrollment availability). We will also provide you with information about helping your child transition from our school to kindergarten if you are interested.

Babysitting: On occasion, our staff is available for babysitting outside of school hours. Every year, teachers who are interested in babysitting give their name and preferred method of contact to the director. This information will be shared with parents only after: a) an email request is sent to the director and b) parents have signed a waiver releasing the school of any liability when your child is in the care of a staff member outside of work hours. Teachers may not babysit children who are currently in their class; however, the director will support parents in finding another educator who would be a great fit for the family and child. Parents are expected to communicate and organize plans for babysitting outside of the teacher's work hours (i.e. not during pick up or drop off.)

Parent Involvement

We encourage your active participation in your child's experience at Desert Spring. As partners we are sharing the important task of educating and nurturing your child.

Visitation: Desert Spring maintains an open door policy for families in attendance. Families may visit any area of the school at any time during our regular hours of operation, as long as staff are available to monitor visits (for safety reasons). We also expect that when visiting or volunteering at the school, positive discipline methods are used and that appropriate behavior is modeled by all adults in our school.

Communication: We strive to maintain frequent and consistent communication about your child's activities, developmental milestones, and other information that affects the well-being and development of your child. For preschool age children, the teachers will communicate via Procure, verbally or by email with you about your child as needed. For toddlers, we will communicate with you daily, either in writing (Procure or email) or verbally. We appreciate your feedback and respect your suggestions and concerns. Keep us informed of changes in your child's life/home that may require sensitive handling by her/his teacher. We hope you will be open to our observations as well.

Since it is difficult for us to get involved in lengthy conversations when the children need our attention, please feel free to schedule an appointment with us when you have questions, concerns, or great ideas. We also request your cooperation in reading the materials we send home, and following the policies we have established for the smooth

operation of the school. If you have any serious concerns about your child, the staff, or the program, please contact the director immediately to set up a conference. As partners in your child's growth and development, we want to be able to help you find the community resources available to ensure your child receives the support he/she needs. All Desert Spring Staff receive training in community resources and can provide referrals to services.

We acknowledge that communication is vital for the home/school partnership. For this reason, we will provide communication to families in the language that is best understood by the parents to the best of our ability. Please let the director know if you wish to receive communication in a language other than English, and we will provide a translator when possible.

Parent Conferences: Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for all parents in the fall. During these conferences, we will share our observations of your child in writing, as well as any results from our Intake Screenings and Ongoing Assessments. We will also give you the opportunity to discuss what your child is learning and how it is measured. Also, arrangements can be made for a conference with the teacher as the need arises. Please, always feel free to bring your concerns about your child or the program to the director or teachers.

Laundry: Families are responsible for laundering their child's nap sheet and personal belongings each week.

Supply Donations: A list of needed classroom supplies will be included in the enrollment packet at the beginning of each school year. Donations are always appreciated and help support our classrooms and programs.

Volunteers: We often welcome help with projects such as playground improvements, equipment maintenance, and furniture repair. Please let a staff member know if you are interested in volunteering. Two parent workdays are typically scheduled during the school year.

Families are also encouraged to share a classroom activity, story, tradition, or experience that helps children learn more about your family and culture. Please speak with your child's teacher to arrange a time that works well with the classroom schedule.

Parent Committee: Desert Spring has a Parent Committee, known as DSPO, that helps plan community activities and teacher appreciation events. Please let the director know if you are interested in participating.

Governance: Desert Spring is governed by a Board of Directors that meets at least quarterly. The Board includes parents, members of the church, and past and present Desert Spring families to ensure a strong working relationship between the school and the church. We especially value representation from families with children currently enrolled at Desert Spring. If you are interested in taking a leadership role within the school, we strongly

encourage you to consider serving. Please let the director know if you would like to be considered for our Board of Directors.

Program Evaluation: Our school is dedicated to ongoing improvement to ensure that we provide the very best care and education for your child. Desert Spring is part of the Quality First Assessment Program and our staff is mentored on a quarterly basis by our Quality First coach. Quality First is a state-wide assessment program that assesses preschools to inspire them to be of the highest quality. In our last assessment, Desert Spring received a four-star rating, which is deemed Continuing Quality of education.

In addition to Quality First coaching, the staff participates in ongoing training and professional development that cover a range of topics, such as Reggio practice in the classroom, developmental ages and stages, and health and safety.

Confidentiality: Our program emphasizes a trusting partnership between families and staff. For this reason, we have added a Confidentiality Policy to our Staff Handbook, and staff sign a confidentiality statement. We keep all information about families and children confidential unless you give us permission to disclose to others. Personal information about individual children is kept in locked Child Files, and only Desert Spring staff have access to this information (except Department of Health Services Child Care Licensing personnel who must check files to determine our compliance with licensing regulations).

Community Resources: Desert Spring maintains a current list of child and family support services available in our community. We are happy to share the list with you and will assist you in locating, contacting, and using community resources. In addition, our program collaborates with other programs in the community through Director's Networking Groups, educational interest forums, and committees and advocacy groups to guide collaborative work and to achieve mutually desired outcomes for children.

Community Events

Community events are an important part of building connection and belonging within the Desert Spring community. These gatherings provide opportunities for families, staff, and children to come together, strengthen relationships, and celebrate shared experiences throughout the school year.

- Monthly Playdates at the Park
- Back-to-School and End-of-School Park Celebrations
- Halloween
- Winter Open House
- Meet-and-Mingle Playdate
- Parent Work Days
- Art of Play Annual Fundraiser

Nutrition and Food Safety

We believe that a simple, wholesome diet results in healthier, happier children.

Snacks: Snacks should consist of at least 2 components - whole grain cereals, or breads and crackers (salt free or low in sodium), or nut and seed butters, or fresh fruit and/or vegetables, and dairy products. Snacks are served mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Lunches: Lunches should consist of at least four food groups (refer to the Nutrition Guide). All lunches, food containers, and water bottles must be marked with your child's first and last name and the date. Masking tape may be used to mark the date.

Special Dietary Needs: Allergies and other special dietary needs must be indicated on the blue registration form. Children's food restrictions are posted for staff's information so please keep us informed of any changes (we will ask for your permission to post your child's food restrictions in the eating areas). If your child has special dietary or feeding needs or has food allergies, you will be asked to participate in creating a Feeding Plan which will ensure that our staff are able to meet your child's needs. This plan will be confidential and will be kept in your child's file.

Birthdays and Special Events: If you wish to honor your child's birthday at Desert Spring, we recommend that you bring a story or a craft to share with the class. Since we must follow strict guidelines regarding the food that is served at the school, we must ask that if you choose to send food, please communicate your plan with the classroom teachers in advance as birthday traditions and routines vary from class to class. When providing food, we encourage healthy and/or low-sugar options.

Alternatively, the birthday child may bring stickers or a small trinket to give to the other children. In this way, your child feels special as each "gift" is given, and sharing and celebration with others is emphasized.

Special events occur in many different cultures, and we would like to incorporate families' cultures whenever possible. If you would like to share an event or holiday from your culture, please let us know.

Health Policies

The health and well-being of every child are a top priority at Desert Spring. In accordance with state regulations, we maintain up-to-date immunization records for each child and notify families when immunizations are due.

Sick Child Policy:

Desert Spring believes that a healthy environment creates positive learning experiences. Please safeguard your child and others by keeping him/her home if signs of illness are present. To guide you in deciding whether to keep your child home, we have outlined the symptoms of a sick child. The staff at Desert Spring will also follow the same guidelines in deciding whether to send a child home from school.

If your child is ill and will not be attending school, the school must be notified. Please call and inform the school of the type of illness or symptoms that your child is exhibiting.

Please keep your child home:

- If your child has a fever of 100.4 degrees or above (orally) or has had a fever during the previous 24 hour period
- If your child has a cold that includes one or more of these symptoms: less than 2 days old, has a heavy nasal discharge, has a congested cough, or child complains of ear pain or throat pain with or without a fever
- If your child has diarrhea or vomiting
- If your child has a skin sore or a mouth sore discharging fluid or puss
- If your child is unusually drowsy or tired
- If your child exhibits symptoms of a communicable disease:
 - Red and/or Runny Eyes
 - Rash
 - Sore throat
 - Mites/Lice

If your child exhibits any of the above symptoms while at school, a parent will be notified to pick them up, and if a parent cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be contacted.

Your child may return to school:

- After a fever is not present for 24 hours **without** fever reducing medication
- The cold is over but a minor nasal drip is still present
- Free of diarrhea and vomiting for 24 hours
- Rash is completely gone or a note from a physician states that rash is not contagious

Contagious Diseases: These must be reported immediately so that notification of exposure can be relayed to parents of the child's classmates.

Children showing symptoms of the following infectious diseases will also be excluded for the time required by the State Health Department.

1. Chicken Pox: Excluded for 7-10 days or until all pox are scabbed over
2. Strep Throat: Excluded until child has been on medication (antibiotic) for 24 hours
3. Pink Eye: Excluded until child has been on medication for 24 hours
4. Diarrhea: Excluded until 12 hours after last symptoms have appeared

Medication: In general the administering of medications should be done as much as possible at home. However, when a doctor or other health practitioner prescribes a medication that must be given during school hours, parents must fill out a detailed medicine form and the medicine must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name. A qualified staff member will be assigned to administer medication when the director is not present. Non-prescription medications will only be administered when accompanied by a note from a physician stating that the medication is necessary. All medications must be kept in a locked storage container.

Sun Protection: The Arizona sun can be very intense! We encourage families to apply sunscreen before school and send their child with a sun hat to help protect their face and eyes. Teachers will reapply sunscreen after nap time. Please provide your child's preferred sunscreen for use at school. Parents must complete an authorization form before sunscreen can be applied at school.

Bug Spray (Insect Repellent): Although Desert Spring is serviced regularly by EcoPest using non-toxic herbal repellents, mosquitoes and other insects may still be present. If your child is especially sensitive to insect bites, please provide a bottle of insect repellent to be used at school. Herbal bug sprays are encouraged and highly effective; however, repellents containing up to 30% DEET are permitted (no more than 30%). All insect repellent will be applied outdoors. Parents must complete an authorization form before bug spray can be applied at school.

Absences: If your child will be absent because of illness, or any other reason, please inform us through the Procure app or email.

Immunizations: The Pima County Health Department requires that the school have an up-to-date photocopy of the immunization record on file for all children in the program. For those who do not immunize their children for religious or medical reasons, immunization waiver forms are available. If there is an outbreak of a communicable disease, such as measles, mumps, etc., **non-immunized children need to be kept at home for six weeks after the last reported case.** This is a Pima County Health rule.

Head Lice: Due to our experience over the years, we have had to devise a more stringent policy regarding head lice than that which is suggested by the Pima County Health Department. Head lice have become resistant to current shampoos on the market. One treatment and sometimes two treatments no longer guarantee that the lice have been stopped; therefore, a no-nits policy seems a prudent course of action at this time. In order to support this policy, the faculty will work to evaluate each individual case to see when the child can return to school. In our experience, this may require as long as a week. We understand that this can present difficulty to families whose children need to be kept out of school for a longer period of time. Besides exposing many children and families to this challenge, the entire school must be stripped of all fabric materials, leaving a bare

classroom. It becomes a financial burden to families and the school to rectify a lice problem. We appreciate your cooperation in this regard. If any problem does occur with an individual, the school must be notified at once.

Inspection Reports: Desert Spring Children's Center is inspected by the Department of Health Services annually. Our license number is 1687. These inspection reports are available to the parents upon request. The Department of Health Services (DHS) is located at 400 W. Congress, Suite #100, Tucson, Arizona, 85701. The phone number for DHS is 628-6540.

Emergencies

Accidents: Desert Spring Children's Center carries liability insurance. In case of an accident that involves your child, you will be notified. Appropriate first aid will be administered. In the event that you cannot be reached, your child's physician will be notified of the emergency and consulted as to its management. Please make sure that your emergency information is current on your child's blue card.

Procedures in Case of Emergency: In the event of a medical emergency, you will be called. If we cannot reach you, we will call one of the other names on the blue registration form. Most Desert Spring staff are trained in Pediatric First Aid and CPR. We practice monthly fire drills and maintain smoke detectors and alarms. In addition, the school maintains written policies and procedures to ensure our preparedness for an emergency.

Procedures in Case of Emergency Evacuation: Parents will be called to pick up children if evacuation is deemed necessary. Children will be relocated at First Christian Church. In the case that evacuation from the immediate area is necessary, children will be relocated at First United Methodist Church (915 E. 4th St.) or Trinity Presbyterian Church (400 E. University).

Corporate Information

Desert Spring Children's Center is a nonprofit corporation under section 501(C) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Our EIN is 86-058-5831. We are also recognized by the Arizona Corporation Commission as a Domestic Corporation organized under the laws of the State of Arizona. Desert Spring Children's Center always maintains current liability insurance. Our agent is Wilcox and Associates, Child Care Insurance Specialists, and the policy is with Capitol Indemnity Corporation.

Desert Spring is inspected annually by the Department of Health Services (DHS). Inspection reports are available to parents upon request or directly through DHS at 400 W. Congress, Suite 100, Tucson, AZ 85701, phone: (520) 628-6540.

The director of Desert Spring Children's Center is Hypatia Luna. The designated director, who acts on behalf of the director when she is not present at the facility, is Kiana Solis.

Appendix A: Tuition and Fees

Beginning August 2026

Hours of Operation: 7:30 am – 5:30 pm

Tuition

- Half Day (Four Days).....\$700
- Half Day (Five Days).....\$750
- Full Day (Four Days).....\$950
- Full Day (Five Days).....\$1050
- Extended Day..... \$50/month
- Young Toddler Fee (18-24 months).....\$100/month

Fees & Discounts

- **Second Child Discount:** \$100 off total tuition
- **Late Pickup Fee:** \$1.00 per minute after your registered pickup time
- **Sign-In/Sign-Out Fee:** \$1.00 fee for each missed sign-in or sign-out
- **Extra Half Day/Full Day:** \$30/\$50 per additional day not included in your regular schedule

Payments - Due by the 10th of each month

- **Cash, check, Zelle and Chase Bill Pay are accepted**
Payments may be **mailed** or **hand delivered** during drop-off or pick-up. Please make checks payable to Desert Spring Children’s Center
- Zelle payments can be made by searching hypatia@desertspringschool.org
- Chase Bill Pay can be made by searching Desert Spring Children’s Center

Tuition is non-refundable.

All prices are subject to change.

Revised: 01/09/2026

Appendix B: Assessment Plan

Timeline:

- **July (or upon enrollment):** Teachers conduct developmental screenings using the Brooks ASQ-2 Ages & Stages Questionnaire in collaboration with families.
- **August:** Teachers begin the assessment process by collecting written observations, photographs, children’s work samples, and other documentation to track growth throughout the year.
- **October:** Parent-Teacher Conferences are held to discuss assessment outcomes and share celebrations, progress, and goals for each child.
- **February:** Teachers begin compiling children’s portfolio documentation.
- **April:** Optional Parent-Teacher Conferences are offered to share ongoing assessment information and discuss transition plans.

Assessment Policies:

SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS

Rationale: Early intervention is critical to ensuring that all children with special needs are able to reach their full potential. We recognize that many children who are eligible for services may not receive them because of lack of screening and identification.

Policy: All children at Desert Spring will be screened for the purpose of identifying special needs in order to ensure that all children and families receive necessary services.

Procedure:

1. All families will be required to provide the school with a copy of the “Health Assessment Form” completed by a physician. The form includes vision, hearing and developmental screening.
2. All incoming paperwork and forms are to be reviewed by the director. The director will identify whether there is a “health concern” as noted by the health care provider, and will notify parents of the possible delay or disability.
3. If indicated on the form, children who need follow up after screening (concern identified) will receive a “case review”. During the Case Review, the family, teachers, and director will meet to discuss next steps in the referral process. The family will be referred to necessary services by school staff, or, in the case that the health care provider has already done so, staff will ensure that the family has made contact with the necessary agencies. Agencies may include a physician, school district special education team, AZEIP, early childhood mental health agencies, family counselors, or other agencies that may provide needed services.
4. For children with identified needs, an Individualized Education Plan will be written in conjunction with the teachers, director, parents, and other related specialists. The IEP will be reviewed quarterly (see IEP form). For children with special health or nutritional needs, a Special Health Care Plan will be completed.
5. All modifications to environment and/or “special plans” will be documented in the Child’s File (see Program Modifications Form).

ASSESSMENT IN SUPPORT OF LEARNING

Rationale: The purpose of assessment of children’s development and learning is to inform planning of day-to-day curriculum and to ensure that the program is addressing each child’s individual needs. We have selected the Creative Curriculum and Work Sampling tools for assessment because they fit with our program’s philosophy that children learn best in ways that are relevant to their own lives, and that often a

learning experience will cover several learning domains at once. In addition, our belief that the best early education for children includes opportunities across all areas of development is consistent both with our selected assessment tools and curriculum. Our philosophy emphasizes the fact that while there are expected ranges for children to develop particular skills, not all children acquire skills at exactly the same age. These assessment tools fit with our philosophy and curriculum goals of individualizing the curriculum for children. Finally, the assessment tools are culturally sensitive and therefore fit with our philosophy that our staff and families must maintain a respectful and collaborative relationship.

Policy: All children will receive “learning assessments” at least two times per year and will include a variety of assessment methods. All families must receive written results of assessments.

Procedure:

1. Toddlers will be formally assessed using the Creative Curriculum Individualizing Goals and Objectives for Children Form. Preschool children are to be formally assessed using the Work Sampling Preschool Checklist. The checklists will be completed by the child’s teaching team and the results are to be shared with parents during parent teacher conferences. The Checklists will be completed at least Fall and Spring semesters. The results will be shared with parents at Parent Conferences in Fall and Spring semesters.
2. In addition, children will be informally assessed. The child’s portfolio is one informal assessment tool used and will include samples of the child’s classroom work. Other informal assessment tools are photos, written observations by teachers, and other documentation of children’s learning.
3. All assessment tools, formal and informal, have been reviewed for cultural sensitivity. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that Parent Teacher Conferences are conducted in a culturally sensitive manner. Desert Spring will make efforts to provide an interpreter for families upon request.
4. Teachers are responsible for completing all checklists, maintaining portfolios, and collecting at least one written observation per child per week. In addition, teachers are responsible for scheduling Parent Teacher Conferences on day designated by the director and as communicated to families on the school calendar.
5. Teachers will utilize information gained from the Assessments to create weekly curriculum goals in order to individualize planning.
6. The director is responsible for ensuring that teachers fulfill their assessment responsibilities. Assessment of child progress is a fundamental aspect of our program and is an explicit responsibility of a teacher’s duties.

Appendix C: Conflict Resolution Procedures

We recognize that conflict provides opportunities for problem solving and growth, when handled in a respectful, proactive, and positive manner.

We have adopted the conflict resolution procedures outlined in *The Visionary Director* (Carter & Curtis, 1998)

Procedure:

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at a high level throughout conflict resolution. This process incorporates a method to document the evolution of a conflict and the attempts made at resolution. Follow up communication is an integral part of the procedure to ensure that the issue is being satisfactorily resolved and that all parties' needs are being met.

Conflict Resolution Model:

1. Listen actively to each person. Paraphrase what was said and clarify your understanding. Acknowledge the person's feelings.
2. Ask each person in turn what his or her needs are in the situation.
3. Jointly brainstorm many possible solutions to meet the needs. Accept all suggestions as possibilities. Do not evaluate at this point.
4. Evaluate possible solutions and select one.
5. Make an action plan together. Distribute copies of the action plan to those involved.
6. Implement the action plan.
7. Check back. Phone the conflicting parties in one week to see how they are doing. Phone back a week after that. Modify the action plan and/or call additional meetings as necessary."

Appendix D: Green School Policy – Pesticide Use

Every effort is made to keep the children safe.

Desert Spring Children’s Center makes every effort to keep the school as “green” as possible by using non-toxic cleaning supplies that are free of harmful substances. We use an integrated pest management system (EcoPest), utilizing soaps and other non-toxic products if pests are discovered.

If insects or pests become a problem, families will be notified by email and posted notices at least 48 hours in advance. The notification will include the following information:

- The brand, concentration, rate of application, and any use restrictions required by the label of the herbicide or pesticide
- The date and time of the pesticide application
- The pesticide label and material safety data sheet
- The name and telephone number of the pesticide business licensee, as well as the name of the licensed applicator