

first steps to success 

the learning ladder

child development center



Parent Handbook

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Dear Parents:

Welcome to The Learning Ladder Child Development Center. Our purpose is to provide the highest quality child care and preschool education in a secure, nurturing and stimulating environment. Our most important priority is your child, and we strive to assure that your child's experience at The Learning Ladder is educational, fun and safe.

Every effort has been taken to assure that these goals are met, from the development of The Learning Ladder curriculum; our highly qualified and well-trained staff; state-of-the-art equipment; the highest standards of cleanliness; to our ongoing communication with parents.

At The Learning Ladder we know that children feel more secure and gain more from their child care experiences when there is a strong connection between home and school. Our door is always open to you, whether it is to visit with your child during the day or meet with us for a conference to discuss how your child is doing. Your comments and concerns are always welcome, and we are here to listen to you.

This Learning Ladder Parent Handbook has been prepared to provide the important information parents need to know when selecting the child care situation that is best for their child. Should you have any questions after reading through it, please let us know.

All of the dedicated, caring staff at The Learning Ladder want to make certain that your child has the very best early childhood experience, and thank you for entrusting us with that responsibility and privilege.

Sincerely,

The Administrative Team

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THE LEARNING LADDER LICENSURE

The Learning Ladder is licensed under the regulations of the Department of Social and Health Services of Washington State. A copy of your local child care regulations is available from the Center Director. As a matter of policy, The Learning Ladder operates to meet or exceed all state and local regulations.

All Learning Ladder staff members meet all state and local standards.

THE LEARNING LADDER EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

During the first years of life - from birth to age six, the intellectual and physical development of children is unparalleled, and the desire to learn and to know will never be more intense.

At The Learning Ladder Child Development Center, we believe...

1. ...that the development of young children is largely influenced by the degree of intellectual, physical, emotional and social stimulation in their environment.
2. ...that children learn through play, exploration, hands-on observation and through positive feedback from the adults who influence them which are primarily their parents and teachers.
3. ...in a safe, happy, clean, organized atmosphere, children learn at their own pace from everything they see, hear, touch, taste and smell.
4. ...that unhurried, non-threatening, non-competitive and non-judgmental learning experiences and positive rewards are the most effective methods for the growth and development of young children.
5. ...that learning cannot be forced and that the comparison of individual children to a "standard of normalcy" is non-productive except to detect genetic or acquired abnormalities or special needs that may require attention.
6. ...that a child who experiences "success" will see himself/herself as competent and that enhanced self-esteem increases the desire to learn.

Therefore, The Learning Ladder is committed to provide every child...

1. ...with an atmosphere rich in experiences, concepts, ideas and skills by providing opportunities each day to play and explore in a variety of developmentally appropriate centers.
2. ...with skilled, professional and caring teachers who will participate with the children in the learning process throughout the entire day.
3. ...with opportunities for success enabling the child to develop a strong sense of self-esteem and self-worth.
4. ...with positive and loving direction to achieve self-discipline and develop appropriate social skills.
5. ...with exciting and multifaceted educational experiences, including introduction to verbal communication skills including pre-reading and writing skills, as the logical steps in developing communication skills.
6. ...with opportunities for exposure to computer programs to be in synchronization with technology of today and tomorrow

THE LEARNING LADDER CURRICULUM

The Learning Ladder's educational program is a discovery based learning experience that gives a child the opportunity to move through specially designed learning modules at his or her own level of interest and ability. Each learning module has a specialized curriculum according to weekly and daily themes, as shown on the monthly curriculum calendar. There are many different learning centers in The Learning Ladder facility. As the children rotate through the centers they have the opportunity to learn and grow through a diversity of ideas, concepts and skills. Some are designed to develop large and small motor skills, while others are more academically oriented. Activities alternate between those that are teacher and child directed.

Our unique and varied learning centers include areas of discovery and participation in:

- Home - an area for home living experiences that develop independence, self-confidence, concentration and eye-hand coordination.
- Science - an area for hands-on learning and curious minds.
- Sensory - an area where perceptions gained through sensory stimulation become the foundation for intellectual development and formalized education.
- Library - where children are introduced to the wonders of reading with age-appropriate books.
- Music, Dance, and Dramatic Play - for creative expression and gross motor skill development.
- Outdoor Playground - an exciting recreational area with safe and developmentally appropriate play equipment for development of gross motor skills and social interaction.
- Math - a center where quantity concepts are introduced through concrete hands-on, **manipulative** exercises which are later associated with number symbols.
- Blocks - an area where spatial relations and relativity are experienced through creative structuring.
- Small Manipulatives - a center where concentration, fine motor skill development and eye-hand coordination develop through manipulative play.
- Art - a center where, through a variety of mediums, the child enjoys the process of art through creative expression of individual thoughts, feelings and perceptions.
- Language - a center that introduces pre-reading and pre-writing skills through a whole language approach that encourages development of verbal communication skills and excites children about the ability to communicate in other ways.
- Social Studies - a child's introduction to the world through multicultural activities.
- Computers - children ages three and up spend from five to 20 minutes several times weekly (depending on age and ability) using the computer, which includes opportunities to use logic and make choices.

OUR SPECIAL STAFF

Every staff member on The Learning Ladder team has unique talents, skills and characteristics that they bring to The Learning Ladder team, making it the special place that it is. Backgrounds include formal training and degrees in Early Childhood Education, previous teaching experience and the knowledge gained from being caring, concerned parents themselves.

Each staff member completes a thorough application, screening and training process, complying with The Learning Ladder standards and local government regulations, before being placed in the classroom. This includes a criminal record check, a minimum of three employment references verified and a TB test.

Applicants are observed interacting with children and questioned about their ability to carry out The Learning Ladder mission and philosophy. Only those most qualified and capable applicants are selected and then placed in a ninety (90) day on the job training period during which they are closely monitored and evaluated. In addition, staff members are certified in infant/child CPR and First Aid.

The Learning Ladder staff members participate in continuing professional education and training and ongoing evaluations. All lead teachers must complete the initial 20 hour block training for the State Training and Registry System (STARS). They must then continue to complete 10 hours of continuing education each year. At The Learning Ladder, we encourage all staff, not just lead teachers, to complete this training.

At The Learning Ladder we recognize the importance of maintaining a partnership between parents, children and their teachers in building the foundation for school success.

CHILD GUIDANCE AND CLASS MANAGEMENT POLICY

It is the philosophy of The Learning Ladder in classroom management to focus on redirecting behaviors and allowing a child's self-esteem to remain intact. We apply careful guidance skills with positive re-enforcement in our interactions with all children to help them build independence and confidence in their own abilities to master skills and interact with others. In this process, it is important that expectations and limits be clearly defined and consistently adhered to.

The Learning Ladder teachers believe in praising appropriate and positive behaviors, while taking into account that every child is an individual. Responses to inappropriate or negative behaviors might include ignoring the behavior, redirecting the child to another activity or reasonably discussing the problem.

When necessary, a child may be removed from the group activity for a period of "time out." In these instances, the child sits apart from the group under direct supervision by a staff member. The period of time is limited to only a few minutes, appropriate for the child's age, and involves a discussion of the behavior. When the child makes his/her own decision to be ready to rejoin the group, he/she may do so.

At The Learning Ladder, punishments and discipline that in any way are frightening or humiliating are never applied under any circumstances. This would include not using corporal punishment, implied threats of physical punishment, derogatory remarks, or harsh language. Children will never be denied food, toileting or rest as punishments.

As a part of our effective guidance techniques we include discussing with parents any problems or behaviors in need of correction. Often a child may be acting out in response to difficult situations at home or a special physical or cognitive imparity. If there are particular circumstances that would affect your child's behavior (divorce, death, new sibling), please let us know. Outside consultations or evaluations may be recommended when deemed appropriate.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

By being an involved parent, your child's experience at The Learning Ladder will be enhanced for both of you. Our door is always open for you to visit for a few minutes or a few hours, and of course, you are welcome to join whatever activity is going on, whether it may be reading stories, arts and crafts or eating lunch.

If your daytime schedule does not permit active involvement at The Learning Ladder during class time, you can still share in your child's activities. Proudly display your child's art work and projects at home (children love to see their creations decorate the refrigerator), and in the evening and on the way to and from the center, encourage your child to share his or her experiences. Talk about the fun things your child likes to do, the teachers, special friends, favorite lunches and whatever else interests your child.

Because The Learning Ladder staff keeps you continuously informed of your child's activities and progress, you'll have much to share. Every age group has their own "Communication Gram" to be sent home daily as well as monthly newsletters filled with center happenings.

You are encouraged to speak with your child's teacher on a frequent basis. If there are any questions, problems or situations that need to be addressed do not hesitate to contact the Center Director or one of the owners, Mike or Shelley Moser. Our goal is to communicate with you on an ongoing basis and satisfactorily resolve any concerns you may have.

At The Learning Ladder we maintain careful observation records of your child's development using a form we call an ability profile. You may schedule a conference to discuss your child's ability profile anytime.

OUR POLICY NON-DISCRIMINATION

Our program is designed for children from six weeks to six years of age. We also offer a full day program for kindergarten, before and after school, and camp children. The Learning Ladder accepts applicants on a first-come, first-served basis and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, marital or veteran status, national origin, handicaps or political beliefs.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Learning Ladder will accept children with special needs. In many instances having a child with special needs is enriching for all children involved by helping them to learn about disabilities and interact with people different from themselves.

The Learning Ladder staff members will work closely with the child's physician, therapist and other professionals, or make referrals to more appropriate settings when necessary.

The more information provided to us about the child and the resources he or she needs, the better The Learning Ladder will be able to meet those needs.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

To enroll your child at The Learning Ladder, we encourage both parents and children to visit the center and meet with the Center Director and teachers. During this time you will have the opportunity to tour the facility and have your questions answered.

When you have made the decision to enroll, please follow these steps:

- Complete all necessary forms in the packet which include the enrollment form, immunization information and emergency contact numbers.
- Pay the required non-refundable registration fee and the first periods tuition in advance.

STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

All information pertaining to a child and his/her family is at all times kept confidential. At times a staff member, along with the Director of the Center, may review the child's file for information which may be pertinent to the child's needs.

By no means may the child's family information or the child's information be released to any outside influences, except for the licensing agents and departmental authorities. Other than this, parental approval must be given.

WAITING LISTS

Due to the high demand for quality child care, there may not be a place immediately available for your child at The Learning Ladder. We do maintain a waiting list with a security deposit required. Admission is based on the date of the application and the child's age. As openings occur in the center parents are called in the order of their position on the waiting list.

Priority will be given, however, to children currently enrolled in The Learning Ladder who are waiting to advance to the next age group and their siblings who have not yet enrolled, before new families are accepted.

We are not able to reserve a place for your child should you decline the opportunity to register when offered.

TUITION AND VACATION POLICY

Tuition may be paid monthly, semi-monthly or weekly. Tuition is due on the first business day of each month or Friday of each week for the upcoming week. Late fees will be assessed on late payments. For returned checks a fee is also assessed, and you may be required to make future payments in cash.

The Learning Ladder Child Development Center Learning Centers will require all parents to obligate themselves to their entire tuition on a monthly basis. Should you decide to keep your child home for any reason, you will be required to pay your tuition in full for that period of absence as part of your contractual agreement with us. Your child may not re-enter the center without this payment in full. Should administration make any verbal agreements to accept your child after temporary absence, you will still be obligated for the tuition balance outstanding with such balance being due within a reasonable period of time after your child's acceptance back at school. Should your child permanently withdraw from school, no credit or refund of tuition will be given. Return to school would require payment of a re-registration fee.

For each additional child enrolled in your immediate family, you will be entitled to a 10% discount on tuition of the older child.

There is an overtime charge of \$10 per child for every 15 minutes that teachers have to wait for a parent past closing time. This fee must be paid when the child is picked up.

Should there be any extenuating circumstances that would prevent you from paying on a timely basis, please discuss this confidentially with the Center Director prior to it becoming delinquent. Continued failure to pay tuition on a timely basis may result in terminating your child's enrollment.

For every six months of enrollment, your child may take one week of vacation (not in attendance). (Maximum two weeks annually, non-cumulative; to be taken in full week blocks – no credit for single days out). This time must be scheduled in advance with your Center Director.

WHAT SCHEDULES ARE AVAILABLE

The Learning Ladder Child Development Center is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, twelve months a year. The Learning Ladder Centers offer full-time and part-time care and flexible scheduling on a space available basis. Administration can provide you with specific information on what openings are available.

Every child deserves to get the most out of the program here at The Learning Ladder. To experience all that the daily curriculum has to offer allows the child to grow and develop. Consistency in day-to-day activities is important to children and the teachers. The staff and administration is concerned that children coming in the afternoon lose out on much of the scheduled learning activities. Most of the activities are done before lunch. We start serving lunches at 11:00 am. Therefore we will not be accepting children after 11:00 am.

If a circumstance arises that prevents your child from being here by 11:00, please call the center beforehand and arrangements can be made for late arrival. We open at 6:30 am and an administrator is always here to accept your phone call.

A TYPICAL DAY AT THE LEARNING LADDER

A day at The Learning Ladder is filled with various age-appropriate, stimulating experiences. Different areas of interest, in balanced time periods, are made available for the child to pursue. Of course, regular trips to the bathroom, playground time, meals, snacks and rest time are part of the day. A detailed daily schedule is posted in each room. The consistency of routine and knowing what to expect during the day helps children develop a sense of trust and understanding of their environment.

HOLIDAYS OBSERVED

The Learning Ladder is closed on some holidays: New Year's Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after and Christmas. There is no tuition credit allowed for these days. The Learning Ladder centers may choose to close on the day before or after the actual holiday if that holiday falls on a weekend.

UNSCHEDULED CLOSINGS

In case of severe weather The Learning Ladder may have to close. In those instances, the closing and opening will probably be according to the public school schedule as announced on local radio stations. Call your center to verify its opening on a day public school is closed before you drive to the center. If weather conditions worsen during the day and it is absolutely necessary to close due to extremely dangerous driving conditions parents will be notified to pick-up their child.

ATTENTION TO SAFETY

From the moment your child arrives, until he or she is picked up at the end of the day, your child's safety is our foremost concern. No child shall ever be left unsupervised. Our center is equipped with an intercom/telephone in each classroom to allow for emergency communication.

Procedures for arrivals and departures have been developed to assure the safety and well being of everyone at the center. Your cooperation in complying with them is appreciated.

Parents are to use only the front door for entering and exiting.

- Children are always to be walked into the building and be placed with one of The Learning Ladder staff members before the parent leaves. Never leave a child outside the building for them to walk in alone or accompanied by another child.
- Parents must complete the Sign-In and Sign-Out process on a daily basis and any applicable permission slips (medication, field trips).
- When picking up your child be certain that a Learning Ladder staff member acknowledges that your child is leaving the building.

A child will not be permitted to leave with any person other than those designated in writing by the parent. A photo identification will be checked for any designated person picking up a child. **There will be no exceptions to this policy.**

If there are any changes to those authorized to pick-up your child, or if you will be car-pooling with other parents, please advise us. Remember to use a child safety seat and buckle up when transporting your children at all times.

The Learning Ladder has instituted a security system in the facility as effectively as possible. This includes:

- Gates and fences surrounding the property
- Special lock at entrance with limited access
- Viewing windows for classroom visibility
- Video cameras for monitoring and observation

HEALTH & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

In addition to the physician's examination and immunization records required for enrollment, we also have a daily screening to observe each child's health. If your child develops symptoms of illness during the day we will immediately isolate him/her from the other children and call you to pick-up your child. For the health and well-being of your child and others, please do not bring your child to school if he/she:

1. Has a fever or has had one during the previous 24 hours.
2. Is in the first 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.
3. Has a heavy nasal discharge that is not clear. (Nasal discharge that is clear may be caused by an allergy.)
4. Has a constant cough.
5. Has symptoms of a possible communicable disease such as sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, painful ears, rash, headache, abdominal pain and/or fever.

If your child has a communicable disease, such as chicken pox, please inform the school so that we can take the necessary precautions.

If your child has a minor accident or injury while at school, you will receive an accident/incident report when you pick up your child at the end of his/her day. The purpose of this form is to make you aware of the accident so that you can monitor your child at home if necessary. If we feel that your child may need medical attention we will attempt to notify you to make you aware of the injury and our plan for monitoring the injury.

In the case of a serious accident or injury we will make an attempt to reach you. If you are not reachable, the child's pediatrician and emergency contact persons listed will be called. If necessary, we will also call an ambulance. Until the arrival of a parent or medical professionals, a staff member in an administrative capacity will take personal charge of your child. In your enrollment package there is a form authorizing The Learning Ladder to act on your behalf if there is an emergency.

We require all of our staff to have a current CPR & First Aid Training. How our teachers respond to accidents and injuries are a direct result of the training provided.

IF YOUR CHILD NEEDS MEDICATION

When a parent brings medication to the center to be dispensed to their child/children, they must follow the standard medication policy implemented at The Learning Ladder..

All medication brought into the school by parents must be in the original container with a label affixed with the child's name, doctor's name, medication name and required dosage, expiration date and directions for administering the medication. This medication must be presented to either a member of the administration along with a completed medical authorization form filled in and signed by the parents. All medication will be stored in a locked medication box.

All medication will be given by a member of the administrative team. Medications will be administered only at designated times, per the prescription label.

MEALS

Good eating habits and positive attitudes toward food should be established at an early age. For young children it is essential to have a nutritionally balanced diet for healthy growth and development. The Learning Ladder menus have been designed to include items from each of the four basic food groups with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables. Milk and/or juice are provided with a hot lunch. A variety of mid-day snacks and drinks are also given. Those arriving early may be given breakfast.

The Learning Ladder Child Development Center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) through the state of Washington. This requires that we meet the highest nutritional requirements in our meal planning and preparation. All meals are served "Family Style" starting in our two year old class.

Meals are prepared on-site at The Learning Ladder in our own kitchen. Second portions are available for hungry little appetites. Menus are sent home to parents at the beginning of each month and posted in the center.

Please advise your child's teacher in writing of any food allergies or intolerance. A substitute item may be able to be offered to your child in place of that item.

NAP TIME

There is a rest period during the day for all children. Each child is assigned his or her own mat to sleep on and is welcome to bring in a favorite blanket or "cuddly." Parents are required to supply a bottom covering for the nap mat as well as a top blanket.

TOILET TRAINING

The Learning Ladder accepts children that are not yet toilet trained. When you, the parent, have determined that your child is ready to begin using the toilet, our staff will assist your child so as to maintain consistency between home and school behavior. The following guidelines are useful in determining if your child is toilet trained:

- The child can wait 30 minutes between toilet times (our staff accompanies the children to the toilet approximately every 30 minutes).
- The child can express the need to go to the bathroom to parent and teacher.
- The child does not need to wear diapers, even at naptime.

CLOTHING YOUR CHILD WILL NEED

Children are to be fully dressed when they arrive at The Learning Ladder. Because play and activity are such an important part of the curriculum, clothing should be comfortable and practical. Children will feel much more at ease participating in activities if they are not concerned about ruining their "good" clothing.

Children who walk must wear closed shoes at all times, preferably sneakers. Footwear such as sandals, flip-flops and boots do not offer the necessary safety and protection and, therefore, are not permitted.

Every child needs to always have a complete change of clothing, including socks and underwear (if applicable), kept at school in case of soiling. If your child has changed clothing during the day, please take home the soiled items and replace them the next day.

All clothing items are to be labeled with either a commercial label (available in fabric and notion stores) or permanent marker with the child's full name. A lost and found box is kept at the center, so please check it if you are missing anything. If your child comes home with an article of clothing that is not his or hers, please return it.

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN BRING IN FROM HOME

When children have a specific "Show and Tell" time in class, they are encouraged to share items of interest, such as toys, games, books or tapes. Items of a dangerous or violent nature, such as toy guns or sharp objects, or anything deemed to be unsafe by The Learning Ladder staff would not be permitted.

In other instances, it is in the best interest of all children to not bring in personal items, as they may be lost or broken or create problems in an otherwise shared environment. A good alternative is to have a favorite toy waiting in the car when your child is picked up.

Under no circumstances should money, jewelry or valuables be brought in by your child.

HOW BIRTHDAYS ARE CELEBRATED

Birthdays are special and important occasions. At The Learning Ladder we want to make your child's birthday fun and exciting. You are welcome to bring in a treat for everyone in your child's class, preferably something nutritious. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher for any special plans, which can include songs, stories, or something to make your child's birthday unique.

SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS

At The Learning Ladder we know that very young children need extra special care and attention. Our loving staff provides a nurturing, soothing, stimulating environment for precious little ones. Plenty of hugs, cuddles, talking and listening, with close attention to your child's needs, create feelings of warmth and security.

Children are involved with activities to promote sensory development and awareness, physical development and cognitive skills on a daily basis. Details about your child's behavior during the day are provided to you in our daily "Infant News".

Please be sure that your child has the following items in the center on a daily basis, replacing and laundering them when needed:

1. Diapers – You should bring in a box of diapers labeled with your child's name and replace it when their supply is getting low.
2. Baby Wipes - labeled.
3. At least 2 Crib Sheets – labeled
4. Three Changes of Clothing (including socks or booties) - labeled.
5. Sweaters and/or Jackets - suitable for indoor and outdoor changes in temperature.
6. Receiving Blanket - labeled.
7. Ointments - labeled. Regulations require us to have a note from your child's doctor for us to apply these.
8. Any foods, whether formula or solids, must be supplied by the parent and must be labeled.
9. Medication forms must be filled out before any medication can be administered to an infant. A note from your child's doctor is required for the administration of any over the counter medications, such as Tylenol.
10. All belongings must be brought to school in a tote bag. All items must be labeled, especially baby bottles and caps. **All bottles must be accompanied with a cap. This is a government requirement!** We are sorry but we cannot be responsible for any unlabeled items.
11. Any items that are not listed above which you care to bring should be labeled. The center cannot be responsible for disappearing items. With your cooperation we can keep disappearing items to a minimum.
12. Please do not use your infant's bin for storage. This only creates a cluttered atmosphere and a home for germs. Infant's belongings must be taken home nightly and laundered (if needed).

Eating times for this age group are special times, and individual preferences will be recognized. Bottles are never propped, and food is portioned and made to appropriate consistency. If you are able to visit the center at this time, you are always welcome to join your child for meals, including breast-feeding.

TIPS FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The first day of school can be both exciting and unsettling. There are several ways you can assist your child with what might be his/her first experience away from you and the security of your home.

- Determine whether past experiences indicate that your child might have a problem leaving you.
- Determine whether you might have a problem leaving your child.
- Take your child to the center to visit prior to the first day. Have your child meet his/her teacher; walk around the building; peek in through the viewing windows; look at the playground equipment, and other surroundings.
- The more familiar your child is with The Learning Ladder center and the consistency of your daily routine in arriving, the more comfortable he/she will be.
- With some parents and children, a transition period into the new experience of child care may ease the separation. Perhaps the first day or few days that your child attends could be less than the full schedule to allow time for the adjustment. Soon your child will look forward to coming to The Learning Ladder with the assurance that Mommy

or Daddy will return.

For some children, going to school is a happy, uneventful break from family or caregivers. For other children the experience is both difficult and frightening. Until that first morning (or the first few days) there is no way to be absolutely sure of how a child will react. Sometimes, days later, there is a delayed reaction accompanied by tears and non-verbalized fears. The way parents react can play an important role in a child's enthusiasm and acceptance. The language of support, before the event, can help to dispel some of these fears:

- "I will go to work, then I will pick you up."
- "You will have so much fun."
- "There will be toys and games to play with."
- "Your teacher will help you in the bathroom."
- "You can play with toys."
- "You can paint and color."
- "Your teacher will be our friend too."

On the first morning or afternoon it is wise to arrive a little earlier so that you are not in a rush. Walk your child into the center and take your child to his/her teacher. Introduce your child if your child is old enough to understand. If your child is too young to understand introductions, simply introduce yourself and your child to the caregiver and the staff will take over with the welcome. Since every child will have a cubby with his/her name it would be a good idea to help your child locate the cubby and place the things you have brought from home in the cubby. Then it is time to think about leaving.

- Be honest with your child. "I'm leaving for work now. I will be back at 4:00." "Give me a big hug and a kiss."
- It is not wise to say, especially if your youngster begins to cry or tantrum, "I'll be back in just a minute" or "I'm just going to the store." Honesty and reality are always best.
- At this time the staff will go to work to interest your child in something around the center. Should your youngster continue to be upset, then we would contact you by telephone. This generally doesn't happen. Tears may flow for just a few minutes.

At the end of the day, park your car and come into the center. Your child will probably be looking for you, and the staff will have him/her ready to go. If for some reason you will be delayed, please call the center. Make sure that the staff sees you take your child, and remember to sign out from the center.

Repeat this procedure on the days following the first day. If you have any concerns do not hesitate to call the center. Together we will plan how to overcome problems should they arise.

During the week prior to your child's enrollment in the center the staff will be glad to receive the items that will be necessary in caring for your child. Otherwise, you can bring them with you on the first morning.

TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT BY THE LEARNING LADDER

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for the center Director to decide to discontinue a child's attendance. Such a decision would be based on whether it is in the best interest of that child, the other children in the class and the overall operation of the center to terminate enrollment. Every effort will be made to correct a problematic situation (i.e. re-direction, distractions, individualized intervention plans, moving the child to another class) before a final decision is made. Termination of enrollment may be the result of the following:

- Non-payment of tuition (immediate termination)
- Abuse of children, staff or property
- Continued violation of The Learning Ladder policies by parents or children.
- Disruptive or dangerous behavior
- The center's inability to meet the child's needs

Whenever possible written notification of one week will be provided to the parent in the event of termination of enrollment.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse and neglect is a terrible crisis. As caring and concerned parents and child care providers we take very seriously our responsibility, as required by law, to report suspected cases. The Learning Ladder staff have been trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.

Abuse and neglect, whether it may be physical or emotional, can happen in all types of families, from all walks of life and in varying degrees. In all instances the damage to children can last a lifetime and certainly affect their self-esteem and developmental process.

When abuse occurs, both children and parents are the victims and need support, understanding and help. Parents may ask the Center Director for a confidential referral for outside intervention and suggested resources for prevention and assistance in dealing with this problem.

Should a parent or The Learning Ladder staff member suspect abuse or neglect, these steps are the usual course of action:

1. Staff member will discuss the suspected case with the Center Director.
2. The Center director will observe the child, talk with the child and further seek to determine if abuse or neglect may have occurred. These findings will be documented in the child's file.
3. The Center Director may talk with the child's parent(s) about the concerns.
4. The staff and Center Director, in conjunction with The Learning Ladder Management will determine the need to call a Child Protective Agency. The staff member who first observed the signs of concern may also make an independent report if they wish.
5. A social worker or representative of the agency may visit the child at The Learning Ladder or the child's home.

At The Learning Ladder we are also very concerned about preventing abuse in the child care center. To protect the children in our care, the following measures are taken:

- Extensive screening of all staff members, including criminal background checks
- Close observations and performance evaluations of staff
- Involved, capable supervision constantly monitoring the classrooms, activities and staff members through closed circuit television and observation windows.