Vista Ridge
ACADEMY

Early Childhood Family Handbook

2026 2027 School Year

Learning, growing, and walking with Jesus one small step at a time

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Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten, Aftercare Ages 3 through 10

Welcome to Vista Ridge Academy

Welcome to Vista Ridge Academy Early Childhood. This handbook explains the program practices, family responsibilities, safety procedures, and licensing policies that guide care for each child. Families should read it together with the enrollment agreement, school calendar, tuition and fee schedule, emergency forms, and classroom information provided during enrollment.

Vista Ridge Academy is a private Seventh-day Adventist school serving preschool through eighth grade. Our early childhood program is licensed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood. We partner with families to nurture each child spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and academically in a safe, loving, Christ-centered community.

Vision

To be the Christian school of choice for families seeking personally attentive education and a kind, nurturing community.

Mission

Growing confident minds, strong bodies, and loving spirits through a Christ-centered environment that nurtures students' unique talents as learners and leaders.

CHERISH Core Values

- Christ-centered living
- Honor
- Exploration
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Service
- Heroism

Purpose and Philosophy

Play is an essential way young children learn. Within clear, caring limits, children ages three through five explore, practice independence, build relationships, and develop language, early literacy, mathematics, problem-solving, creativity, and physical skills. We believe every child is a gift from God and deserves responsive, respectful care that recognizes individual strengths, culture, development, and needs.

Teachers create hands-on, developmentally appropriate learning experiences and use observation and assessment to individualize instruction. Christian faith, prayer, Bible stories, service, kindness, and stewardship are woven naturally into the day.

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1 Program Information

Children Served

Vista Ridge Academy Early Childhood accepts children ages three through five. A child must be three years old before attending. Placement in Preschool or Pre-Kindergarten is based on age, developmental needs, available space, and the program selected during enrollment. The program does not provide infant care.

Hours and Schedule

Day	Program Hours
Monday through Thursday	8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Friday	8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
After Care Monday through Thursday	
After Care Friday	
After Care Non- School Day	

Classroom schedules include Bible, circle time, early literacy, mathematics, science or social studies, centers, outdoor play, meals or snacks, rest or quiet time, and specials. Music, physical education, STEM, art, Makerspace, chapel, and other special programs are offered during the school day according to the published classroom and school schedule. Hours or offerings may change for early-release days, special events, or emergency conditions; families will receive advance notice whenever possible.

Scheduled Closures

The center follows the Vista Ridge Academy school calendar. For 2026-2027, regular care is not offered on the following school closure dates:

- September 4 and 7, 2026 - non-student day and Labor Day
- October 1-2 and 5-6, 2026 - fall break and non-student days
- November 20 and 23-27, 2026 - non-student day and Thanksgiving break
- December 21, 2026-January 5, 2027 - Christmas break
- January 18, 2027 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 12 and 15, 2027 - non-student day and Presidents' Day
- March 12 and 15-19, 2027 - non-student day and spring break
- April 16 and 19, 2027 - non-student day and April break
- May 19, 2027 - last day of school with 12:15 p.m. dismissal

The most current school calendar controls if a date changes. Additional closures may be necessary because of weather, public-health guidance, building conditions, or another emergency.

After Care: Non-School by reservations only. Reservations can be made by emailing the principal or the director. Reservations close two days before the non-school day.

Inclement and Excessively Hot Weather

The principal or designee monitors weather forecasts, air quality, road conditions, district and local emergency information, and conditions at the school. The center may delay opening, close, dismiss early, remain indoors, shorten outdoor play, or cancel an excursion when conditions are unsafe. Families are notified through ClassDojo, email, text or phone, the school website, or another designated alert system.

Outdoor play is adjusted for heat, cold, wind chill, lightning, precipitation, air quality, and surface conditions. Staff provide frequent water and shade, reduce vigorous activity, schedule cooler play periods, and observe children for heat- or cold-related symptoms. Children remain indoors when safe participation cannot be maintained. Families must provide seasonally appropriate clothing and sun protection as requested.

Educational Program

The program uses a Christ-centered, standards-based approach informed by Colorado early learning standards and Adventist early childhood development standards. Learning is active and play-based, with intentional small-group and individual instruction. Teachers document growth through observations, work samples, developmental measures, and family input. Assessments guide instruction and are not used to label children.

Special Programs

Art, music, physical education, STEM, robotics or Makerspace, chapel, reading buddies, community guests, and seasonal activities may be included. Staff remain responsible for attendance, active supervision, child-to-staff ratios, health plans, and safety during every special program, including those led by another school employee or visitor.

2 Enrollment and Financial Policies

Admission and Registration

Submit the school application and all required enrollment forms.
Receive an acceptance decision and classroom placement based on eligibility and available space.
Pay the non-refundable registration fee within the stated deadline to reserve the space.
Create and maintain a FACTS account and select a tuition payment plan.
Before the first day, provide emergency contacts, authorized pickup persons, health examination and immunization records, health plans, custody documents when applicable, and all required permissions.

Enrollment is not complete until required records and payments are received. The center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or another status protected by applicable law. As a religious school, Vista Ridge Academy maintains its Seventh-day Adventist faith identity and educational mission..

After Care: Enrollment must be completed before the first day care is provided.

Immunization and Health Records

Families must submit a current certificate of immunization or a valid exemption permitted by Colorado law, together with the required health examination record. The center may enroll a child who is non-immunized or under-immunized only when the child's documentation complies with state requirements. During an outbreak or public-health event, a non-immunized or under-immunized child may be excluded as directed by public-health authorities. Families are responsible for updating records as vaccinations or medical information change.

2026 2027 Itemized Fee Schedule

Enrollment Option	Registration	Annual Tuition
Full time 5 days	$500	$10,850
Three days M W F	$500	$8,850
Two days T Th	$500	$7,850
After Care Yearly		
After Care Monthly		
After Care Weekly		

Payment Option	Full Time	Three Days	Two Days
Pay in full by August 1	$10,470	$8,540	$7,575
Two payments August 1 and January 1	$5,325 x 2	$4,350 x 2	$3,860 x 2
Ten monthly payments August through May	$1,085 x 10	$885 x 10	$785 x 10
After Care Yearly			
After Care Monthly			
After Care Weekly			

Additional Fee	Amount
Financial aid application	$35
Hot lunch	$6 per meal
Scheduled drop-in day when ratio and space permit	$100 per day
Late tuition fee	$30 per month per family
Returned payment fee	$30
School uniforms	Up to $250; assistance may be available

Students beginning in January or later are charged a $250 registration fee. Published discounts include $380, $310, or $275 for paying the full year in advance for the five-day, three-day, or two-day option; semester prepayment discounts are $100, $75, or $65 per semester respectively. A $225-per-child multi-student discount applies to households with two or more Preschool-through-eighth-grade students. Tuition assistance and CCCAP may be available. Current financial policies and the signed enrollment agreement control if a fee or schedule is formally revised.

Billing and Attendance

Tuition is charged for the enrolled program regardless of actual attendance. Substitution days are not provided for illness, vacation, holidays, or closures. The first monthly payment is due August 1 and the final payment is due May 1. Accounts seven days late may be placed on financial suspension until brought current. Families should contact the business office promptly if they need to discuss payment arrangements.

Family Withdrawal

A parent or guardian withdrawing a child must provide written notice to the director and business office. If withdrawal notice is received after August 1, August tuition is non-refundable. After the first day of a month, tuition is not refunded or prorated for partial attendance that month. Registration fees are non-refundable except for the limited circumstances listed in the current Early Childhood Financial Information and Policies. The family remains responsible for charges due under the enrollment agreement.

Center Withdrawal of Services

The center may withdraw services for non-payment, failure to follow program policies, falsification or failure to provide required records, a safety threat by a child or adult, or when the center cannot safely meet a child's needs after reasonable supports have been attempted. Except when immediate action is necessary to protect health or safety, the center provides written notice and a transition period consistent with the enrollment agreement. Behavioral concerns follow the separate prevention-focused procedure in Section 4.

3 Daily Care and Family Responsibilities

Arrival, Attendance and Absence

Drop-Off: Morning drop-off takes place at the main school entrance. An adult must escort the child to the entrance and remain until the child has entered the building. Children will walk independently to their classroom while staff monitors the entrance, doorways, and hallways. The classroom teacher completes the sign-in process and assumes responsibility after receiving the child. Parents and guardians are not permitted in the classroom due to licensing restrictions.

Pick-Up: Afternoon pick-up takes place at the ECE entrance. Please enter through the gates and wait outside the glass door. A staff member will bring each child to an authorized adult and complete the sign-out process. Children are released only in accordance with the Authorized Release policy in this handbook. Children who aren't picked up by 3:45/ 12:30 will be transferred to after care, and the drop- in charge will apply.

Early Pick- Up: Please send the director an email or Dojo message by 1:00 pm if your child will be picked up before 3:30 pm Monday-Thursday or by 11:00 am if your child is being picked up before 12:15 on Fridays. Please go to the school office and wait there for your child to be brought to you.

Absence or Late Arrival: Parents or guardians must notify the school through the attendance form, office, or classroom teacher when a child is absent or late.

If a child arrives after the class has left campus or moved to an off-site activity, the family must report to the office. The child will remain with an authorized staff member in an approved group, or the family may be asked to keep the child until the class returns. Staff will not transport a late child separately or leave a child with an unauthorized person.

Personal Belongings and Money

Label clothing, approved rest items, water bottles, and other permitted belongings with the child's first and last name. Toys from home, including stuffed animals, are not permitted. Toy weapons, personal electronics, jewelry that creates a hazard, and unnecessary money must also remain at home. Money for an approved activity must be delivered to an adult in a labeled envelope or paid through the designated system. The center is not responsible for ordinary loss, staining, or damage to personal items.

Meals Snacks and Menus

Families provide a nutritious lunch unless purchasing an offered hot lunch. The center provides or coordinates snacks as communicated by the classroom. Vista Ridge Academy serves vegetarian food in keeping with its religious beliefs of the Seventh- Day Adventist Church. Menus and hot-lunch schedules are shared through newsletters, ClassDojo, email, or the school website. Drinking water is available throughout the day; parents are responsible for sending their child a clean and filled water bottle every day.

Families must identify all food allergies, intolerances, religious dietary practices, and medically required diets during enrollment and whenever they change. A health-care provider's plan is required when indicated. Staff review ingredient labels, prevent food sharing, use designated seating or preparation practices when needed, and keep emergency medication accessible to trained staff. The center will work with families on reasonable substitutions; families may be asked to provide suitable food when the program cannot safely supply it.

Students are not permitted to share any food that is brought into the center by families.

Celebrations

Food for classroom celebrations must be approved in advance, commercially packaged, labeled with ingredients, vegetarian, and consistent with classroom allergy restrictions. Provide enough for the class and avoid items prohibited by the teacher or health plan.

Clothing and Weather Readiness

Children must follow the school dress code and wear closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes with a closed heel or heel strap. Provide at least two labeled changes of clothing, including socks and underwear, and check sizes seasonally. Families must send weather-appropriate layers, coats, hats, mittens or gloves, waterproof footwear, and other requested protection. Remove unsafe drawstrings and neck or waist ties except when needed for a documented personal or religious accommodation.

Diapering Toilet Training and Toileting

Children are supported respectfully and without shame as they develop toileting independence. Families must disclose current toileting needs and provide diapers or pull-ups, wipes, and extra clothing when needed. Staff follow universal precautions, maintain supervision, use a designated changing area, clean and disinfect the surface after each change, dispose of waste in a covered container, and wash both the child's and staff member's hands. Clothing soiled with body fluids is sealed and sent home without rinsing.

Toilet learning is coordinated with families using consistent language and routines. Please keep in mind that we are licensed for preschool and pre-K; we do not offer a toddler room. Children are offered regular restroom opportunities and help as developmentally appropriate. Staff does not punish, force, ridicule, or withhold food, drink, rest, or activity because of toileting accidents. Due to regulations from licensing and the health department, Staff is not permitted to assist in changing clothes or wiping children.

Rest and Quiet Time

Children attending the full day receive a supervised rest or quiet period. The center provides individual cots or mats and maintains clean bedding practices. Families may provide the requested labeled bedding; however, pillows and stuffed animals are not permitted for nap or rest time. Children who do not sleep are offered quiet activities after an appropriate rest opportunity. Our full rest period is one hour. In accordance with state regulations, children age five and younger rest for at least 30 minutes. Once a child is awake, the child may leave the nap mat within 10 minutes and will be offered a quiet activity for the remainder of rest time. Staff position themselves to see and hear children and conduct regular visual checks. Children may use the restroom as needed during rest time. Bedding brought from home is sent home Thursday afternoon to be washed and returned on Monday.

4 Positive Guidance and Inclusion

Programwide Approach

Positive guidance teaches children what to do, protects dignity, and strengthens belonging. Staff use predictable routines, visual supports, clear expectations, encouragement, choices, redirection, co-regulation, problem-solving, and logical or natural consequences. Expectations are stated positively and taught through modeling and practice.

Relationships and Emotional Well Being

- Staff greet children and families warmly, learn each child's communication style and interests, and respond promptly and respectfully.
- Classrooms provide consistent routines, calm spaces, inclusive materials, and opportunities for movement, sensory regulation, friendship, and meaningful choice.
- Teachers explicitly teach feeling words, calming strategies, turn-taking, empathy, asking for help, conflict resolution, and safe ways to express needs.
- Families are invited to share culture, language, routines, strengths, goals, and strategies that help their child succeed.
- Staff communicate concerns privately and focus on observable behavior, skill needs, and supports rather than labels.

Challenging Behavior and Individualized Support

When behavior is persistent, intense, or unsafe, staff first protect all children and use calm, least-restrictive support. The team gathers information about what happens before and after the behavior, developmental expectations, health or sensory factors, communication needs, classroom conditions, and effective strategies. Staff document patterns and partner with the family.

The center may develop a written, team-based positive behavior support plan with prevention strategies, replacement skills, adult responses, progress measures, and review dates. With parent or guardian consent when required, the team may consult the child's health-care provider, school support personnel, Child Find, an early childhood mental health consultant as defined by Colorado law, or another qualified specialist. Supports are individualized and implemented consistently across settings when possible.

Prohibited Guidance

Staff may never use corporal punishment; physical or verbal abuse; threats; humiliation; ridicule; harsh, frightening, or profane language; food, rest, toileting, or outdoor play as punishment; mechanical restraint; seclusion; or punishment for toileting accidents. Physical intervention is limited to what is reasonably necessary to prevent immediate harm and must follow law, training, documentation, and parent-notification requirements.

Steps Before Behavioral Suspension Expulsion or Requested Withdrawal

Document the behavior objectively and identify immediate safety needs.
Review routines, environment, supervision, communication supports, developmental expectations, and possible triggers.
Meet with the family to share observations, listen to family knowledge, and agree on initial strategies.
Implement and document targeted classroom supports, teach replacement skills, and monitor progress for a reasonable period based on the level of risk.
Develop or revise an individualized team-based support plan and seek consultation from an early childhood mental health consultant or other specialist when needed and available.
Consider reasonable accommodations and referrals, including evaluation through Child Find when appropriate.
Review whether strategies were implemented consistently, whether they helped, and what additional supports are possible.

Have the director make any suspension, expulsion, or requested-withdrawal decision after reviewing documentation, safety, family input, consultation, accommodations, and alternatives.

Suspension or expulsion for behavioral concerns is a last resort. The center will not use exclusion as punishment or because a family sought disability-related support. When an immediate and serious safety threat requires temporary removal, the director will notify the family promptly, document the reason and conditions for return, and convene the team as soon as practical. Unless immediate termination is necessary for safety, families receive written notice and transition assistance. Records will describe the supports attempted and the basis for the decision.

5 Health and Medication

When a Child Must Stay Home

Keep a child home when the child cannot comfortably participate, needs care beyond what staff can provide without compromising supervision, or may expose others to a communicable condition. Exclusion may include fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher; repeated vomiting or diarrhea; uncontrolled cough or breathing difficulty; unusual rash with illness; eye drainage with significant irritation; severe lethargy; or another condition identified by public health guidance or the child's health-care provider.

Unless a health-care provider or public-health authority gives different written direction, a child may return after being fever-free and free of vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing or symptom-masking medication and able to participate normally. The center may request medical clearance.

Illness During Care

A staff member stays with and comforts the child in a supervised area separated from the group as appropriate.
Staff assess symptoms, provide permitted first aid, and contact the parent or guardian promptly.
The family or authorized emergency contact must arrange prompt pickup.
Staff document relevant observations and follow cleaning, disinfection, exposure-notification, and reporting requirements while protecting confidentiality.
Emergency medical services are called for severe symptoms or whenever delay could endanger the child.

Accidents Injuries and Medical Emergencies

Staff provide first aid within the scope of their training. Families receive an incident or accident report for injuries requiring first aid or notable observation. The center contacts the parent or guardian promptly for head injuries, significant injuries, possible fracture, uncontrolled bleeding, allergic reaction, or other concern requiring medical evaluation. If emergency care is needed, staff call 911, continue care, bring emergency information and medication, and attempt to reach the family and emergency contacts. A staff member accompanies the child when required until an authorized adult assumes responsibility.

Medical Records and Individual Health Plans

Required health examinations, immunization documentation, emergency information, medication authorizations, and individual health plans must be current. Families must immediately report changes in health, diagnosis, allergy, medication, or emergency instructions. Records are stored securely and shared only with staff who need the information to protect or care for the child, or as otherwise required by law.

Medication Storage Administration and Delegation

- A current written authorization signed by the parent or guardian and an authorized health-care provider is required when applicable.
- Medication must arrive in the original pharmacy or manufacturer container with the child's name, medication name, instructions, expiration date, and appropriate labeling. The instructions must match the authorization.
- Medication is stored inaccessible to children in a locked area or locked refrigerator as required. Emergency medication is kept immediately accessible to trained staff but inaccessible to children and travels with the child during evacuation and excursions.
- Only a staff member who is trained, authorized, and delegated medication administration as required by the Colorado Nurse and Nurse Aide Practice Act may administer medication.
- Staff verify the child, medication, dose, route, time, authorization, and expiration date; document each dose; and record refusals, errors, reactions, or omitted doses. Families are notified of concerns promptly.
- Expired, discontinued, or unneeded medication is returned to the family or disposed of according to approved procedures.

Allergies

Children with a diagnosed allergy must have current written instructions and emergency medication when prescribed. Staff receive need-to-know training, review food and activity risks, and follow the child's plan. The center informs classroom families of necessary restrictions without identifying the child.

Hand Hygiene and Infection Control

Children and staff wash hands on arrival; before food preparation and eating; after toileting or diapering; after contact with body fluids; after outdoor play; and whenever hands are visibly soiled. Staff clean and disinfect high-touch areas, mouthed toys, toileting surfaces, and food areas using approved products and procedures.

6 Supervision Security and Release

Knowing Where Children Are at All Times

Each classroom maintains a current attendance roster showing arrival, departure, and authorized transfers. Staff use active supervision by positioning themselves to see and hear children, scanning and counting frequently, anticipating hazards, and engaging with children. A named staff member is responsible for the group during every transition.

Staff conduct and verbally verify name-to-face counts before leaving an area, while moving, upon arrival, after restroom use, before and after vehicle travel, and whenever responsibility transfers. The receiving staff member confirms each child's name and total. Attendance records, classroom boards, and electronic sign-in information are reconciled throughout the day. Children are never sent between locations alone.

Building Security and Visitors

Visitors enter through the main entrance, identify themselves, state their purpose, sign in when required, and wear or carry visitor identification. Staff verify appointments and monitor visitors. A visitor who will have access to children must meet screening and supervision requirements for the role. Visitors may not photograph, interview, discipline, transport, or be alone with children unless specifically authorized and qualified. Staff may deny or end a visit that disrupts care or creates a safety concern.

Authorized Release

A child is released only to a parent, legal guardian, or person authorized in writing in the child's record. Staff requires government-issued photo identification when the person is not known to them and they must be at least 16 years old. Families must update authorized persons and contact information in writing. A telephone request is not accepted unless the director follows an established identity-verification and written-confirmation procedure. The center follows valid custody or protection orders on file and does not mediate family disputes.

If an authorized person appears impaired or unable to transport the child safely, staff will not knowingly place the child in immediate danger. The director will contact another authorized person and may contact law enforcement or child protective services when necessary.

Emergency Pickup

During an emergency or off-site reunification, families follow the location and instructions sent by the center. Staff release children one at a time after checking identification and authorization, recording the release time and recipient, and confirming the child has necessary belongings and medication. Families must not remove a child without completing the reunification release process.

Late Pickup and Child Not Picked Up

- Staff contact the parent or guardian as soon as the child remains after closing.
- If contact is unsuccessful, staff call authorized emergency contacts in the order provided.
- At least one qualified staff member remains with the child; staff do not leave a child alone or transport the child home.
- If no authorized person can be reached within a reasonable period, the director contacts local law enforcement or child protective services for guidance and continues supervision until responsibility is formally transferred.
- Staff document contacts, times, and the final release. Repeated late pickup may result in fees, a family conference, required after-school enrollment when available, or withdrawal of services under the enrollment agreement.
- Regular dismissal is 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 12:15 p.m. Friday. Families should allow time to complete pickup by closing. The school communicates any grace period or late fee through the current tuition policy.

- Children not picked up in our dismissal window will be transferred to after care and will be charged a drop-in rate for after care. Monday through Thursday, children are transferred to after care at 3:45; on Fridays, they are transferred at 12:30. Payments will be made via facts.

7 Transportation Field Trips and Media

Transportation and Vehicle Safety

When the center provides or arranges transportation, families receive information and provide written permission before the child rides, except during an emergency when transportation is necessary to protect life or safety. Only approved, properly licensed and insured drivers may operate a vehicle. Vehicles meet applicable inspection and safety requirements.

- Each child uses an age-, size-, and vehicle-appropriate child restraint or seat belt as required by law. Children never share restraints or ride in a front seat when prohibited.
- A staff member maintains the roster and conducts name-to-face checks when boarding, after seating, at every stop, when unloading, and after arrival.
- A final physical sweep checks every seat, floor area, and compartment immediately after unloading. The driver and another staff member verify that no child remains.
- Children are supervised while entering, exiting, crossing, and waiting. Safe loading locations are used, and children do not cross a roadway alone.
- The vehicle carries emergency contacts, health information, first-aid supplies, communication equipment, and necessary emergency medication. Staff know procedures for collision, breakdown, severe weather, evacuation, and delayed return.
- Children are never left unattended in a vehicle.

Field Trips, Excursions and Special Activities

Families receive advance information about the destination, date, times, transportation, cost if any, planned activities, clothing or supplies, and known unusual risks. Written parent or guardian permission is required. Staff review allergies, health plans, accessibility, emergency medication, restroom needs, and accommodations before departure.

A designated staff member carries the roster and emergency information. Staff maintain required ratios and active supervision, assign small groups when helpful, count children throughout the activity, and inspect the site for hazards. Volunteers and venue staff supplement but do not replace center supervision unless they meet all applicable requirements. Swimming, water activities, animals, cooking, hiking, or other higher-risk experiences require activity-specific safeguards.

Media, Internet and Screen Use

Screen and media use is limited, intentional, age-appropriate, and connected to curriculum, movement, worship, documentation, or a specific learning purpose. Passive entertainment is not used as a routine substitute for teaching, play, outdoor activity, relationships, or rest. Teachers preview content, supervise viewing, protect privacy, avoid advertising when practical, and provide an alternative when content conflicts with a documented family need.

Children in this program do not independently browse the internet, use personal social media, communicate with unknown users, or share personal information online. If a child over age five participates in an online activity, staff teach and reinforce simple safety rules: use only teacher-approved sites, keep names and identifying information private, do not click or message without permission, and tell an adult about anything confusing or uncomfortable. Family permission governs identifiable photos, video, and digital sharing.

8 Emergency Preparedness

The center maintains a written emergency plan consistent with Colorado child care rules and coordinates with school leadership, emergency responders, and the facility. Staff receive training and participate in required drills. Emergency plans and site-specific maps are maintained in staff-accessible locations; sensitive security details are not published in this family handbook.

Evacuation

For fire, gas leak, unsafe building conditions, or another evacuation emergency, staff take the attendance roster, emergency contacts, first-aid supplies, and essential medication; complete name-to-face counts; move children by the designated route to the assembly or relocation site; account for every child; and await further instruction. Staff do not re-enter until authorities give permission.

Shelter in Place and Severe Weather

For hazardous outdoor conditions, severe weather, or an external environmental threat, staff move children to designated interior areas, account for everyone, bring emergency supplies, and remain until the all-clear or evacuation direction. Staff provide developmentally appropriate reassurance and maintain supervision, hydration, toileting, medication, and access needs.

Lockdown and Active Shooter on Premises

For an immediate security threat, staff follow trained lockdown, evacuation, or other protective actions based on the circumstances and law-enforcement direction. Doors are secured when appropriate, children are moved away from exposure, silence and supervision are maintained as practical, and attendance is checked. Families must not come to campus until authorities or the center provide reunification instructions.

Children With Disabilities and Access or Functional Needs

The emergency plan identifies individualized assistance, communication, mobility, sensory, medical, behavioral, and transportation needs. Staff assign primary and backup responsibilities, keep necessary equipment and medication accessible, plan accessible routes and relocation options, and practice procedures in a manner that protects dignity and does not exclude the child.

Family Notification and Reunification

The center will use available methods such as ClassDojo, text, email, phone, website notice, or emergency alert to communicate the nature of the event, actions families should take, and the reunification location. Messages may be delayed when staff must first protect children. Families must keep contact and authorized-pickup information current, avoid calling repeatedly during an active response, and bring photo identification to reunification.

Continuity of Operations

After an emergency or disaster, school leadership assesses the building, utilities, staffing, records, supplies, public-health conditions, and ability to meet licensing requirements. The center may operate from an approved alternate location, use a delayed or modified schedule, or remain closed. Families receive updates about reopening, tuition or calendar decisions, records recovery, and available community resources. Care resumes only when the program can operate safely and legally.

Emergency Closure

The center may close, delay, or dismiss early because of weather, utility failure, fire, public-health conditions, law-enforcement activity, staffing emergency, or another condition that prevents safe care. Families are responsible for arranging prompt pickup when early dismissal is announced.

9 Child Protection and Legal Policies

Teachers

All teachers are credentialed and meet the minimum requirements of a level 2 in order to be left alone with the children. In addition, all teachers are background checked at the state and federal level including fingerprinting. All teachers are required to maintain their credential level and obtain a minimum of 15 hours of professional development.

Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

Early childhood staff are mandated reporters. A staff member who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect must make an immediate report as required by Colorado law. Staff do not investigate, require proof, or delay a report for internal approval. The center cooperates with child protective services and law enforcement and maintains confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

Reporting Resource	Contact
Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline	1-844-CO-4-KIDS 1-844-264-5437 available 24 hours
Boulder County Child Protection	3460 Broadway Boulder CO 80304 303-441-1309
Immediate danger	Call 911

Confidentiality and Children's Records

Records are maintained securely and released only to authorized parents or guardians, staff with a legitimate need to know, licensing authorities, auditors or accrediting bodies as authorized, emergency personnel, or others as required or permitted by law. Families must not photograph, record, or post another child without permission. Confidentiality cannot be promised when safety or mandated reporting requires disclosure.

Custody and Visitation

The center follows the most current court orders and legal documents provided to it. A parent or guardian must give the office certified or otherwise acceptable copies and promptly report changes. Without a controlling order, the center cannot deny a legal parent's access solely because another family member requests it. Staff do not supervise disputed visitation or exchange arrangements beyond normal program procedures.

Smoke Tobacco Cannabis Alcohol and Drug Free Environment

Smoking and vaping, including tobacco, nicotine, cannabis, or any other substance, are prohibited inside the building, in program vehicles, and on school grounds. Alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, misuse of medication, and working or arriving impaired are prohibited. These rules protect every child from direct exposure and from secondhand and thirdhand smoke residue on clothing, skin, hair, furniture, vehicles, and equipment. Although the center does not enroll infants, the same protections exceed the infant-specific requirement and apply to all children.

Nondiscrimination and Disability Access

The center considers reasonable accommodations and works with families and qualified professionals to support children with disabilities or developmental needs. An individualized assessment considers the child's needs, program resources, safety, licensing requirements, and whether an accommodation would fundamentally alter the program. Families are encouraged to share information early so supports can be planned.

10 Family Partnership and Complaints

Family Communication

ClassDojo is the primary classroom communication tool. The school may also use email, telephone, text, newsletters, the website, conferences, and printed notices. Families should review messages regularly and keep all contact information current. Staff respond during working hours as soon as practical; emergencies should be reported by telephone or 911 as appropriate rather than by app message alone.

Parent and Staff Conferences

Formal parent-teacher conferences are offered at least twice during the school year, generally in October and February, and additional conferences may be requested by the family or staff. Conferences address learning progress, assessment information, strengths, goals, social and emotional development, friendships, behavior, communication, physical development, health or care needs, and strategies for home and school. Families and staff may invite relevant specialists with appropriate consent.

Family Involvement

Families may participate in classroom activities, read to children, share culture or talents, attend chapel and school events, help with approved projects, and support class needs. Volunteers must follow sign-in, screening, confidentiality, supervision, health, and safety requirements.

Resolving a Program Concern

- Discuss the concern with the classroom teacher when appropriate.
- If the concern remains or involves the teacher, contact the Early Childhood Director.
- If further review is needed, contact the principal.
- For a licensing concern, a family may contact the Colorado Department of Early Childhood directly at any time. Internal resolution is not required before a licensing complaint.

Child Care Licensing Complaints

To report a suspected child care licensing violation, contact the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, Division of Early Learning Licensing and Administration, 710 South Ash Street, Denver, Colorado 80246, at 303-866-5958. If a child may be abused or neglected, use the child abuse reporting contacts in Section 9. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 911.

The center prohibits retaliation against a family or staff member for making a good-faith complaint, contacting licensing, or reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

11 Additional Safety Procedures

Child Separated From the Group or Missing

The staff member immediately alerts other staff and the director, maintains supervision of the remaining children, and verifies the attendance roster and last known location.
Available staff search assigned areas promptly, including restrooms, transition paths, playground zones, vehicles, and nearby approved areas, without leaving other children unsupervised.
The director calls 911 without delay when the child is not immediately located, has left the supervised area, faces elevated danger, or local authorities are otherwise needed.
The center notifies the parent or guardian and licensing as required, preserves relevant records or video, documents the incident, and cooperates with authorities.
After the child is safe, leadership reviews contributing factors, implements corrective action, and communicates appropriate information while protecting confidentiality.

This procedure also applies when local authorities are contacted about a child for another serious safety reason. Staff never ask other children to conduct an unsupervised search.

Product and Food Recalls

The director or designee routinely monitors reliable recall notices from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, manufacturers, vendors, and public-health agencies. Staff also inspect toys, furnishings, playground equipment, sleep equipment, classroom materials, and food for damage, missing labels, expiration, contamination, or recall information.

A recalled item is removed from access immediately, clearly marked and isolated, and returned, repaired, discarded, or otherwise handled according to the recall notice. Staff check classrooms and storage for matching model, lot, or date information; document the response; and notify families when exposure or return of a family-provided item is relevant.

Infant Safe Sleep

Vista Ridge Academy Early Childhood does not accept or care for infants, so infant safe-sleep procedures are not applicable to the current licensed program. The center will not begin infant care unless its license, staffing, environment, training, supervision plan, and written safe-sleep policy are updated to meet all applicable requirements, including direct supervision and required physical checks.

Weapons and Violence

Real or toy weapons, threats, and violent conduct are prohibited on school property and during program activities. Staff respond immediately to protect children, notify administration and families as appropriate, and contact law enforcement when required. Developmentally typical pretend play is redirected when it becomes unsafe, frightening, targeted, or inconsistent with classroom expectations.

12 Family Acknowledgment

Please sign and return this page or complete the school's electronic acknowledgment. Keep the remainder of the handbook for reference.

I acknowledge that I received the Vista Ridge Academy Early Childhood Family Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year. I understand that I am responsible for reviewing the policies, keeping emergency and health information current, following arrival and release procedures, and asking the school when I need clarification. I understand that this acknowledgment does not waive any right provided by law or change the terms of the signed enrollment agreement. We reserve the right to make changes or additions to this handbook when changes are made families will be notified two weeks in advance of a new or adjusted policy.

Child Information	Family Information
Child name _____	Parent or guardian name _____
Classroom _____	Signature _____
School year 2026-2027	Date _____

Center Contact

Vista Ridge Academy | 3100 Ridge View Drive | Erie Colorado 80516 | 303-828-4944 | hello@vistaridge.org | www.vistaridge.org